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Highlights

Local News Headlines

President vows he would not hand over ‘a single cat’ to the ICC

(Dailies / Sudan Tribune) The embattled Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir today says he will not accept any compromise aimed at handing over two Darfur war crimes suspects to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

“I swear to god I will not surrender even a single cat from Sudan because we can make a shoe out of its skin” Al-Bashir told a rally in the state of Sennar in Eastern Sudan.

The analogy used by the Sudanese head of state denotes that he will not give anything of any value to the Hague based court.

“They tell us that if we give them Haroun and Kushayb we will pardon the president...I swear to god that neither the US, UK or France will move a single hair in our skin” Al-Bashir said. “We told them if they want to come after us come and try” he added.

If the ICC judges endorse charges against Al-Bashir the latter may end up a prisoner in his own country since he faces the potential of being apprehended while travelling abroad.

Furthermore, European Union (EU) rules prohibit its officials from communicating with individuals indicted of war crimes.

The ruling National Congress Party (NCP) insists however that Al-Bashir will run for presidential elections in 2009.

Salva Kiir and Taha meet in Juba

Al Ray Al AAm reports Vice President Taha is to meet with First Vice President Salva Kiir.

Al Ayaam reports sources affirmed that the meeting aimed at making a breakthrough on the contentious laws on top of which the Security, the Press and the Referendum Acts. In addition, the meeting aimed at discussing various propositions on the work of the special committees formed to monitor the implementation of the CPA.

According to *Al Ayaam*, SPLM insisted that the two articles related to the power of arrest and appointment of the deputy directors of the Security Chief should be kept as stipulated in the draft bill.

Security Conditions in Abyei Stable, Says Health Minister

Sudan Vision reports the Federal Health Minister and head of GoNU delegation to Abyei, Dr. Tabitha Butrus, told Sudan Vision that the recent incidents did not mean that the situation there had broken down. She pointed out that Abyei had enjoyed stable conditions, unruffled by any disturbances since May.

Tabitha indicated that the high-level delegation that included representatives from the Government of National Unity and the Government of the South has surveyed conditions in Abyei on the ground through interviews it made with the head of Abyei administration and his deputy and a number of

officials in the area. She added that the tight plan drawn up by the joint integrated forces has reassured the delegation on the situation in Abyei.

The Federal Health Minister revealed that the region needs services in the fields of water, health, education, urban planning, irrigation, agriculture and humanitarian affairs are being listed by the different organs.

She further disclosed that a meeting will be held on the coming Monday between the Government of National Unity and the Government of the South to come out with a unified vision on means and modalities of supporting these projects to realize development and stability in the region.

She remarked that her Ministry had drafted a specific plan for meeting health needs of Abyei region, noting that her Ministry will establish health centers to the north and south of Abyei in addition to construction of a hospital and rehabilitation of workers.

Websites / International Headlines

UN Preparing for Influx of Congolese Refugees

(VOA) The U.N. refugee agency says it is preparing for a possible new influx of refugees heading to Southern Sudan because of the joint military action recently taken against the Lord's Resistance Army by Congolese, Ugandan, and Southern Sudanese forces.

The military operation to flush out the Lord's Resistance Army from camps in the remote Garamba National Park in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo began Sunday.

The U.N. refugee agency reports the local population is in a state of panic. Spokesman, Ron Redmond says civilians fleeing the fighting reportedly are crossing the border into Sudan.

He says a UNHCR team based in Yambio in West Equatoria, Sudan, close to the DRC border, is unable to reach the area because of the security situation. Therefore, he says the agency does not know how many people are fleeing nor what their condition may be.

"Thousands of Congolese refugees fled to that area starting in mid-September after ferocious attacks by the LRA [Lord's Resistance Army] in the Dungu area," said Redmond. "Refugees reported at the time that many of their family members and friends had been abducted, killed and raped during the LRA attacks." "That September group of refugees, about 5,000 in all, was temporarily settled in nine sites around Yambio. UNHCR and its partners have been providing them with assistance," he added.

Redmond says the UNHCR is planning to start relocating many of these refugees to a site further inland. He says about 700 are scheduled to be relocated from Sakure. This group will be followed by at least 3,000 more in coming days.

UN envoy sees 'merit' in attack on Uganda rebels

(AP) The U.N. envoy trying to end one of Africa's longest and most brutal wars said Wednesday he sees "merit" in the military offensive launched this week by three nations against Ugandan rebels.

Joaquim Chissano, former president of Mozambique, said troops from Uganda, southern Sudan and Congo attacked LRA bases in eastern Congo for two reasons — rebel leader Joseph Kony's failure to sign a final peace accord and rebel attacks on civilians in Congo and Sudan.

"We are there to facilitate for peace, so we are going to always advocate for peace. But we cannot condemn these military actions because we can see the merit of it," the U.N. envoy for LRA-affected areas told reporters after giving a private briefing to the Security Council.

Chissano said the council "expressed sympathy and support" for the offensive. "They also urged that the peace process be continued ... which means the signature of the final agreement."

The joint offensive also is aimed at stopping LRA atrocities "because through dialogue we were not able to stop them," he said.

Sudan warns of imminent LRA attacks in Equatoria

(Sudan Tribune) Governor of Central Equatoria state, Major General Clement Wani Konga, on Monday warned of imminent attack by the Ugandan rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Greater Equatoria region following a joint regional military offensive on the rebels in eastern DR Congo on Sunday.

Governor Wani, who also chairs the SPLM party in the state, asked the SPLM State Liberation Council to mobilize the citizens to fight back if the rebels carry out revenge attacks in Equatoria region.

South Sudan parliament passes army budget on third reading

(Sudan Tribune) The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly late Wednesday afternoon passed a bill on the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) by the specialized Committees of Security and Public Order and legal affairs for a third reading.

The SPLA gets 40% of the southern region's budget annually which translate to 400 million Sudanese pounds (US\$187 million). SPLA is tasked with transforming itself into the conventional army of Southern Sudan, the semi-autonomous region that was granted its status in the 2005 peace agreement that ended Africa's longest-running civil war.

Sudan dismisses documentation of army's role in Darfur slave-taking

(Sudan Tribune) The Sudanese Foreign Ministry today dismissed documentation of the Sudanese army's role in systematic abduction of civilians in Darfur for the purposes of sexual slavery and forced labour, but not did refer specifically to any of the cases pointed to in the human rights report.

Field research in Darfur conducted by the Darfur Consortium over the last two years indicated that "many hundreds of people have been abducted during the course of the conflict, but the true figure is likely to be in the thousands."

Ambassador Ali Sadiq, the spokesperson of foreign ministry, called the 22-page report "naïve" and "ignorant." He said it was fabricated by foreign intelligence services.

Sudanese gov't stresses readiness for talks with Darfur rebels

(Xinhua) The Sudanese government on Wednesday reiterated its readiness for talks with Darfur rebels in Qatar. Samani al-Wasila, Sudanese minister of state for foreign affairs, told reporters that his government was ready for the next round of peace negotiations with the rebel movements

in Darfur. He said the joint Arab-African initiative for the peace talks has won the support of the Sudanese people.

Food aid needs in Sudan to reach \$851 million for 2009

(Sudan Tribune) The World Food Programme today appealed for US\$5.2 billion for urgent hunger needs beginning in 2009. Of this, \$851 million of which will be allocated to Sudan, the costliest of all operations.

The WFP operations in Sudan will benefit 5.95 million people, WFP predicted.

Darfur is currently the largest humanitarian emergency operation in the world and represents more than 70 % of WFP's budgeted activities in Sudan. Of Darfur's estimated population of 6 million people, more than half are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict.

According to the aid agency, its work in Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia could be jeopardised without new funding by the middle of the year.

Arrangements to resettle refugees in Romania legal –Al Aghbash

(Sudanese Media Center) The Commissioner for Refugees Mohammed Mohamed Al Aghbash said that the arrangements undertaken by UNHCR to move 97 Sudanese refugees from Iraq for resettlement in Romania are legal. He said those refugees have been living in camps at Iraqi desert since 2005. Al Aghbash said there is no big number of Sudanese refugees in Iraq.

Kenyan Vice-President to visit Sudan

(SUNA) The Kenyan Vice-President, Kalonzo Musyoka, is due to begin a two-day official visit to Sudan next Monday. He will meet the President and senior Government officials to discuss bilateral and regional issues of common concern as well as CPA progress.

Justice Minister sets up specialized child attorney offices

(SUNA) Justice Minister Abdul-Basit Sabdarat issued Wednesday a decree establishing specialized child attorney offices in a number of Sudan states. The attorney offices' jurisdiction according to the decree is to supervise investigations and exercise powers provided in the Act of Criminal Procedures of 1991, the Child Act of 2004 and any other act. The decree provides for Attorney offices in South Darfur, Al-Geddarif, Northern, Southern Kodofan, Sennar, Blue Nile, West Darfur and Kassala states.

Vice President to address Conference of Sudanese Experts

(SUNA) Vice President Taha will open the 2nd conference of the Sudanese Experts working in regional and international funding institutions. The conference will be held in the Friendship Hall from 7 - 9 January 2009.

More Ethiopian troops arrive in Darfur

(UN News Center) More than 300 Ethiopian troops arrived in Darfur over the last two days to boost the strength of UNAMID. More personnel from the Ethiopian Infantry Battalion are expected to land in El Geneina, West Darfur by the end of the week.

“Our deployment in Darfur has been slower than I wished despite our best efforts,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told reporters at his year-end press conference today.

“The joint UN-African Union force will be 60 % deployed by year's end, and 85 % by March of next year. Yet we still lack mission-critical assets, including helicopters,” he added.

Ugandan MPs say army bombed deserted rebel camps

(Daily Monitor website) The Acholi Parliamentary Group yesterday accused the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) of bombing deserted rebel camps as opposition grew against the military offensive launched 14 December.

Reagan Okumu, an MP with Forum for Democratic Change, told reporters that the UPDF had attacked empty camps because, alerted to the operation, the LRA had left the area two days earlier. Uganda's State Minister for Defence Ruth Nankabirwa, as did the military operation spokesman Capt Chris Magezi, who, speaking from Dungu in the DRC, said it was absolute “nonsense”.

UPDF, assisted by the SPLA and the Congolese army, launched air strikes against suspected rebel positions in northeast DRC on Sunday. Infantry and other support troops including newly created Special Forces were later deployed to hunt down rebel fighters but no details of casualties on either side were yet available. Nor was there any independent information about LRA leader Kony's whereabouts although he had earlier been reported as heading towards the CAR. "We do not know where Kony is," Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa told a Kampala press conference. The Minister said any collateral damage caused by the bombings could only be assessed once troops arrive at the scene. Meantime, he called upon northern Ugandan leadership “to assure people in the area that they are secure."

State Minister for Defence Ruth Nankabirwa told parliament the air strikes were on target in the attack on LRA camps in Dungu. She thanked the DRC and GoSS for allowing Uganda fighter jets to refuel on their territory.

Security Minister Amama Mbabazi said the attack on Kony was initiated by the DRC government after the LRA started killing Congolese civilians. There were reports that LRA had displaced about 17,000 DRC civilians, and abducted women and children.

Some MPs questioned the attack. As one MP put it, most rebels and their wives had been “abducted” and their children born in the bush. “To destroy thousands of lives in order to get rid of three LRA commanders is totally unacceptable. It is a crime against humanity bordering on genocide”, those opposed to the military operation claimed.

Rwanda genocide 'kingpin' jailed

(BBC) Former army colonel Theoneste Bagosora has been convicted of instigating Rwanda's 1994 genocide by a UN tribunal and sentenced to life in prison. Bagosora and two co-defendants were found to have led a committee of Hutu extremists that plotted the massacre of ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

It is the first time the Rwanda tribunal has convicted anyone of organising the killings.

More than 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda's genocide.

Along with Bagosora, former military commanders Anatole Nsegyumva and Alloys Ntabakuze were also found guilty of genocide and given life sentences.

According to the indictment at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), based in Tanzania, Bagosora and the two senior military officers all conspired to "work out a plan with intent to exterminate the civilian Tutsi population and eliminate members of the opposition".

The tribunal rejected the defence's argument that the killing was not organised, and therefore not genocide.

Brigadier Gratién Kabiligi, the former chief of military operations, who was on trial with Bagosora and the two other men, was cleared of all charges and ordered to be released from custody immediately.

In another verdict on Thursday, the Rwandan court sentenced Protais Zigiranyirazo, 57, to 20 years in jail for his part in the genocide. Mr Zigiranyirazo, a brother-in-law of former President Juvenal Habyarimana, was accused of ordering Hutus to kill 48 people in two incidents.

Bagosora, 67, has been in custody since 1996, when he was arrested in Cameroon. The prosecution said he played a key role in plotting to exterminate the Tutsis and moderate Hutus, and that he also set up the Interahamwe - gangs of Hutu extremists who carried out much of the slaughter.

Prosecutors said Bagosora assumed control of military and political affairs in Rwanda when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down in 1994 - the catalyst for the genocide. He is said to have distributed the arms and machetes that became the chief tools of the genocide.

Profile: Col Theoneste Bagosora

The indictment alleges that he set out to "prepare the apocalypse" as far back as 1990. The following year, Bagosora helped draft a document circulated within the army that described Tutsis as "the principal enemy".

Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, head of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda at the time, described Mr Bagosora as the "kingpin" behind the genocide and said the colonel had threatened to kill him with a pistol.

The trial, which began in 2002, was expected to last two years. The tribunal is due to wind up at the end of 2009.

Interviews

Interview with SRSG

Al Ahram, the Egyptian daily, posted a two-page an interview with SRSG Ashraf Qazi on its website. According to the paper, the SRSG met with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit and the Secretary General of the Arab League Amro Mussa.

The SRSG said the CPA applies to Darfur given that this latter is part of Northern Sudan which signed the agreement with the south. However, due to the deteriorating security situation in Darfur, separate efforts are currently exerted to achieve peace there in the region, he added. Yet, both situations in Darfur and Southern Sudan affect one another, he said.

On the accusation directed to Southern leaders on using their counterparts in Darfur to put pressure on the Government, he said the Southern leaders announced commitment to support peace in Darfur and encouraged the Darfur movements to unify their views to negotiate with GoNU, a stand that he described as very positive.

On the criticism directed to him as a result of his condemnation to the trials of those involved in the attack against Omdurmen, the SRSG denied that he condemned the trials. He explained that he only commented on the international standards that should be followed in the trials, adding that his comments were misinterpreted.

On a question on the double standards used by the UN in reporting violations committed by north and the south, SRSG said that the UN reports are well balanced regardless of who committed the violations whether on the north or the south.

Analysis

Undeniable genocide by the executive; what about the judiciary?

Sudan Tribune - By Mahgoub El-Tigani

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