

Sudanese UNAMID staff go on strike demanding to be paid in US dollars

Tuesday 4 September 2012

September 3, 2012 (KHARTOUM) - Sudanese staff working for the African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) will stage a one-day strike on Wednesday, demanding to be paid in US dollars.

The move, which will include UNAMID workers in Khartoum, Darfur and Port Sudan, is motivated by the country's high inflation, and the fall of the Sudanese pound (SDG) following the austerity measures implemented to reduce Sudan's budget deficit.

When South Sudan seceded last year it took with it 75% of country's oil. For six years South Sudan's oil was shared 50:50 between north and south but no arrangement was reached before South Sudan's independence. In January South Sudan stopped production as part of the ensuing dispute over oil transit fees, depriving Khartoum of further income it already had budgeted for.

UNAMID national staff believe that their salaries, which are budgeted in dollars should be paid in dollars like the international staff as there is an important difference between the rates of the black market (6 SDG for \$1) and the official rates (4 SDG for \$1).

In a letter they submitted to the Mission, the staffers said despite the low annual increase their salaries do not cope with the rapidly rising cost of living and the economic conditions in the country.

Khalil Ismail, a representative of local staff told Ashoroq TV, that the strike was decided in a meeting held in El-Fasher on Monday. He added that Wednesday 5 September will be the first day adding that next week they will stop working on Monday and Tuesday.

The meeting also decided to go on strike in the third and fourth weeks of September if the Mission does not respond positively to their demand.

The UNAMID, which is the largest international operation in the world, hires some 2,954 local civilian staff.

Local staffers have always felt the financial discrimination between them and their international colleagues but it was the economic crisis in Sudan and South Sudan pushed the local employees into withdrawing their labour in protest.

in August, South Sudanese working with the UN Mission in South Sudan went on strike asking to be paid in US dollars rather than South Sudanese Pounds, which have decreased in value due to high inflation since the turn of the year.

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