



FLICKR-HELPAE

Perspectives from the Arab World

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Main issues during December 2009

- Upcoming elections
- International Peace Efforts
- Other issues

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A monthly selection of Arab official, journalistic and academic sources is compiled to give an overview of the main events, opinions and documents from the perspective of the Arab world.

Introduction

December was another month where Sudan was only a minor issue in the Arab media. At the beginning of the month, attention focused on the public referendum on the minarets ban in Switzerland and what the Arab news sites called the 'Islamophobia campaign'. The next focus was on the cancellation of Tzipi Livni's trip to Great Britain. The clashes between Yemeni (and Saudi Arabian) forces with Shia rebels were an important security issue; Sudan aligned with Saudi Arabia and Al Bashir visited the Kingdom. During the final week of December the aborted aeroplane terrorist attack in Detroit overshadowed other security concerns including Sudan's chronic problems.

The anti-government demonstrations that took place in the first part of the month are an example of the potential (and real) dangers that are present in the Sudanese political situation.

During the first two weeks of March, an international Darfur donors' conference will be held in Sharm Al Sheikh. Egypt and Turkey will be the co-chairs of this event, which shows Turkey's increasing role in Islamic regional issues. Egypt has become the most important Sudanese ally in the diplomatic field: it not only represented the Sudanese position in France regarding the France–Africa Summit but also diplomatically opposed the South secession.

Despite the continuing problems and the violence in Darfur, the electoral process is going ahead and it seems that during 2010 the planned elections will take place. However, this will not mean an end to the problems, but rather a new phase in the political situation.



FLICKR-RADIO NEDERLAND WERELDOMROEP

Methodology

The main objective of this newsletter is to bridge the language gap between the Arab media and Western audiences. In order to obtain a complete picture of the information published in Arabic, five different sources have been analysed: the webpages of regional organisations, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, official news agencies, Arab think tanks and, finally, Arabic newspapers¹.

Our intention was not to cover every article published regarding Sudan and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, but to consider news items, editorials and opinion articles that reflect the main trends in the Arab media's perception of the Sudanese issue.

(1) See the list of sources monitored at the end of this newsletter.

Trends

- It seems that the United States of America lost its interest in Sudan as terrorism again became the main security concern in Washington.
- The governments of European Union member states maintain their position by backing the ICC arrest warrant decision without having a concrete policy.

- The approval of the referendum law by the Sudanese National Assembly and the continuation of the voter's registrations show that the process is moving forward.
- Violence is still a problem (a Sudanese MP and two UNAMID peacekeepers were killed during December), and this security issue should not be overlooked because of improvements in the political situation.

December 2009 Arabic News Report

1. Upcoming Elections

Sudan: The election dilemma

According to the article's author, Haidar Ibrahim Ali, 'We missed precious time and today the circumstances and the sensitivity of the situation is delicate. It needs a degree of seriousness and responsibility, those qualities that missed all the parties. There is no justification to explain why we lost nearly five years'.

Date: 22 December 2009

Source: Al Arabiya (Arabic)

<http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/12/22/94969.html>

Interview with the Head of the Sudanese Democratic Unionist Party Muhammad Othman Al Mirghani

His party fully supports the electoral process and he believes that the time has come for comprehensive national reconciliation led by President Al Bashir. As the Sudanese President, it is his responsibility to unite the different political forces and the Sudanese population as a whole. According to Al Mirghani the peace process should continue but 'bilateralism' (the National Congress and the SPLM) will not be able to face isolation from the political forces.

Date: 10 December 2009

Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11335&article=547923&search=&state=true>

Interview with the Secretary General of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, Pagan Amum

According to Mr Amum, the ruling National Congress Party is trying to replicate the past crisis and return to the previous state of war. The opposition parties that met at the Juba Summit decided to begin a public movement in order to ensure the implementation of the remaining points of the Naivasha agreement without any delay, particularly the right of self-determination for the people of southern Sudan, the Abyei referendum and the popular consultation for South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Date: 05 December 2009

Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11330&article=547194&search=&state=true>



Interview with the Head of the Sudanese National Ummah Party, Sadiq Al Mahdi

The politician said that his party will support the electoral process because elections are 'the only way to ensure a peaceful transition of power'. Even though they have been

subject to many irregularities, these problems will be overcome with everybody's cooperation. According to Al Mahdi, 'The United States envoy is not familiar with the situation and his role is based on good intentions and on the carrot and stick policy'.

Date: 02 December 2009

Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11327&article=546768&search=&state=true>

2. International Peace Efforts



African Union Security Council Statement

The members of the Security Council agreed with the report that the causes and consequences of the conflict in Darfur have yet to be addressed. They reiterated their support for the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), and for the work of the United Nations-African Union Joint Chief Mediator, Djibril Bassolé, to promote a lasting political settlement for Darfur. They reiterated their call for all parties that have not yet done so to fully commit to and participate in peace talks.

Date: 21 December 2009

Source: African Union Website (Arabic/English/French)

<http://www.africa-union.org/root/ar/index>

Egypt welcomes the decision of the Sudanese Parliament to approve the referendum law for south Sudan

The Spokesman of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted the importance of the continuation of the dialogue between the ruling sectors on the remaining issues. He

added that Egypt will continue its efforts aiming at creating a positive environment to deal with the situation in Sudan after the referendum.

Date: 29 December 2009

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (Arabic)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/referendum.htm

Arab League welcomes Sudanese-Chadian developments

The secretariat of the League of Arab States welcomed the positive developments in Sudanese-Chadian relations and the bilateral declaration made after the visit by Chadian Foreign Minister Mr Moussa Fakie to Sudan, aimed at resuming full diplomatic relations.

Date: 27 December 2009

Source: Arab League Website (Arabic)

http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/news_details_ar.jsp?art_id=1832

Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs and Djibril Bassole meeting

The joint mediator of the African Union and United Nations Djibril Bassole and the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the advisor to the Sudanese President, Dr Ghazi Salahuddin, who is also in charge of the Darfur file, and his accompanying delegation. Talks dealt with the arrangements underway to hold meetings in Doha according to recent declarations.

Date: 27 December 2009

Source: Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (Arabic)

<http://www.mofa.gov.qa/newsPage.cfm?newsid=12399>

Egypt welcomes the agreement between the governing partners in Sudan

Egypt welcomes the agreement announced on December 13 2009 between the two governing partners in Sudan, SPLM and NCP. Aboul Gheit described the agreement as 'an important decision on the right track'. Egypt hopes the governing partners would resume positive dialogue regarding pending issues in the near future. Egypt is preparing the opening of the Alexandria University's branch in Tونغ, Kadugli state.

Date: 15 December 2009

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (Arabic)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/15122009Sudan.htm

Political consultations between Egypt and Europe

An Egyptian delegation including the Assistant Minister for African Affairs and the Director of the Sudan Department visited Brussels. The main objective of the visit was to hold political and technical consultations on the developments in the Middle East, Sudan, Somalia, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. During the meeting they discussed ways to deepen trilateral cooperation (Egyptian, European and African) in some African countries.

Date: 12 December 2009

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website (Arabic)

http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/ar-EG/MFA_News/Press_Releases/great-lakes12122009.htm

'Sudan: The country of a million crises'

According to Tariq Alhomayed, 'The south is on the path to secession, some people even say that secession has already taken place and has not been announced. Darfur is in crisis and there is also the conflict within the ruling regime itself. We say that the crises in Sudan have begun to give birth to other crises, and the main reason for this is the bad management by the Sudanese government'.

Date: 09/DECEMBER/2009

Source: Al Arabiya (Arabic)

<http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/12/09/93614.html>

3. Other Issues

The coming Arab world

Ezzedine Choukri Fishere says that current situation in the Arab world shows that political Islam will continue to grow. Besides that, minorities-related conflicts should be expected to emerge or intensify in Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Date: 27 December 2009

Source: Al Ahram Weekly On Line (English)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2010/979/sc242.htm>

Egypt cancels hosting the 25th Africa-France Summit

During President Mubarak's official trip to France it was announced that the Egyptian government had decided not to host the next France-Africa Summit as planned, due to the French position regarding Sudanese President Al Bashir.

Paris does not want to invite him, whereas Cairo does.

Date: 15 December 2009

Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11340&article=548615&search=&state=true>

Ministerial session on Organization of the Islamic Conference Dakar-Port Sudan railways line project

Ministers and Heads of Delegation from ten countries participated in the First Ministerial Meeting on the OIC Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Line Project in Khartoum on 10 December 2009. President Al Bashir underscored the importance of the Project in promoting peace, security and stability within the OIC Member States and the international community at large. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a roadmap and a timeline for the implementation of the project.

Date: 10 December 2009

Source: Organization of the Islamic Conference Website (Arabic)

http://www.oic-oci.org/topic_detail.asp?t_id=3079&ref=1326&lan=ar

According to the ICC, Sudanese who deny Darfur crimes may be charged

Luis Moreno Ocampo said that those officials who deny or dissimilate those crimes will have to face criminal responsibility because there is no place for due obedience excuses. The Sudanese ambassador to United Nations replied saying that this position is an example of 'bankruptcy'.

Date: 04 December 2009

Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11331&article=547320&search=&state=true>

■ Chronology - December 2009

31 December

- The Sudanese National Assembly endorsed the People's Consultation Act for the residents of South Kordofan and the Blue Nile State.

30 December

- The Sudanese National Assembly adopted the referendum law.
- Al Bashir made an official visit to Saudi Arabia.

29 December

- Ethiopia-Sudan border commission meeting.

28 December

- Sudan and Chad agree to end hostilities

27 December

- Egypt reiterates its opposition to South Sudan secession.

22 December

- Sudan considers joining OPEC.

21 December

- Sierra Leone peacekeepers join UNAMID forces.

18 December

- The United Nations Development Programme will help to fund the next Sudanese elections.

15 December

- US special envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration visits Sudan.

14 December

- The chairman of the African Union level panel on Darfur (AUPD) Thabo Mbeki visited Sudan.

13 December

- Two UNAMID staff members were released by Darfur hostage takers.

12 December

- Tageeddin Ahmed Al-Helu a National Congress Party MP was killed by a group of gunmen.

11 December

- Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the autonomous Government of Southern Sudan, meets President Al Bashir.

09 December

- Clashes on the streets of Khartoum

06 December

- Sudanese authorities arrested the SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum and his deputy Yassir Arman.

05 December

- Two Rwandan UNAMID peacekeepers were killed in North Darfur.

04 December

- The Russian special envoy to Sudan, Mikhail Margelov, visits Sudan.

02 December

- Darfur rebel groups meeting in Libya.

01 December

- The Joint Chief Mediator for the Darfur peace process, Djibrill Bassole, briefed the United Nations Security Council.

■ Annex

2009 Report on Human Rights in the Arab World: Bastion of Impunity, Mirage of Reform.

Date: 08 December 2009

Source: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies Website

<http://www.cihrs.org/Images/ArticleFiles/Original/482.pdf> (Arabic)

<http://www.cihrs.org/Images/ArticleFiles/Original/485.pdf> (English)

■ List of Sources

Regional organisations web pages

Arab League	http://www.arableagueonline.org/
African Union	http://www.africa-union.org/
Organization of the Islamic Conference	http://www.oic-oci.org/
Gulf Cooperation Council	http://www.gcc-sg.org/

Ministries of Foreign Affairs web pages

Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mofa.gov.qa
Saudi Arabia - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mofa.gov.sa/
Libya - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.foreign.gov.ly/
Egypt - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mfa.gov.eg/
Sudan - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	http://www.mfa.gov.sd/

News agencies

Al Jazeera	http://www.aljazeera.net/
Al Arabiya	http://www.alarabiya.net/
Qatar News Agency	http://www.qnaol.net/
Saudi Press Agency	http://www.spa.gov.sa/
Emirates News Agency-WAM	http://www.wam.org.ae/
Jamahiriya News Agency	http://www.jananews.ly/
Middle East News Agency (MENA)	http://www.mena.org.eg/
Sudan News Agency	http://www.sunas-sd.net/
Radio Dabanga	http://www.radiodabanga.org/

Arab think tanks and information web pages

To understand Darfur	http://ifhamdarfur.net/
Arab Program on Human Rights	http://www.aphra.org/pcd/
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information	http://www.anhri.net/
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies	http://www.cihrs.org/
Al Academy for Graduate Studies	http://www.alacademia.edu.ly/

Newspapers

Ash sharq al awsat	http://www.asharqalawsat.com/
Al Hayat	http://www.alhayat.com/
As Sahafa	http://www.alsahafa.sd/
Sudan Tribune	http://www.sudantribune.com/
Al Ahram	http://www.ahram.org.eg/
Al Watan Al Libi	http://www.alwatan-libya.com/
Tripoli Post	http://www.tripolipost.com/