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Perspectives from the Arab World

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Main issues during November 2009

- Darfur humanitarian situation
- Upcoming elections
- International efforts to bring peace to Darfur

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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

Clashes between Yemeni and Saudi forces and insurgents on the border between those two countries were the Arab countries' main security concern during November. As in other issues, the Iranian influence, real or perceived, was also present, and it was a point of concern when the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the 5+1 Group reached a stalemate.

Besides that, the Egypti–Algeria football game played in Sudan generated a dispute, which had a strong presence in the Arab media. Sudan was once again almost absent from the Arab security agenda. The consequences of the football game between the two North African countries received more attention than the conflict in Sudan. There could also be a negative impact on relations between Sudan and Egypt because of this problem mixing football and national pride.

While the security situation is far from being stabilised, the process to hold the first presidential and parliamentary elections in 24 years, in accordance with the terms of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), has begun. The upcoming April 2010 elections are facing many problems, not only due to the context in which they will be held but also due to the process itself (registration of voters, access to the media, etc). At the same time, the referendum in the South (to be held in 2011) is adding new concerns since the threat of secession is growing. This would add new problems to the already complicated situation.

There are further complications due to the fact that both the Sudanese government and the main rebel force in Darfur (Justice and Equality Movement) criticised the report of the African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD), headed by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, for recommending a hybrid court to try Darfur war crimes suspects. As neither the 'international approach' (i.e. ICC efforts) nor the

'regional approach' (AU proposal) are accepted by the Sudanese stakeholders, it remains to be seen whether a solution to this important issue can be found. The fact is that the Sudanese government took advance of the division of the international community over this issue.

The main event within the context of the regional efforts for peace was the ceremonial launch of the Darfur Civil Society Inaugural Conference in Doha on November 16–19, which covered issues like land and natural resources; power sharing; the role of civil society in the peace process; and other general issues. Not all stakeholders were present.

At the international level, the Organization of the Islamic Conference held its summit in Istanbul on November 8 and 9, but al-Bashir declined to attend despite Turkish President Abdula Gül's formal invitation to attend. His reason was the Conference's publicly announced conviction of the fact that 'a Muslim could never commit genocide'.

Even if not present in the Arab media, other relevant events regarding the situation in Darfur during November 2009 refer to the fact that the UN denounced Sudan violating the arms embargo with help of Iranian private companies. Meanwhile, Al-Bahir's assessor Ghazi Salahuddin declared that the Government is working towards finding a peaceful settlement of the Darfuri conflict intensifying political efforts to ease the relations with Chad.



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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

- The Sudanese government rejected the report issued by the AUDP regarding a solution to the ICC indictment. If the ICC option is not acceptable to the African countries and their own option is not acceptable to Sudan it is not clear what should be done.
- The Peace Process is in a stalemate.

- While the process that will lead to the upcoming April 2010 elections has begun, many problems are still unsolved and there are gaps that must be filled. Otherwise the elections will be part of a new problem; not part of the solution.
- A secession of the South is a possible consequence of the 2011 referendum that should be considered. The Arab media doesn't portray this option as a positive solution.

November 2009 Arabic News Report

1. Darfur humanitarian situation

The Justice and Equality Democratic Movement refuses UNAMID departure from Darfur

In order to protect the hopes and aspirations of the Darfuri people, the Justice and Equality Movement refuses to accept that UNAMID forces leave the region. JEM believes that human rights violations and genocide are still ongoing in Darfur and if UNAMID leaves Darfur it will mean the declaration of a new war on our people by the Sudanese government.

Date: 27/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: To Understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://www.ifhamdarfur.net/node/1346>

Sudan Liberation Movement celebrates the safety of Mohammad Al Nour

According to the SLM, its leader Haidar Mohammad Al Nour is safe and in good health. The SLM considers this good news that reinforces its desire to continue working in this field to improve the situation of the Sudanese people. They also thanked all those who have helped them.

Date: 19/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: To Understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://www.ifhamdarfur.net/node/1327>

Human rights activists go to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Human Rights activists presented cases against the Sudanese government at the African Commission on the

detention of three members of these organizations during last year. Those detentions were part of a campaign of the Sudanese security authorities to control civil society organisations.

Date: 15/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: To Understand Darfur (Arabic)

<http://www.ifhamdarfur.net/node/1302>

Turkey: Between Sudan and the EU

Turkish President Abdullah Gul accused the European Union of 'interfering' after the EU asked Ankara to reconsider a decision to invite indicted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to the Organization of the Islamic Conference summit in Turkey. Ankara has not ratified the Rome Statute that established the ICC, but it is under pressure to do so to move closer to EU standards.

Date: 06/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: Asharq Al-Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issue=11302&article=543309&search=&state=true>



2. Upcoming elections

According to Al Mahdi, al-Bashir's Reelection Means Secession of South

Al Sadiq Al Mahdi, leader of Sudan's opposition Ummah Party and former prime minister, said that the reelection of the President Omar al-Bashir (Sudanese National Congress Party – NCP) in the elections scheduled for next April will mean the secession of south Sudan. According to Al Mahdi, 'NCP would carry the hostile spirit in its confrontation with the SPLM into the future and the situation in Darfur would deteriorate further'.

Date: 13/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: As Sharq Al Awsat (Arabic)

<http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11308&article=544125&search=&state=true>

We certainly hope that the southerners would opt for unity. And on our side, we will keep working towards this goal for a number of reasons. One is that the Naivasha Agreement makes it our duty to make unity the primary option. Another is that we are convinced that secession would be as harmful to the south as it is to the north, and bad news for the entire region. Secession will not lead to security and stability between north and south, but will be a regional precedent and the start of a period of tensions and disturbances.

Date: 05-11/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: Al Ahram Weekly (English)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/971/re1.htm>

Federalism and Oil: the case of Sudan and Iraq

The experience of federalism in both Sudan and Iraq is running into great difficulties, especially concerning the oil industry and the distribution of oil revenues. In Sudan, Global Witness, an NGO, issued a report at the end of September that addressed the problems of the distribution of oil revenues between the North and the South. There is a link between the idea of federalism and the possibility of secession, which raises questions regarding the relation between this and oil.

Date: 08/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: Al Hayat (Arabic)

<http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/74101>

3. International efforts to the peace process in Sudan

"My Nation Does Not Make Us Proud" by Jihad Al Khazen

According to this columnist Iran has interests in many Middle Eastern countries, he does not intend to criticize Iran's activity but the impotence of Arab states. Iran has an alliance with Syria, it sponsors Hizbullah, and was behind a group of Hizbullah operatives, Egyptians and Palestinians who tried to contact Shiite groups in Morocco, Egypt and Sudan.

Date: 30/NOVEMBER/2009

Source: Al Hayat (Arabic)

<http://international.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/81590>

The screenshot shows the Al-Ahram Weekly website interface. At the top, it displays the date '5 - 11 November 2009', issue number '971', and region. Below the header, there are navigation links for 'Recommend', 'Comment', and 'Printer-friendly'. The main article is titled 'Whither Sudan?' and is by Asma El-Husseini and El-Azab El-Tayeb. The article text discusses the Sudanese Presidential Adviser Mustafa Othman Ismail's views on the 2011 referendum. A photo of Mustafa Othman Ismail is included. A sidebar on the right contains a list of categories: Front Page, Egypt, Region, Focus, Economy, International, Opinion, Press review, Culture, Entertainment, Features, Living, Sports, Cartoons, People, Listings, BOOKS, TRAVEL, and Site map.

Whither Sudan?

Al Ahram Weekly interviewed Sudanese Presidential Adviser Mustafa Othman Ismail about the possible secession in the south of country.

Are you prepared in the north to accept the option of secession without fuss?

■ Chronology - November 2009

27 November

- General Salva Kiir Mayardit urges Uganda to lead recognition of independent South Sudan

26 November

- African Union's Peace and Security Council delegation visits Southern Sudan

25 November

- Pro-Sudanese government militias attacked two villages in North Darfur

24 November

- UN report accuses Sudan of intimidating Darfur peacekeepers

23 November

- Sudan announces a delay to upcoming elections

22 November

- According to General Kiir, Sudan's elections will be held in April 2010

20 November

- China and Sudan sign new oil and gas cooperation agreements

19 November

- Darfur mediation delays talks between government and rebels

18 November

- Forty-seven people were killed in ethnic clashes in south Sudan's Lakes state region

17 November

- Consultative meeting of the Darfurian civil society in Qatar

16 November

- The Tripartite Mechanism (AU, UN and the Government of Sudan) meeting highlights concern on security of Darfur peacekeepers

15 November

- South-South Dialogue Conference in Khartoum

14 November

- Sudanese delegation visits Washington to discuss lifting of sanctions

10 November

- UNAMID accuses Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) of obstructing its work.

09 November

- The Sudanese government rejects the UN panel of experts report that monitor the compliance with UN Security Council resolutions relating to the Darfur region.

05 November

- UN-AU mediator meets SLM rebel chief in France

04 November

- US special envoy meets with Sudanese officials

02 November

- Sudan accuse ICC prosecutor of standing behind AU hybrid court proposal

01 November

- Sudan reiterates rejection of Darfur hybrid courts

■ Annex

Doha Declaration

Visions and Recommendations of Civil Society on Important Issues and Priorities that must be included in the terms of negotiations to achieve and build just and sustainable peace in Darfur, and the role of civil society in all stages of the peace process

Full Unofficial English translation:

<http://www.darfurinfo.org/doha-english-rough.pdf>

Arab Version:

<http://www.darfurinfo.org/doha-arabic.doc>

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/