



MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

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Highlights

'South Sudan soldiers ransacked UN stores'

Agence France-Presse Juba, 12/05/13 - The uniformed men of the (South) Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) raided UN stores in Pibor town in troubled state of Jonglei late on Saturday and Sunday, AFP reported on Sunday.

They also looted a hospital and premises of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and "flattened" premises of the Italian humanitarian aid organization INTERSOS.

"The SPLA (army) went to INTERSOS and looted things there and then went to the World Food Programme and looted," said Beko Konyi, the coordinator for the state-run Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in Pibor.

An eyewitness working for MSF said that, "All the items from MSF are looted, everything, drugs and all the assets, and again INTERSOS."

"MSF is deeply concerned about reports we are receiving that our health center in Pibor town has been looted today," said Vikki Stienen, the MSF head of mission in South Sudan, adding, "We suspended medical activities in Pibor town on April 19 as the security situation had made it impossible to provide impartial medical care there."

He stated that the population of Pibor relied almost entirely on MSF for medical services before the suspension.

"We know that the consequences for the population of the loss of access to healthcare are devastating," he noted.

Many international aid workers left Pibor on Friday over concerns of possible attacks. South Sudanese military spokesman Philip Aguer said he did not have any knowledge of the attacks.

"Why would they go and do that? I doubt these are SPLA soldiers. These may be rebels," he said.

South Sudanese soldiers loot aid

Agence France-Presse South Sudan, 13/05/13 - South Sudanese soldiers have looted UN stores and charities in troubled Jonglei state where the government has been battling rebels for a year, humanitarian sources told an international news agency on Sunday.

They said uniformed men ransacked and looted a hospital and premises of French aid agency Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

The men also "flattened" premises of the Italian aid agency INTERSOS and raided UN stores in Pibor town late on Saturday and Sunday, the sources said.

"The SPLA [army] went to INTERSOS and looted things there and then went to the World Food Programme and looted," Beko Konyi, coordinator for the state-run Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in Pibor County, said.

An MSF source said its hospital in Pibor was also ransacked.

"All the items from MSF are looted, everything, drugs and all the assets, and again INTERSOS," an eyewitness working for an international agency in Pibor said.

Asking for anonymity for fear of reprisal, the eyewitness said the perpetrators were "SPLA", referring to the Sudan People's Liberation Army, or government forces.

"I'm here, I saw it with my own eyes," the eyewitness said.

Other sources told the news agency that many South Sudanese soldiers were seen hauling away building materials, furniture and tents from aid agency compounds.

"MSF is deeply concerned about reports we are receiving that our health center in Pibor town has been looted today", Sunday, said the group's head of mission in South Sudan, Vikki Stienen.

"We suspended medical activities in Pibor town on April 19 as the security situation had made it impossible to provide impartial medical care there."

He said that before the suspension, the population of Pibor and the surrounding area relied almost entirely on MSF for medical services.

"We know that the consequences for the population of the loss of access to healthcare are devastating," Stienen added.

Other international aid workers pulled out of Pibor on Friday over concerns about a possible rebel attack and rains cutting them off.

South Sudan's military spokesman Philip Aguer said he was unaware of the looting incidents but challenged the reports.

"Why would they go and do that? I doubt these are SPLA soldiers. These may be rebels," he said. South Sudan has been fighting former soldier and theologian turned rebel leader David Yau Yau since April 2011.

An international aid worker in Jonglei insisted the looters were soldiers.

"It's absolutely SPLA, it's absolutely not rebels, if it is they are looting places 100 meters away from the army's barracks," the worker said, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

7 Killed as clans clash in South Sudan's Jonglei

VoA News Bor, 10/05/13 - Seven people have been killed and dozens injured in inter-clan fighting in South Sudan's restive Jonglei state, officials said Friday.

Officials in the state's Akobo County said violent clashes pitted members of the Waat and Walgak clans against each other on Tuesday and Wednesday.

French medical charity Doctors Without Borders, which goes by its French acronym MSF, said it has treated 16 people with gunshot wounds

"We received 16 people and two of them died of internal bleeding when they arrived at the hospital. It was already too late to treat them," Raphael Gorgeu, MSF head of mission in South Sudan said.

Akobo County Commissioner Koug Rambeng said the fighting stemmed from a long-term conflict between the Waat and Walgak clans. In 2008, a clash between the two Nuer clans left 19 people dead and several others injured.

Rambeng said the local government is doing all it can to end the conflict.

"We have deployed the SPLA on all the routes leading to the towns... also on the routes leading to the two respective communities, to deter any mobilization and revenge from any of the two subsections. We have arrested the people who are believed to have ignited the conflict," he said.

Rambeng said he is also working to encourage dialogue between the two communities to end the conflict once and for all. State lawmakers are expected to visit the area tomorrow to bolster the commissioner's peace initiative.

Deputy Minister of Interior urged to stop intimidating media and resign.

AllAfrica.com/Press Release Juba, 12/5/2013 – SSHURSA Condemns Detention of journalists, Urges the Deputy Minister of Interior to stop intimidating the media and resign, calls for fair investigations of Banyjiath's murder.

The South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy (SSHURSA) condemns in strongest terms possible the recent detention of Juba Monitor Newspaper journalists. Michael Koma, the Managing Editor, who was detained by the police in Juba from May 2nd 2013 and released on May 5th 2013 after three days in unlawful detention and Alfred Taban, the Editor-In-Chief of the same Newspaper,

on May 6, 2013, was put into interrogations by the same police for eight (8) hours in Juba and this equally amounts to unlawful detention. According to the findings of SSHURSA, the journalists were detained by the police under the orders of the Deputy Minister of Interior Lt. General Salva Mathok Gengdit.

Minister Mathok complained of being defamed by the Newspaper and the Bul Community of Unity State. In a letter written and signed by their leaders, Bul Community made a rebuttal against the denials by the Minister on the allegations in Bul Community's first letter against him on the murder of a young man called Banyjioth Mathoat Tap from Bul Community and whose body was found lying on March 30, 2013, beneath the premises of Minister Mathok. The community members in its letter previously published after the incident accused the Minister of being behind the demise of their son, allegations which recently the Minister strongly denied as false.

Hence leading to the Community's rebuttal to the Minister's denial and in a letter published by Juba Monitor. The publication angered the Minister Mathok who ordered the police to summon and investigate the Senior Management of the paper as he claims that his name has been tarnished by both the Juba Monitor Newspaper and Bul Community.

In SSHURSA analysis, the behaviour of police under the orders of Minister to instantly detain the journalists is a clear case of intimidation against the press and misuse of power by the persons in the position of authority. This is a direct abuse of the rights to freedom of expression and media under Article 24 of the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan 2011.

This Constitutional provision allows every citizen to express, receive, disseminate or publish information within the limits of the law. Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 and Article 9(1) and (2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981 equally protect the freedom of press and expression. South Sudan in 2011 authored its own Constitution and is a member of United Nations and African Union, and by such a membership and also by the principle of the universality of human rights, her institutions are therefore, obliged to respect and promote the legal provisions of these bodies which guarantee the rights of an individual.

Unity State - women crash stones to fight poverty

AllAfrica.com Bentiu, 12/5/2013 – Women and children in South Sudan's Unity state have resorted to crashing gravels to fight hunger threat in the oil-rich region.

In a series of interviews with Sudan Tribune, women and children as young as 10 years narrated how their daily lives depended on stones to not only earn a living, but also meet school needs.

Ruei Tena Bol, a 13-year old boy from Kordapdap village says he is engaged in the activity in order to raise money to pay school fees.

"I have no money to pay school fees that forced me into street jobs; I'm only brought up by a single parent after the death of my father. My mother struggles to bring us up through making alcohol for money. And I'm digging gravels in order to pay my school fees and to use some money in additional to our daily consumption", said Bol.

The young lad, who has been in the business for the last one and half years, says he was forced into it after the school administration started demanding money for fees.

Unity state has been severely hit by hunger, due to heavy floods that affected some areas, and the situation worsened after the closer of the border between Sudan and South Sudan.

Nyatuay Gatluak, 25 said she decided to collect gravels to make money in order to raise money for her sick seven year old child.

"My coming here today was because of my small son who got sick and this forced me to join these groups of women in digging gravels. I'm not a resident of this town. I came from GoliGoli deep in the village to collect gravels in order to take him to the hospital," she said.

Part of the money, she said, would help transport her back to village", she said.

With the current austerity measures, initiated in the wake of last year's oil shut down, South Sudan's economy almost reached the verge of collapse, a leaked World Bank revealed.

Elizabeth Nyawuok Gai, a 40-year old woman says life has been extremely hard since South Sudan gained independence in July 2011. For her, raising her seven children as a single mum has not been an easy walk.

"We have a lot of challenges in common as women. You may find a woman raising up children without [her] husband, and this really makes us suffer as women in this nation. This is why we came here as groups of women collecting gravels," she said.

Each woman, Gai stressed, could get about SSP 10 (about \$3) daily, which they use to feed their children when they return home

Greater Bahr el Ghazal calls for conference to discuss country's situation

Sudantribune.com Juba, 12/5/2013 – The four states of the Greater Bahr el Ghazal region have called for their intellectuals and senior political leaders to report themselves to Wau, the former regional capital and current state capital of Western Bahr el Ghazal, to discuss challenges facing the region and the country.

States of the former Bhar el Ghazal region include Lakes, Warrap, Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal.

The host governor, Risiq Zechariah Hassan, has travelled to Juba and briefed the President of the Republic, Salva Kiir Mayardit, who also hails from the region, on the ongoing preparations to hold the extraordinary conference.

In a statement broadcast on the state-owned South Sudan TV on Saturday, Hassan disclosed that the five-day conference will take place next Wednesday from 15th to 20th May 2013.

Hassan did not elaborate on the agenda of the conference, which will take place days after the Greater Equatoria region concluded its two-day regional conference in Juba on Thursday where they addressed national concerns, including the ongoing transformation and transition processes in the ruling party.

Officials told *Sudan Tribune* that the Bahr el Ghazal regional conference will cover issues to do with politics, security and economy of the country.

The unfolding approach on regional groupings are a concern, officials say, because they may create unconstitutional regional political blocs based on the defunct system of governance introduced in early 1980s, but abolished in early 1990s when the former Sudan was still one country.

Education is the pre-requisites for development: Governor

Gurtong.net Torit, 12/5/2013 – The State Governor of Western Equatoria Joseph Bangasi Bakosoro has said that education is the pre-requisites for socio-economic development of any nation and therefore, the Government should be determined to improve quality of and access to education.

He argued that under the Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, we are obliged to remove any discrimination in the education system through the so-called 'merit' system.

"In this meeting, I am appealing to our National Government to consider repatriating the remaining returnees stationed in Renk. Most of the languishing citizens of this Country in Renk are Equatorians and I fail to understand why so. They are suffering there today due to selective method applied in the repatriation process," he said.

The leader has called for bilateral relation and good neighbourhood between South Sudan and neighbouring countries including the Republic of Sudan.

He notes that bilateral relation and good neighbourhood is a key to peaceful co-existence counting exchange of service and technology between neighbouring countries.

“Bilateral relation and good neighbourhood is key to peaceful co-existence, exchange of service and technology between neighbouring countries and I am obliged to stress the need for border relation in a bid to promote conducive environment for commercial activities with all those countries bordering the three states of Great Equatoria,” he said.

Governor Bangasi stresses that Agriculture is the back bone of the economy of the Republic of South Sudan and should remain a priority on Equatorians’ Governments’ top agenda.

He repeats that in this regard its (Agriculture) development and contribution to food security will continue to be accorded highest priority by the State Government and the State Governments in Equatoria must intensified campaigns on agricultural productivity by encouraging our citizens to work harder in order to produce enough food not only for local consumption, but also for commercial purposes.

“Agriculture is the back bone of the economy of the Republic of South Sudan and that is a priority for us Equatorians. In this regard its development and contribution to food security will continue to be accorded highest priority by the State Government. In respect of the above, the State Governments in Equatoria must be intensified campaigns on agricultural productivity by encouraging our citizens to work harder in order to produce enough food not only for local consumption, but also for commercial purposes,” he said.

SPLM/A to mark 30th anniversary this week

Gurtong.net Wau, 12/5/2013 – The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) will be marking the 30th anniversary this week, a party official has announced.

The SPLM Information, Communication and Culture Secretary, Bol Makueng said the anniversary will be marked on the 16 May.

“This is a Day which will go down in the history of nations, and particularly, South Sudan, as a day that started the longest and bloodiest revolution and liberation struggle. Every family has lost its loved ones and contributing materially,” Bol Makueng said in his press release on Sunday before leaving to Ethiopian Capital Addis Abba for an official visit.

He congratulated the SPLA gallant soldiers, the sons and daughters of South Sudan who suffered diseases, hunger, sweated and sacrificed in the battle field.

“We are proud of SPLA. They are our main reference point for unity of our people, and building the nation and state of South Sudan,” he said.

He said that we are less than two years as an independent nation, and we have made tremendous achievements.

“We have established a decentralized democratic multiparty system of governance. This has enabled the new nation to have a forum for debating issues of national interest. The SPLM as a party has made positive influence among the people by introducing ideas of change,” he said.

Makueng said that the affirmative action on women and youth participation in government and its institutions was not there before and the recognition of rights of the people amounts to respect for human rights - thus the perpetual values of freedom, justice and equality which the party has demonstrated relentlessly.

South Sudan denies offering support to rebels

AllAfrica.com Juba, 12/5/2013 – Colonel Philip Aguer, official spokesman of the South Sudanese army, denied allegations that his country is providing any kind of support to rebel movements fighting the Sudanese army in the provinces of Darfur, Kordofan and the Blue Nile.

In an interview with *Radio Dabanga*, Aguer described the accusations on South Sudan's financial and technical support to factions of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, Sudan Liberation Movement of Minni Minawi and Sudan People Liberation Movement North, as "fabricated" and "not new to the regime in Khartoum".

The spokesman added that the latest statement is contradicting the statement issued by the National Intelligence and Security Services, which cleared the South Sudanese army of any involvement on the attack that took place in Umm Rawaba.

The Sudanese government rushed to mislead the public opinion of South Sudan's involvement in the assassination of Dinka Ngok paramount chief in Abyei carried out by its militias, Aguer added. The spokesman said "South Sudan is not involved in the war in Darfur, North Kordofan, South Kordofan or Blue Nile" and stressed that "what is happening in those areas is a result of the failure and lack of commitment by Khartoum to implement what is agreed upon in Addis Ababa in 2005".

He added that Khartoum's lack to implement protocols for these areas has nothing to do with South Sudan.

Juba dismisses rebel claims, says Khartoum covering Abyei killing

AllAfrica.com Juba, 12/5/2013 – South Sudan on Sunday dismissed Sudanese government claims that it provides support to rebels opposed to Khartoum regime, saying such an allegation was a cover-up to the recent killing of tribal leader in Abyei.

“There is no single truth in these allegations. The government of the Republic of South Sudan has always been clear on these unfounded allegations. We have said time and again that South Sudan does not provide any support to any rebel. We believe in peaceful coexistence with our neighbours,” said South Sudan information minister, Barnaba Marial.

The claims by the government of Sudan are attempts to cover up the killing of the paramount chief of Abyei, he added.

Marial said the allegations made by Khartoum comes as a “surprise”, given that the latter recently delinked South Sudan from any involvement in rebel activities within the northern territories.

“It was the government of Sudan which came out to dismiss and telling their press in Khartoum that we have no link to the rebel attack in the North and South Kordofan. Now they are turning around and make these unfounded allegations”, Marial told reporters in the capital, Juba.

He said it was the Sudanese government supporting militia groups, fighting proxy wars with South Sudan government on behalf of the northern establishment.

“We now have militia group who have just responded to the amnesty. They can themselves attest to the international community and the government of Sudan where they came. Ask them. They are now here in Juba and they will tell you who used to support them. They were in Sudan,” Marial stressed.

“These are hard facts, not allegations”, he added. The minister, however, said his government was still committed to work with its Sudanese counterpart to give peace a chance and build trust between the two nations.

Abyei youth call for immediate termination of UNISFA mandate

Sudantribune.com Juba, 12/5/2013 – The leadership of a youth group from the oil-contested border region of Abyei have called for the immediate termination of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei (UNISFA), claiming the mission has failed to live up to its obligations since its establishment two years ago.

Mijak Kuol”, senior member of the Abyei Youth Union (AYU), told *Sudan Tribune* on Sunday that UNISFA’s role had become redundant in the face of ongoing violence in the region, particularly the killing of the Ngok Dinka paramount chief Kuol Deng Kuol on 4 April.

“There is no point to have [the] United Nations [peace] keeping force in Abyei. The situation started to deteriorate after deployment. Many of our people are killed in the presence of the so called peacekeeping force. People are killed within the vicinity of the UN camp in Abyei, which has never happened before. The living example was the killing of our chief in their hands”, said Kuol, who also cited the killing of Awet Ngor, a native of the Mulmul area, days before the chief was shot dead. UNISFA’s base is located in the Mulmul area.

“Awet Ngor was killed in Mulmul just about two minutes walking distance to the UN camp. This has never happened before”, the youth leader said.

“We have asked our government to quickly terminate the mandate of this mission. This was our message which [we] gave the minister of cabinet affairs, Deng Alor Kuol, to deliver to our president [Salva Kiir]. We also conveyed the same message to the minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, Nhial Deng Nhial, when he came to attend the burial of our chief”, he added.

Deng Mading Mijak, the co-chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) representing South Sudan, has also called for a “review of the mandate of the mission”, saying the security situation in the area continued to deteriorate despite the presence of peacekeeping troops.

“The mandate of this mission should be reviewed. Our government should take it seriously. Our people are no longer feeling they can be protected by the United Nations troops in Abyei if their chief was killed in their hands”, Mijak told reporters on Saturday at a news conference in Juba.

Meanwhile, in a letter of protest signed by civil society organizations and obtained by *Sudan Tribune*, civil rights activists, as well as members of union groups representing youth, traders, women, farmers and teachers, issued UNISFA with a 24-hour ultimatum to remove Sudanese UN personnel working in the area, claiming they were security agents.

“We are asking UNISFA to immediately send away the security agents who are camouflaging as UN personnel in Abyei. We know them one by one because some of them were here [before]. We know them and they know themselves very well that they are not ordinary citizens. They are security agents”, the protest letter dated 9 May reads in part.

The letter also calls on the UN mission, relief organizations and other agencies working in the area to stop hiring Sudanese nationals.

“We are asking UNISFA to stop hiring and hosting of employees from Sudan because we consider it as part of the Arab Misseriya settlement plan in [the] Dinka area. This is a plan by the government of Sudan”, the letter adds in part.

Sudan warns rebels against attempting to attack Khartoum

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/5/2013 – Sudan said today that rebels from the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) will face "disastrous consequences" if they dared to launch an attack on the capital city of Khartoum.

“[They] won’t be able to attack Khartoum, however, if they dared to do so, their fate would be much worse than Khalil [leader of Darfur Justice and Equality Movement]” the national parliament speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir said in a meeting with the media yesterday.

Al-Tahir lambasted the opposition parties and described their stances regarding the SRF recent attack on Um Rawaba and Abu Kershola in north and South Kordofan states as “misty” and accused them of secretly sympathizing with the SRF with the hope that they can manage to overthrow the regime.

“The opposition parties want to topple the regime by all means, be it demonstrations, force, or the SRF”, he said.

He urged the media outlets to support the army saying that SRF avoids direct confrontation and seeks instead to exhaust it by launching small military operations.

Al-Tahir further said that there must be no negotiations with Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North (SPLM-N), considering resumption of negotiations at present times a "defeat" for the army.

Address South Sudan shootings

Daily Monitor Kampala, 12/5/2013 – Last week, two Ugandans were seriously injured in South Sudan when unidentified gunmen shot at the vehicles they were travelling in. The attack that took place at Jebel, 45km from South Sudan's capital, Juba, comes three weeks after two other Ugandan traders were shot dead and another injured in Nesitu, South Sudan. Similar incidents have been reported in the past.

These attacks reflect a broad and disturbing pattern. As a new nation, South Sudan is facing daunting challenges, including sporadic episodes of gun attacks. One of the core challenges, however, is the safety of foreign nationals, especially Ugandans, who work and do business in South Sudan.

The frequent attack on Ugandan traders affects the cross-border trade between Uganda and South Sudan. Juba should, therefore, accord Ugandan citizens due protection and fair treatment. While South Sudan is duty-bound to provide safety for foreign nationals, Ugandans in South Sudan have a reciprocal obligation to respect the laws of their host country by legalizing their status.

Ugandans have also complained of harassment, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment by Sudanese authorities. There are, however, Ugandans who get into trouble with the law because they live in South Sudan illegally. Such cases, when identified, should be handled professionally through competent courts of law.

The attacks on traders, particularly on the highway, are a worrying trend that deserves urgent attention from both South Sudan and Ugandan authorities. Recently, the Inspector General of Police, Lt. Gen. Kale Kayihura, and his South Sudan counterpart, Gen. Deng Tieng, said the two countries were taking positive steps to resolve the concerns raised by Ugandans.

Part of the plan, which was agreed upon last year, was to set up an integrated highway patrol on the Uganda/ South Sudan highway. The move to have officers from Uganda and South Sudan monitor both sides were aimed at improving security.

Since a memorandum of understanding was signed by the two countries last year, it is crucial to evaluate the integrated patrols system, which was expected to weed out rogue elements that terrorize travelers on the highway. As the recent attacks show, the highway is still insecure; the two countries still have work to do.

The devil in resolving decades of Abyei conflict

Sudantribune.com, 10/5/2013 – The past days have seen global community watching members of the Nine Ngok Dinka of Abyei, together with their cousins in the South Sudan shedding tears unabated. They are grieved by the unexpected, untimely and the sudden death of Kuol Deng Kuol, the paramount chief of the area, who, on Saturday 4th, was gunned down in a terrorist style act, when he fell into an ambush strategically planned by the members of the Arabs nomads of Misseriya in the Lenger area, north of Abyei.

He was part of the joint high-level government delegation which was visiting the area from Juba and Khartoum for a consultative meeting to find a common ground and to hasten discussions on the need to form a temporary joint administration in the area so as to facilitate return of the displaced persons and the conduct of the referendum.

He was traveling in a military convoy of the Ethiopian troops serving in the area as members of the United Nations peacekeeping force tasked with responsibilities to ensure that the area is free from any armed groups and provide adequate security and protection of civilians under imminent threat and their properties as mandated by the United Nations Security Council resolution which established the mission for the area.

The Council normally approves such a resolution to establish a Mission if it finds that the situation in any part of the world shows sign that it would deteriorate and develop into threat to the stability, break of peace or act of aggression. The situation in Abyei warranted the establishment and the government of Ethiopia offered to send troops to provide and maintain peace and security in the region until such time when the two sides shall agree to end the dispute but situation since deployment of the UN troops to the area remains volatile despite resolution of the UN Security Resolution, which called for unconditional withdrawal of the armed forces, as well as any other armed elements.

The decision to deploy foreign forces was part of the international attempt to diffuse tension and prevent a return to a full blown war after the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) took control of the town earlier in May 2011, forcing over 110,000 people, mostly unarmed civilians to flee. Several others were killed and many more remained unaccounted for until today.

With calls to exercise restraint and maintain peace from the regional leaders and the international community, the government of South Sudan, since no country exists in isolation of the other, immediately responded and pulled out its troops which were component of the Joint Integrated Units during the six years of interim period under the terms of the 2005 peace accord, which ended over two decades of civil war between the successive Khartoum based government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Sudan was expected to do the same but decided to remain in the area until in 2012 when authorities in Khartoum, wanting to draw international attention and renew contacts, decided to reduce the strength of its forces, which had entered the region. A significant strength equipped with modern weapons and conventional knowledge remained in the form of oil police in contrary to the resolution.

In September 2012, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan and South Sudan presented to the two presidents a peace proposal to resolve the conflict. The proposal recognized and allowed members of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms as indigenous people with voting rights at the referendum together with other residents with permanently settled in Abyei.

The government in the South, including its president Salva Kiir Mayardit, immediately accepted the proposal without any conditions but the government of Sudan under its president Omer Ahmed Hassan El-Bashir quickly rejected it entirely, calling for either partitioning of the region into the north to be administered by his government and the south to be administered to be administered by the government in Juba, or inclusion of Misseriya in the vote. Khartoum sees this suggestion, which was one of the proposals by the AUHIP in 2010, as part of the attempts to resolve the dispute but which Juba had rejected, citing its lack of basis in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It is this difference that has always left the area in limbo and the killing of the paramount chief had highlighted the level the dispute has reached between the two communities.

Late Kuol Deng Kuol

Having lived in Abyei I extensively interacted with Chief Kuol while covering a myriad of issues of national value, including the future of the region. Chief Kuol was not only a great leader, but wanted to see the two countries embracing each other to live side by side in pursuit of mutual benefits and build trust to promote the idea of two viable states.

He was also a great thinker and a peace strategist who had wanted the region to play a strategic role in fostering harmony by properly utilizing the concept of Abyei being molded into a bridge between two independent and viable states without each taking advantage of the other.

His ideas were always appearing shaped by the national interest, thus the reason he was an admired as a leader in his community and beyond. He had more friends than adversaries. He never scorned at anyone whether big or small. He was always humble and ready to pay a listening ear. His death can never be celebrated even those who killed him may be feeling the guilt of their act. He will be remembered by the generations as someone who immensely contributed to the liberation struggle of not only the people of Abyei and their cousins in the South but also marginalized groups in both

countries. The fact that he was killed on national mission accompanying the delegation shows the level of love of his people and the country.

Why the people of Abyei could not secede with the south?

Described as “a bridge between the countries” in its protocol under the 2005 peace agreement, the region, known for its fertile agricultural land and prevalence of oil, lies at the border between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan which was formerly part of the united Sudan until on July 9, 2011, when she gained her full independent status, becoming the 193rd member of the United Nations and 54th member of the African Union.

Although the majority of the area’s inhabitants are ethnically, socially and culturally linked to those in the South, it could not secede with the new nation, because it was transferred to Kordofan province in Sudan in 1905 during British rule for administrative purposes. Attempts aimed at persuading successive Khartoum-based regimes since the British left in 1956 have repeatedly failed, forcing natives to join rebellions waged in the South against Khartoum, hoping that any deal with Sudan would include their case and eventually get lasting peace. Such efforts were seen when the South signed a deal with Khartoum to end the first civil war which lasted for 17 years in 1972.

In that deal, Abyei was granted “special status” and was allowed to vote in a referendum but the vote did not take place when the agreement was abrogated by Sudan’s then military president, Jaafar Mohamed Nimery, triggering a return to war in 1983.

Angered by the failure by the government in Khartoum to allow them exercise their right under the agreement, the people of Abyei decisively joined the second war in numbers and fought with the South this time as part of the marginalized group wanting broader change in Sudan, especially the system. Many of the youth abandoned studies and joined the movement at its inception. Others followed after finishing their studies and they became some of the senior members of the movement by the virtue of their education.

With the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Khartoum and the rebel group predominantly fighters from the South, the area got the same right of self-determination as it did in 1972 but it has proved equally difficult to make the vote happen as the two sides have not been able to agree on voter eligibility. The government of Sudan wants the members of the Misseriya Arab nomads who seasonally access the area to get water and pasture for their cattle to be part of the vote, while the government of South Sudan maintains that voting rights should be limited to members of the Dinka Ngok.

It is against this backdrop that the region’s situation continues to remain unpredictable despite the presence of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) which has absolute power to clear the region of any armed groups. This leads one to wonder as to how and when the status of Abyei can be resolved. Normally, there are universal ways to resolve such conflicts. One way is peaceful settlement through negotiation. The other way is the involvement of an independent and competent court of arbitration lest they fail to reach an understanding after involving third party. Another option and which is universally acceptable is to conduct referendum so as to allow people involved in the conflict make decision of their choice.

In this case of Abyei, everything has been exhausted. The two sides negotiated the deal. They also involved the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague over the territorial dispute of the area and it was resolved. But the devil has been maintaining the spirit of negotiation to implement the outcomes of the talks. The territory of the area has been defined by the International Court of Arbitration in July 2009 and the decision was accepted by both sides but the implementation has not taken place. The referendum was supposed to have been conducted simultaneously with the referendum on the South’s independence in January 2011 but could not take place, because of the differences over voting rights. How can this now conflict be resolved?

Some options to resolve the dispute

There are some options to avoid escalation of the conflict. One of these options is for the international community, particularly the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council to use its legitimacy to unilaterally and independently, on the basis of its communiqué endorsed by the UNSC resolution 2046, conduct the referendum for the people of Abyei so they can decide where to go within the territory defined by the court, or allow the two sides to return to war, which will have a lot of consequences that may affect peace and stability in the region.

The other option is to make it totally an independent state from Sudan and South Sudan and letting it be administered by the United Nations. Aid together with resources generated from the area, should be exclusively and meticulously used for developing it.

How the people of Abyei should honour Chief Kuol

There is no any other better way for the people of Abyei to honour Chief Kuol Adol, than to come together and clearly demonstrate their interest and resolve to the entire world that they will work together with his replacement, Bulabek Deng Kuol. To do this, there needs to be conference in which distinguished leaders at different levels come together to strategize on the future of their area. They must show that they are united behind a common interest. There should be no separate conference and resolutions on Abyei. There must be one, whether in the diaspora, in the South, in Sudan they must come together as one to decide what they want for Abyei and its future generations. Uniting for the common interest and voting unanimously to decide the destiny of Abyei is the only way to realize the objective of the cause for which the chief has died.

It is important that they come together in Sudan to learn how to see things for themselves, as well as listen for themselves and think for themselves. If they do it, then they will eventually come to intelligent decisions for themselves. But if they continue with the habit of going by what they hear Westerners say about their future, or going by what they think about the current leadership in South Sudan and Sudan is telling them, instead of going and searching those things for themselves and seeing it for themselves, they will be walking west when they should be going east, and walking east when they should be going west. They must have an ultimate say in issues which relates to the affairs of the region, as did by the Nuba Mountains. They did not want anybody to tell them what to do.

If they don't, then they will always be manoeuvred into fighting themselves. It is already clear that someone has planted the seeds of division in the area, which means there is no longer any genuine concern for each other.

They shouldn't also forget the fact that the area represents one of the most important, if not the most important, fields of battle against all the forms of exploitation existing in the world. There are big possibilities for success for the people of Abyei, but there are also many dangers. The positive aspect includes general hatred for expansionism, racism and discrimination. But there is also the principal danger of the possibility of division among the peoples, which appears to be continually rising. I have concrete reasons for fearing this danger. There are many problems and challenges but the unity could be strength to find solutions. They are perfectly capable of deciding upon their own future. They have capable people, most of them great leaders of the caliber of Dr. Francis Deng, Dr. Luka Biong, Edward Lino, Juac Agok, Deng Alor, Dr. Chol Deng Alaak, Arop Madut Arop, Deng Arop Kuol, just to name a few of the committed personalities. What they need is to exert much more, and break out of the vicious cycle of dependence on others, especially those who see Abyei as a small area of few square kilometers to be compromised for peace between Sudan and South Sudan.

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