

# مجمع الكنيسة الأسقفية السودانية

## Province of Episcopal Church of the Sudan

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#### COMMUNIQUE OF THE EMERGENCY HOUSE OF BISHOPS' MEETING (HOB) THE PROVINCE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SOUTH SUDAN AND SUDAN

*"Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot –yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord... In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all"(Isaiah 11: 1-3, 6, NLT, Italics added).*

#### PREAMBLE:

We the Bishops of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan, who converged in the Emergency House of Bishops' meeting held between 28-29 January 2014 at the Provincial Headquarters in Juba, aware, that we have gathered here as leaders of the body of Christ, the church, recalling our pastoral and spiritual roles played during the five decades of the conflict in the then Sudan which led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 and subsequently the independence of South Sudan in July 2011.

As church leaders, we have come together to listen to each other's stories about the political crisis and violence which erupted on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2013. We have heard of over 10,000 people dead and over half a million people displaced from their homes besides tremendous destruction of property and looting.

In addition, we reflected and prayed about the current situation in the Country and give recommendations for the way forward. And recognising that "Christ's love compels us" (2 Cor. 5:14a) to use our prophetic role to speak the message of peace and caution the nation and political leaders against the use of war and violence as a means to maintain or get into power.

Having experienced the pains of the loss of lives and property during the 21 years of the liberation war (1983 - 2005), we are hugely puzzled by the current one month and half months conflict which has led to killing of innocent people including clergy, even those who took refuge in churches and hospitals including patients. This was not even done by our 'enemies'. Shame on us the South Sudanese!

#### THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT:

Having heard with concern from one another as Bishops the reports of the magnitude of the suffering and the plight of our people; as a result of this political crisis, we believe that the conflict has not only caused tragedy, but created a black mark in the life of our beloved nation and lack of trust.

In Juba, where the conflict erupted between the presidential guards and the rebelling soldiers loyal to Dr Riek Machar on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013, over 500 people are reported dead, majority are innocent civilians including two (2) pastors and thousands of people are internally displaced. In the Dioceses of Lainya, Rejaf, Rokon, Yei, Kajokeji and Terekeka in Central Equatoria State, although the situation is calm at present, some people still live in a state of fear. Tens of thousands of people who were displaced from Bor, Twic East, Duk, Awerial and Juba fled to these dioceses. However, fighting caused by the defecting soldiers loyal to Dr. Riek Machar also affected

Yei and Rokon, although the situation is returning to normal. The heavy fighting was in Gemeiza in Terekeka with huge number of casualties among the men and women in uniform including civilians. There are huge humanitarian needs here besides the need for trauma and psychosocial counselling.

Hostilities were also reported in Jambo, Lanyi, Lui and Mundri, all in Central Cluster in Western Equatoria. According to the reports, markets in those towns and villages were badly destroyed and looted except in Mundri, although no civilian casualties were reported. But hundreds of people were scared and spent nights in bush because of fear and others were displaced from their homes in addition to those who fled from Juba to stay with relatives in Great Mundri.

Maridi, Ibba, Ezo, Nzara and Yambio had experienced the influx refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) including IDPs.

However, the most affected areas are in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States. Bor, the Capital City of Jonglei State was totally destroyed with houses, food stores; shops and banks including churches were burned down and looted. And estimated 2,500 people were killed in Bor alone including thirteen (13) women Church Workers who were raped and shot dead at the church compound, while one of them a pastor was slaughtered in her own house! Over 147,613 people fled Bor to Awerial County and tens of thousands fled to Juba then on to Nimule and Torit in Eastern Equatoria State.

Most of the internally displaced persons from Malakal and Bentiu fled to Renk that borders the Republic of Sudan and some fled to Juba and others to Greater Bahr el Ghazal States.

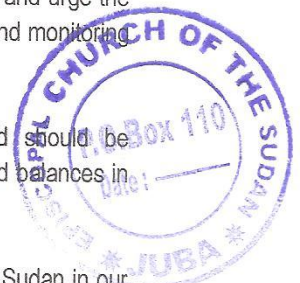
In the light of above situation, we deeply lament on these negative aspects of our society that have fuelled the political conflict extensively:

- The culture of revenge killings
- The culture of looting and destruction
- Tribalism and nepotism
- 'Personality cult' (or blind following of leaders)
- Corruption
- Issues of governance

Our reading of the situation has led us to come out with the following recommendations to address the political, economic and social dimensions of the conflict:

#### **POLITICAL DIMENSION:**

- Cessation of hostilities Agreement:** We appreciate the efforts of IGAD mediators and the warring parties for reaching the agreement on cessation of hostilities. We support the agreement and urge the warring parties to respect and honour their commitment to implement it with supervision and monitoring by IGAD and to ensure that civilians are protected.
- Constitution:** The issue of constitutional review process should be continued and should be participatory, seeking more inputs from the people. There should be adequate checks and balances in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of Government.
- Issues of Governance:** We are aware that we have inherited the old system of the then Sudan in our government. There is need to review the ten states structure to address issues facing our Country. As a church we believe that the government at the national level should be reduced. Service delivery should





be the responsibility of state government to enable it reaches the people at grassroots. While noting the recent reduction of the size of the government, we recommend further reduction to suit the present context.

- d) **National Army:** The present composition of army is not adequately reflecting the diversity of our new nation. There should be reform to reflect nationalism other than loyalties to individual political leaders and ethnic groups. Let the army reflect the proportion of the population of each state.
- e) **Democratisation of Political Parties:** We call on the political parties for democratisation of their parties in both *theory* and *practice*. Given the present situation, we urge our government to consider the issue of election in 2015 carefully with great wisdom in the light of the need to resettlement of IDPs, conducting Census and completion of the constitutional review process. In addition to these, we appeal to the SPLM as a ruling Party to put its house in order.

#### ECONOMIC DIMENSION:

- f) **Equitable and Transparent Distribution of Resources:** We call for equitable and transparent distribution of resources in proportion to the population of each state. We urge our government to address the issue of poor management of resources and corruption. There is need for the government to develop strategies to address the issue of poverty and diversification of sources of revenue for sustainability and development of the nation.
- g) **Fighting Corruption:** While appreciating the government efforts to fight corruption, we are urging Members of Parliament (at all levels) to use their Public Accounts Committee to investigate and publish the names of the corrupt officials in order to minimize corruption and to build trust and confidence on the electorate. Those involved should be made to face justice and MPs at all levels should ensure that recommendations of the Auditor General are implemented accordingly by the relevant institutions.

#### SOCIAL DIMENSION:

- h) **Inclusive Dialogue for Peace:** We condemn all forms of violence and killings in the country in strong terms possible and appeal to all warring parties to expeditiously resolve the underlying problems through peaceful means and inclusive dialogue.
- i) **Accountability for Crimes Committed:** We appreciate the government for releasing seven (7) of the political detainees. We urge the government to speed up the legal process for those who are still in detention so that they are either charged or released. We urge the government to investigate crimes committed against innocent civilians by the people in uniform and whoever committed these crimes has to be brought to book to enforce justice in the new nation. We urge both sides in the conflict to discuss this and include it in the anticipated agreement.
- j) **Reconciliation and Healing:** As a church we have been trying our best to contribute towards sustainable peace, reconciliation and healing. Given the fact that the current political crisis has not only reopened the wounds of the past, but deepened it, we urge all stakeholders to recommit ourselves to a sustained and long term process of reconciliation and healing. The people to people peace process should be used to build confidence among citizens, restore trust with one another and to promote peaceful coexistence among communities.



- c) **Humanitarian Aid:** We appreciate the invaluable support being given to the IDPs by UNMISS at all their basis in the Country, the International Community and NGOs, the National None-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs), our fellow Christians across the globe, partners, fellow South Sudanese and other people of good will, we urge you all to continue to do so.
- ) **International and local Media:** During the crisis there has been an impression of the issue being between Dinka and Nuer problem. Unfortunately this aggravated the situation even more. Therefore, we appeal to both International and local media houses to report responsibly and balanced in their reporting as they go about their work.
- n) **Call to Repentance:** What happened in our Country cannot be blamed on political leaders alone, but every South Sudanese national regardless of gender, position, tribe, region and age has contributed directly or indirectly in the conflict. Therefore, we need to repent from the culture of revenge killings, looting and destruction of property, tribalism and nepotism and blind following of leaders.

We believe human life is a gift from God because we are created in God's image. Also we believe that we have not honoured God as neither have we respected the sanctity of life nor have we respected one another as children of God. Therefore, we ask God to forgive us and to give us the grace we need to refrain from continuously killing ourselves, but instead to forgive, to be "our brother's keeper", respect human rights, reconcile, love one another unconditionally, so that the Lord could allow us to live peacefully and heal our land (2 Chronicle 7: 14).

**AL:**

- ) We appeal to the warring parties to put this Country and its people first before their political interests.
- ) Also we appeal to all South Sudanese to accept themselves. This is our nation and God Created us to be here and we will remain here until Jesus returns. Therefore, let us accept and walk together instead of walking alone. *"Two people will not walk together unless they have agreed to do so"* (Amos 3: 3, HB).

*[Handwritten signature of Daniel Deng Bul Yak]*

The Most Reverend Dr. Daniel Deng Bul Yak  
The Archbishop, Primate, Metropolitan of the Province of the  
Episcopal of South Sudan and Sudan and the Diocesan Bishop of Juba.

*[Handwritten signature of Francis Loyd]*

The Rt. Rev'd. Francis Loyd,  
The Dean of the Province and the Bishop of Rokon.

*[Handwritten signature of Bismark M. Avokaya]*

The Rt. Rev'd. Bismark M. Avokaya  
The Assistant Secretary of the Episcopal Council and the Bishop of Mundri.



January 31<sup>st</sup> 2014