

Sudan's NCP welcomes Eritrean initiative with SPLM-N rebels

Saturday 1 September 2012

August 31, 2012 (KHARTOUM) - Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) said Friday that Eritrea has launched an initiative to bridge the gaps between the Khartoum government and senior members of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) who operate in Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

Badr El-Din Ahmed Ibrahim, NCP spokesperson, did not elaborate on the capacity of those rebels who described as "parts of the SPLM-N inside the Sudan", but the announcement is the first confirmation of an Eritrean initiative in this regard.

The local press raised the issue of the Eritrean mediation on 18 August saying Sudan's defence minister Abdel Rahim Hussein was in Asmara to discuss this initiative with the Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki. The SPLM-N chairman Malik Agar and the secretary general Yasir Arman reportedly had been there before him.

But the Abdel-Rahim denied the report saying he just briefed Afewerki about the talks in Addis Ababa without elaboration.

Badr El-Din told the Sudan Media Centre (SMC), a news service sponsored by the Sudan's intelligence and security agency, that his party welcomes the Eritrean initiative pointing out that the Eritrean government should take into account the positions of Sudanese government on the different issues.

He said his party has a number of demands like changing the name of SPLM-N, disarmament of rebel combatants and changing the leadership of their negotiating team, alluding to Yasir Arman who is a particularly disliked figure among the NCP.

The NCP official did explain the links between the Eritrean efforts and the talks held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia mediated by the Africa Union.

Sudan last month said it accepted the stipulations of United Nations Security Council resolution 2046 which says that the talks should be based on a framework agreement signed by the Sudanese government and the SPLM-N in June 2011, but rejected by the Sudanese president the next month.

The SPLM-N says they refuse talks with Khartoum on issues related to their regions (Blue Nile and South Kordofan) and demand to extend the talks to include Darfur and other issues.

The rebel group demands, further, to release its members detained by the Sudanese authorities and to reinstate its chairman, Malik Agar to his former position of Blue Nile Governor. Agar, who was elected in April 2010 was replaced after fighting broke out between SPLM-N soldiers loyal to Agar and the Sudan Armed Forces a year ago.

(ST)