Introduction

The elections in Iraq and the Arab League Summit in Libya were the most important issues in the Arab media during this month. Besides the OIC International Donors’ Conference held in Cairo, the situation in Sudan and the upcoming elections do not seem to be a matter of great concern in the international Arab political agenda as reflected by the media.

Both the signing of the bilateral Framework Agreement between the Sudanese government and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Donors’ Conference in Cairo seem to show that the diplomatic channel is being led by Qatar, while the economic and development channel is in principle led by Egypt; although no great economic contributions have come from Egypt itself.

Following the general trends in the Arab media this month, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the African Union (AU) are framing
the Sudanese situation as a reconstruction problem, while Western countries generally consider that the pending ICC issues regarding President al-Bashir’s arrest warrant must be resolved as soon as possible. These different approaches are seen as contradictory rather than complementary by many international actors, such as the African Union. Once again, US diplomacy and its role in assisting Sudan’s path towards elections and (de)stabilization is almost absent in the Arab Media. However it is a key topic in the protests of Sudanese civil society organisations and human rights activists throughout the region, who complain about the disparity between President Obama’s general approach to African problems and the attitude of his Special Envoy to Sudan Major Scott Gration, who is really interested in pushing for the vote in April, even though all opposition parties have decided to withdraw from the Presidential elections due to the lack of neutrality, credibility and freedom; and international observers are being intimidated.

The presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections, although included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement roadmap of 2005 to seal peace between North and South Sudan, are far from being a solution to the conflict in Darfur. On the contrary, as they are conceived now, they could threaten the temporary ceasefire in Darfur due to the exclusion of more than 50% of the Darfuri citizens from the census and voter registrations, and due to the inherent goal of these elections to legitimise the National Congress Party (NCP) in power in the eyes of the international community.

■ 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 newspapers.

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.

■ Trends

- Even though the electoral schedule will be kept as it was originally planned, there are still many doubts about the elections, and their possible negative consequences for the country.
- The agreements reached between the Sudanese government, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were mainly facilitated by the Qatari mediation and show that Qatar has become the major diplomatic actor in the region.
- The Donors’ Conference held in Cairo under Egyptian and Turkish chairmanship achieved an international commitment to help Sudan, but the question remains as to whether this humanitarian help will arrive or whether it will be merely a rhetorical decision.
- The Arab states continue to be concerned about the possible consequences of the secession of the South and the regional implications of this decision. This is not only about Sudan, it is about regional security.

(1) See the list of sources monitored at the end of this newsletter.
1. International support to the Peace Process in Sudan

Interview with Ban Ki Moon

According to the UN Secretary General, ‘the United Nations has taken the political situation in Sudan this year and next year as a highest priority’. On the upcoming elections, Ban Ki Moon said that the postponement or decision to proceed as planned is a Sudanese matter. He also confirmed that he has not planned to meet Al Bashir during the Arab League Summit in Libya.

Date: 26 March 2010
Source: Al Hayat website (Arabic)
http://www.daralhayat.com/internationalarticle/123347

OIC Secretary General underlines the importance of international support for Darfur

According to the OIC official, all the important and positive developments that are taking place in Darfur will not be complete unless they are complemented by international support. He said that not only governments, but also civil organisations and the private sector will be encouraged to participate in the reconstruction process.

Date: 21 March 2010
Source: Organization of the Islamic Conference website (Arabic)
http://www.oic-oci.org/topic_detail.asp?t_id=3532&ref=1508&lan=ar

OIC Secretary General welcomes the signing of the Framework Agreement between the Sudanese government and the Liberation and Justice Movement

The Secretary General congratulated the Liberation and Justice Movement for joining the Doha peace process on Darfur. He also stated that the Qatari support was indispensable in the whole process and it shows that diplomacy is the best way to solve conflicts.

Date: 20 March 2010
Source: Organization of the Islamic Conference website (Arabic)
http://www.oic-oci.org/topic_detail.asp?t_id=3524&ref=1505&lan=ar

Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General on the agreement between Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement

The GCC official said that this agreement is a positive step towards achieving permanent peace in Darfur. It is an example of the positive role the Qatari diplomacy has played regarding regional issues, just as it did in the Lebanese crisis and the Sudanese-Eritrean conflict.

Date: 18 March 2010
Source: Gulf Cooperation Council website (Arabic)

2. Upcoming elections

Sudan electoral code of conduct

The Sudanese government and different political parties have signed an electoral code of conduct which is based on common principles for free and fair elections. The signing is considered a step towards a peaceful electoral process.

Date: 16 March 2010
Source: African Union website (Arabic and English)
Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sudanese Vice-President press conference

Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al Thani expressed the Qatari support for the peace process in Darfur after the signing of the accord between the Sudanese government and the JEM group. The Qatari official said that a high level of coordination must be achieved between all the actors involved in this peace process.

Date: 18 March 2010
Source: Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (Arabic)
http://www.mofa.gov.qa/newspage.cfm?newsid=13809

‘Sudan: Elections or no elections’

Whether the elections will be held or not is the issue currently controlling the Sudanese political arena. Postponing the elections seems unlikely and even useless, mainly because there are three key players that do not wish to postpone. From the ruling party’s point of view, this election will bring a ‘democratic legitimacy’ to Sudan before next year’s election in the South.

Date: 31 March 2010
Source: Al Arabiya website (Arabic)
http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2010/03/31/104526.html

Joseph Lagu on Sudan

According to the former Sudanese vice president, ‘if southerners decide on separation then I will support them, because this is closer to reality’. According to Lagu, Sudan must return to the division into nine provinces and a Federal government as it was during English colonial rule. The Parliament must be elected in a democratic manner and the president should be chosen from the party who holds the parliamentary majority. Only strong ministers of the nine territories will prevent the president from becoming a dictatorial ruler.

Date: 29 March 2010
Source: Ash Sharq Al Awsat website (Arabic)

Moreno Ocampo on Sudanese elections

On the topic of monitoring Sudan’s elections, Luis Moreno Ocampo, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, commented that: ‘It’s like monitoring a Hitler election. It’s a huge challenge’. Ocampo also said that it was the duty of the Sudanese government in the first place to arrest Bashir.

Date: 23 March 2010
Source: Al Arabiya website (Arabic)
http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/03/23/103855.html

Sudan before a fateful juncture

Mohamad Samak argues that the next elections will decide whether Sudan will remain one country or whether it will divide into several countries. On the regional level, the greatest danger is the secession of the south, which will have direct repercussions on the countries of Central and Eastern Africa.

Date: 22 March 2010
Source: Al Arabiya website (Arabic)
http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2010/03/22/103755.html

‘If Al Bashir steps down from the presidency many problems will be avoided’

According to Yussuf Koda, the head of the Islamic Wasat Party, Al Bashir’s resignation would bring great benefits to Sudan. It would avoid sanctions and pressures from abroad and also the threat of many European countries to withdraw ambassadors if Al Bashir remains in power.

Date: 19 March 2010
Source: Al Arabiya website (English)
http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/03/19/103455.html

3. Other issues

Egyptian-Sudanese Fund for agricultural investment

A billion dollar fund was established between Egypt and Sudan to develop the agriculture sector. Two companies,
one from each country, will manage this initiative. According to the Sudanese Vice President, this fund is important because it will help to generate an appropriate environment for investment in the country.

Date: 30 March 2010
Source: Al Hayat website (Arabic)
http://international.daralhayat.com/international/article/124675

Arab organisations send an open letter to the Arab League

More than 100 Arab organisations sent an open letter to the Secretary General of the Arab League asking for a strong and constructive leadership of this regional organisation regarding the Sudan conflict. They pointed out that stability in this African country has a great importance for the whole region.

Date: 23 March 2010
Source: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies website (Arabic)
http://www.cihrs.org/Arabic/NewsSystem/Articles/2586.aspx

France invites Sudan, not Bashir, to summit

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has asked Sudan to take part in the next Franco-African summit, to be held in France during May. However he has made it clear that Sudanese President Al Bashir should not attend the meeting.

Date: 22 March 2010
Source: Al Jazeera website (Arabic)
http://aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/133008E8-0B25-47F5-89EA-D9FF1BB089AC.htm?wbc_purpose=%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%2F%2F%2F%2F

‘I was Sudanese’

The author of this article discusses his experiences as a Sudanese citizen over the last few decades. He describes the influence of national political developments on his life and the life of his generation, in particular the exasperation and disappointment with politics and the different governments in Sudan.

Date: 15 March 2010
Source: Al Arabiya website (Arabic)
http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2010/03/15/103059.html

Chronology - March 2010

31 March
• UNAMID Joint Special Representative meets with the leader of the Sudan Liberation Army Abdul Wahid in Paris

25 March
• Sudan deported 85 Nigerian citizens

24 March
• UNAMID chief visits Djibouti

23 March
• Bashir threatens to expel poll observers

20 March
• UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Ibrahim Gambari, meets in Paris with French officials and the head of the Sudanese Liberation Army

18 March
• Liberation and Justice Movement and the Sudanese government sign a peace accord

14 March
• Two French aid workers were freed in Darfur

5 March
• President Al Bashir visits Eritrea

2 March
• African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan meeting in Juba

1 March
• Clashes between Sudanese forces and rebels in Darfur

Annexes

Final Communiqué: The International Donors’ Conference on Development and Reconstruction of Darfur

Source: Organization of the Islamic Conference website (English and Arabic)
# List of sources

## Regional Organisations’ web pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Ministries of Foreign Affairs’ web pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## News agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Jazeera</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aljazeera.net/">http://www.aljazeera.net/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East News Agency (MENA)</td>
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## Arab think tanks and information web pages

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To understand Darfur</td>
<td><a href="http://ifhamdarfur.net/">http://ifhamdarfur.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Program on Human Rights</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aphra.org/pcd/">http://www.aphra.org/pcd/</a></td>
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## Newspapers

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<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Al Ahram</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ahram.org.eg/">http://www.ahram.org.eg/</a></td>
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