

UNAMID's local staff threaten to repeat their strike over the coming weeks

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September 5, 2012 (KHARTOUM) - The local employees of the hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) went on strike demanding to be paid in US dollars instead of the Sudanese pound.

Wednesday's walkout will be repeated next week over two days, and in the third week the strike will be conducted over five working days, if their demand is not heard by the United Nations, the staff said Wednesday.

"The strike was the last resort after disregard and deliberate procrastination to address issues relating to the welfare of the national staff," said deputy head of the union of UNAMID Sudanese staff, Ismail El Tag Mohamed Zain in statements he sent to *Sudan Tribune*.

Sudan is witnessing a severe economic crisis since the loss of oil revenues after the independence of South Sudan in July 2011. The lack of hard currency led the government to remove fuel and commodity subsidies.

In a bid to control the rampant inflation and to stop the fall of the Sudanese pound, the government devaluated the national currency but the US dollar continues to rise on the black market, which is now an important supplier of hard currency needed to import goods.

Zain said that the federation of local staff of the United Nations agencies in Sudan might join their strike as they decided to support the "legitimate demands" of UNAMID local workers.

According to the to the United Nations staff rules and regulations, the wages of the local staff are paid in local currency even if they are expressed in US dollars.

The world's largest UN peacekeeping mission has not yet reacted to the demand of the Sudanese workers.

Khalil Ismail Tkras, who chairs the union of UNAMID's Sudanese staff, said the hybrid mission continues to calculate their salaries with the old official rate of one US dollar to 2.88 Sudanese pounds (SDG), while the Bank of Sudan raised it to 4.40 SDG.

He also said, in statements reported by the official SUNA, that the mission explained its rejection to pay their salaries in US dollars by the opposition of the Sudanese government. But he said the government did not intervene in the issue.

He further pointed out that a team of the UN civil service commission recommended to increase their wage after a recent salary survey conducted in Darfur but the organization ignored the this recommendation.

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