

Sudan Domestic Media, January 17, 2010 (covering January 10 to January 16, 2010)

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State-Owned Media

January 10

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 0400 GMT 10 Jan 11)

- Voting continued today in Sudan and abroad for the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum. The environment for voting yesterday was peaceful. Following the inspection of several voting centers, Prof Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil, the chairman of the national commission for the referendum, told the press that southerners in the north and south have voted freely in a peaceful and stable atmosphere. He noted that the first day of the referendum was calm and voting for the day ended peacefully. He expressed hope that the referendum would carry on in a secure and tranquil fashion that would maintain peace and security throughout Sudan. Khalil added that he had received a phone call from Chan Madut, his deputy, in Juba. Chan confirmed that the voting process in the south was secure and peaceful and turnout at southern voting centers was high.

January 11

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 0400 GMT 11 Jan 11)

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied comments made by Jimmy Carter, former U.S. president, to CNN's website and disseminated by other media outlets claiming that President Omar al-Bashir had said that the north would take over all of Sudan's foreign debt in the event of the secession of the south, leaving the south free of any debts. The ministry's official spokesperson said that during talks with Carter, al-Bashir had stressed that the international community should forgive Sudan's debts in light of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. The reason for this request is that neither the north nor the south has the resources to pay the debts, particularly now that the north is expected to see a reduction in oil revenues and the south is expected to face new challenges if southerners opt for secession.
- The third day of voting for Southern Sudan's self-determination referendum was underway in Sudan and abroad. Radio correspondents and reporters noted that the referendum was running smoothly and calmly. The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) decided to extend the voting time by one hour, beginning at 8 a.m. and ending at 6 p.m. instead of 5 p.m. The Darfur states remain the exception and remain open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The SSRC attributed the time changes to the circumstances of numerous eligible voters who were unable to vote during the previous voting hours. The SSRC said that the

- referendum results would be announced on February 7, followed by an appeals period, with the final results announcement expected on February 14. The commission said that it had reviewed the progress in voting yesterday in a news conference and affirmed that it was taking place in a friendly and smooth fashion.
- The Sudanese government affirmed its commitment to the Darfur peace negotiations in Doha and noted its gratitude regarding the efforts made by Qatar, the African Union, the Arab League and the UN in attempting to settle the Darfur issue. Ambassador Rahamtallah Muhammad Uthman, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met with ambassadors of the UN Security Council's member states in Khartoum yesterday and called on the international community to assist in preparations for the Darfur-Darfur dialogue. He noted that a meeting would take place on January 15 to discuss arrangements for the dialogue. He also briefed the ambassadors of the African group in Khartoum on the government position vis-à-vis Darfur's peace talks. The Sudanese government affirmed its confidence in the joint mediation of the AU and Qatar at the meeting and the ambassador conveyed the government's desire to see all of the armed groups join the peace talks.
 - Kenya made known its respect for President Omar al-Bashir's positions toward issues confronting Africa as a national leader and African figure. During an interview with a radio correspondent in Nairobi, Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka of Kenya called on Sudanese citizens to maintain amicable ties regardless of the referendum outcome and asked Western countries to respect the will of African peoples. He also noted that relations between Sudan and Kenya would remain firm and strong.
 - The AU Peace and Security Council held a crisis meeting in Addis Ababa yesterday evening. At the meeting, Sudanese Ambassador to the AU Muhai-al-Din Salim presented a progress report on the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum to the council. The council hailed the progress that has been made in Sudan, particularly since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) reached the referendum stage. Akoi Bona Malwal, Sudan's deputy ambassador to the AU, told the radio that the council conveyed appreciation regarding the Sudanese president's visit to Juba. American President Barack Obama welcomed the commencement of the referendum. Ambassador Fath al-Rahman Ali Muhammad, Sudan's chargé d'affaires at the Sudanese embassy in Washington, noted that prominent figures in the American administration expressed great pleasure over the developments in the implementation of the CPA.

(Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 0400 GMT 11 Jan 11)

- Salva Kiir Mayardit, the first vice president and president of the South Sudan government, held talks on the voting process in Juba with Haile Menkerios, the special representative of the UN secretary-general. Following their meeting, Menkerios said that he had briefed Kiir on economic, political and security issues related to the referendum. He also called on the ruling partners to resume dialogue on post-referendum arrangements and hailed the voting process and the ruling partners' commitment to peace.

January 12

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 0400 GMT 12 Jan 11)

- Chan Reech, the deputy chairman of the SSRC, said that reports coming from 10 South Sudan states indicated that 46 percent of eligible voters had cast their votes on the first and second day of the referendum. He noted that in light of this, the preliminary results would be available on January 31 rather than in February and added that he hoped voting would carry on as planned in the remaining days.

January 13

(Suna news agency website, Khartoum, in Arabic 13 Jan 11)

- The Foreign Affairs Ministry noted its concern after three Bulgarian pilots and one Sudanese national working for the World Food Programme in Darfur were abducted while involved in food aid distribution in the area. Khalid Musa, the ministry's spokesman, commented that the abduction occurred in Um Sholaya area near Murni, 75 kilometers southeast of Junaynah town, the capital of West Darfur State. Musa said that the government had immediately made efforts to put a plan in place and took measures to go after those responsible. He noted that the government was searching the entire region where the culprits are believed to be hiding. He added that the government sympathized with the families of those abducted and confirmed that the proper authorities were doing everything they could to track down the culprits and release the abductees as quickly as possible.

January 14

(Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 1500 GMT 14 Jan 11)

- According to state-owned television, President Omar al-Bashir said that the south was a burden on Sudan from the time of independence until now. During the inauguration of a new mosque, the president told followers of Shaykh Idris Wad al-Rabab that if the south secedes, Sudan will have a new beginning and a new society. The president noted that the south was separated from the rest of Sudan during the colonial period and said that the historical injustices imposed upon southerners were not to be blamed on the north. He said that claims that fighting in the south was the result of unjust treatment of southerners by northerners were false and attributed the situation to the colonists and said that the south separated when Britain established the Closed District Ordinance and closed the south.

January 16

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 0400 GMT 16 Jan 11)

- Vote counting for the Southern Sudan referendum will begin this morning at polling stations in the first step before the results are announced on January 31 (at the level of ten southern states) and then on February 14 (at the national level), both in Sudan and abroad. Kamal Ali Salih, a member of the National Referendum Commission, announced that 75 to 86 percent of eligible voters in South Sudan had voted. In the north, 55 percent had voted, and 91 percent had voted abroad. Prof Muhammad Ibrahim Chill, the referendum commission's chairman, said that voting was successful because the federal bodies, the southern government, the country's international partners and Sudanese citizens had cooperated. Dr. Su'ad Ibrahim Isa, the referendum commission's official spokesperson, said that intensive training had taken place for the technical group responsible for vote counting and that strict training had been conducted in coordination with the federal government and the southern government to ensure peace while the results were announced. George Maker Benjamin, the official responsible for the media at the SSRC, told the radio that an information center had been created in Juba in order to sort, count, allot and analyze the ballots coming from the polling stations in the ten states. He noted that strict security precautions had been taken in addition to the presence of local, regional and international observers who will follow up during this phase of the referendum.

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 1200 GMT 16 Jan 11)

- Gen Hashim Uthman al-Husayn, the director general of the police, confirmed that police records did not contain any criminal complaints related to the referendum process. He said that the police had implemented its plans for the referendum in an excellent fashion throughout the north. He attributed the notable reduction in criminal complaints to wide police presence in all areas. He said the police preserved security and stability and carried out its duties. He also reassured citizens that the police was ready to maintain peace, stability and security as the referendum votes were counted and the final results were announced. He noted the slogan "security is the duty of everyone", calling for cooperation from the police, citizens and civil society. He praised the media's role in spreading tranquility among the citizenry.

(Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 1300 GMT 16 Jan 11)

- The Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD's) referendum monitoring mission held a news conference at Al-Salam Rotana Hotel in Khartoum and presented its preliminary report on its observations of the referendum. At the news conference, Akobo Misbu, the head of the mission, praised the cooperation between the federal government and the southern government, which allowed for a smooth and simple phase of the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum. He praised the government for permitting the IGAD mission to take part in monitoring the referendum along with other international monitoring missions.

(Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 1900 GMT 16 Jan 11)

- Foreign Minister Ali Ahmad Karti talked about potential strategies for enhancing relations between Sudan and the U.S. During talks with Scott Gration, the U.S. special envoy to Sudan, Karti noted that the referendum revealed a spirit of trust in the UN, thus removing hindrances to the peace process in Sudan. Gration applauded the government for leading in the implementation in the CPA. Karti remarked that the meeting was positive and addressed peace with the south and the Darfur issue. He said it would help to change U.S. views from negative to positive and commented that the picture of Sudan was gradually changing. He said recent visits to Europe showed a commitment to looking into Sudan's foreign debt, reviewing sanctions against Sudan and improving bilateral relations.

(Sudan TV, Omdurman, in Arabic 1900 GMT 16 Jan 11)

- During his speech at the end of the cultural season for the General Union of Khartoum Students, Abd-al-Rahman al-Khidir, the governor of Khartoum State, announced that new arrangements would be made by the state to address the rise in commodity prices. This will include the initiation of free school meals and the distribution of health insurance cards to 30,000 students. The chairman of the General Union of Students said that such efforts would cover 60 percent of families of students in the state, representing 67 percent of students enrolled in higher education in Khartoum State.