

South Sudan Council of Churches



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المكتب الرئيسي

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEADS OF CHURCHES OF SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC)
KAMPALA, UGANDA, 20th December 2017

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

We the Heads of the Member Churches of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), having visited our people who have taken refuge in Uganda from the horrific violence in our own country, held a meeting in Kampala on 8-9th June 2017. We have been deeply saddened by listening to their experiences, but at the same time we wish to express our gratitude to the President, the Churches and the people of Uganda for once again welcoming their South Sudanese neighbours, sisters and brothers in their hour of need. In a world where migrants are becoming increasingly unwelcome almost everywhere, and with the number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda now over 1m, Uganda shines out as a beacon of hope and of Gospel values: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25: 35).*

Context:

We highlight the plight of refugees. We have listened to our brothers and sisters in the settlements who told us what forced them out of South Sudan and of the life they are experiencing. People who grew up as refugees are again forced to become refugees once again. Despite the enormous generosity of the Ugandans and communities that host them, they struggle to provide sufficient food, education, and health. They have a huge trust in the Church, that the Church will do something. They asked us to tell the parties to the conflict that what they have done is terrible, inhumane; it must be revealed to them, the situation they live in. What are we going to do with these people who are shedding tears day and night, who are wounded in their hearts, about these children who are suffering? How can the Church be a light in the situation? How can we give hope? God has entrusted us with this responsibility, to be the voice of these people.

Since July 2016, the violence has escalated even in areas where there has been peace. As conflict now rages in all areas of South Sudan, we urge all parties to allow the free movement of peoples and particularly of humanitarian aid, and to cease the targeting of civilians, and allow people to get on with their normal lives, including cultivating their crops and tending their livestock. Once again we state unequivocally that there is no moral justification for killing, raping and looting. This war is evil and sinful; it has no purpose whatsoever and must stop immediately.

Peace initiatives have not achieved their goals. We recognise that the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), brokered by IGAD, has not brought peace to our nation; indeed in July 2016 the conflict became worse. We ask ourselves how we can move beyond this non-productive agreement. We recognise also the fragmentation and division both within and between the different parties, and the escalation of the conflict

to areas and communities not previously involved. This is no longer a conflict between two main parties, led by President Salva KIIR MAYARDIT and former Vice President Dr Riek MACHAR TENY; it is now a multi-faceted conflict with dozens of parties, factions, forces, militias, communities, warlords and other leaders. While it is clear to us that the current ARCSS has not brought peace, we the church welcomes the various efforts and attempts made by IGAD, and international community to resolve the conflict especially the current attempt to revitalise the ARCSS.

The impact of the war in South Sudan is so deep and widespread. Neither can it any longer be characterised as an internal SPLM conflict; it has moved far beyond that. We welcome the institution of a National Dialogue the President, but we also recognise that for a successful dialogue, a number of criteria must be met, and we note that it has not been accepted by many of the opposition parties. We recognise also a new and alarming factor, as our national economy has collapsed while our rural areas are suffering famine. We believe that both the economic decline and the famine are man-made, a result of mismanagement, blatant corruption, insecurity, lack of governance and the rule of law, but above all the failure by leaders on all sides to prioritise the needs of the people over their own political and personal interests. Greed, hatred and the struggle for power have left the ordinary people of South Sudan, on all sides of the conflict, as the losers. This is anathema to us as Church leaders.

Appreciation for hospitality for South Sudanese refugees

We come to Uganda not only to visit our own people but also to bring this message to His Excellency President Yoweri KAGUTA MUSEVENI. We thank His Excellency for having always been a good friend to South Sudan, and we honour him as a colleague of our Founding father Dr John GARANG De MABIOR, a friend who played a major role in the liberation struggle and the independence of our nation. We thank him, his people and the Church in Uganda, especially at this moment, for the generosity, hospitality and aid extended to our suffering people who fled across the border seeking shelter. Indeed our Father in Heaven will one day say to the Ugandan people, *Whatever you did for one of these least brothers [and sisters] of mine, you did for me (Matthew 25:40).*

As pastors and shepherds, our first priority is the suffering of our people. We urge Uganda and other neighbours to continue to welcome our people who seek sanctuary across the borders. We urge the international community to continue their generous humanitarian assistance, and also to recognise that with the scale of the problem so much more is needed.

What the Church is trying to do:

We have been reflecting ever since the current senseless civil war began in South Sudan in December 2013. From the very beginning we have urged that the killing, raping and looting must stop; we recognise that there are legitimate differences between various parties, factions and communities, but we insist that these be addressed through nonviolent means and that the rule of law be respected.

We also wish to highlight the historic role of the Church in peace building in Sudan and South Sudan. We repeat the Statement of Intent, which we made in Kigali two years ago, that we intend to be a significant actor to bring about peace and reconciliation in South Sudan through nonviolent action as part of our Action Plan for Peace. This is our mandate from God and we will not be diverted from it.



In June 2015 we met in Kigali and developed a Statement of Intent that we intend to be a significant actor to bring about peace and reconciliation in South Sudan through the implementation of Action Plan for Peace (APP), to address the root causes of the conflict, using the three Pillars of Advocacy, Neutral Forums (Dialogue, People to People process and Community Conversations) and Reconciliation. In June 2017 we met again in Kampala with some of our ecumenical family to reflect on our visit to the refugee camps as part of the international advocacy component of our Action Plan for Peace, but also to reflect on the changing circumstances in our country and the role of the Church.

The church will continue to raise the voices of the voiceless affected by the conflict and to mediate for peace to return to South Sudan.

Concerns about the violence in South Sudan:

There are parallel processes with IGAD peace process: Peace processes that are parallel to mainstream IGAD-led process have led to divided directions of addressing peace, hence not helping to rally commitments towards a common solution to the conflict.

The conflict is escalating beyond the region, including the middle-east: As the conflict now escalates beyond the regional boundaries, it is increasingly becoming complex to address the conflict. We remind Uganda and our other neighbouring countries of the negative consequences which conflicts in the region may have on every nation in the region.

There is lack of an inclusive peace process, which puts the suffering of people at the centre of the intervention: We recognise that the National Dialogue initiated by President Salva KIIR MAYARDIT has not been accepted by many of the opposition parties. We underscore the fact that for a successful dialogue to happen, a number of criteria must be met, and we note that it has not

Without the arms embargo, the escalating violence in South Sudan is facilitating the inflow of illicit arms in Uganda and other neighbouring countries: We also urge our neighbour Uganda to use whatever influence it has to prevent the flow of yet more weapons into the conflict. We also respectfully request Uganda and other neighbouring countries to put aside their own national interests and think only of the good of the ordinary people of South Sudan.

Plea to the Government of Uganda:

We are not politicians and we do not wish to give detailed political recommendations. Nevertheless, we dare to speak to political leaders as Jesus instructed us, *like sheep among wolves... as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16)*. Thus, we make the following pleas to seek the attention of the Government of Uganda:

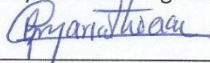
1. Uganda has played an important role in addressing issues of conflict in South Sudan, as such, Uganda should refrain from actions that might compromise its role as a mediator in the conflict.
2. Government of Uganda to support a more inclusive peace process beyond immediate political actors, including diaspora, citizens, and other critical stakeholders.
3. Government of Uganda should use its influence to campaign for an arms embargo in South Sudan.
4. Government of Uganda to use its influence within the EAC to mobilise members to set clear roadmap for ending the conflict, IGAD process notwithstanding.
5. Government of Uganda mobilise the international community to continue to address the plight of the increasing South Sudanese refugees in Uganda.



Closing Appreciation:

We should like to end by thanking the Church in Uganda for their unwavering support, and for being with us during our meeting with the Prime Minister of Uganda, Rt. Hon. Dr Ruhakana RUGANDA. We thank also our regional Church bodies who accompanied us on this visit – the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), and the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA). We thank the ordinary people of this country, this region and other parts of Africa who have shown solidarity with us always. We ask for your continued prayers, just as we and our people pray for you.

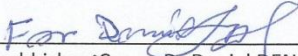
May God bless Uganda, God bless South Sudan, God bless Africa.



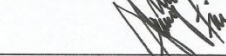
Rt. Rev. Moderator Peter GAI LUAL MARROW
Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)



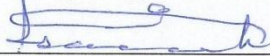
Archbishop Paulino LUKUDU LORO
Metropolitan Archbishop of JUBA, Catholic Church



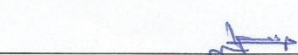
Archbishop Canon Dr Daniel DENG BUL YAK
Archbishop and Primate, Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS)



Bishop Dr Arkanjelo WANI LEMI
Presiding Bishop, Africa Inland Church (AIC)



Bishop Dr Isaiah MAJOK DAU
General Overseer, Sudan Pentecostal Church - JUBA



Rt. Rev. Moderator James PAR TAP HON
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Rev. Moderator Alex GABRIEL LADU LUNGAJU
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan (PCSS/S) - JUBA



Rev. Bulus SHUBBA WALA
Chairman, Sudan Interior Church (SIC) - RENK



Fr. James OYET LATANSIO
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