

S. Sudan refutes claim of President Kiir's "apology letter" to Obama

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August 7, 2012 (JUBA) - South Sudan on Tuesday strongly refuted reports that its President, Salva Kiir wrote "an apology letter" to his US counterpart, Barack Obama denying his alleged support for Sudanese rebels, SPLM-N.

The report, which appeared in McClatchy, one of US largest newspaper groups, said the South Sudan leader wrote to Obama, allegedly explaining why he twice denied that Juba was throwing its weight behind rebels opposed to the Khartoum government.

The newspaper, in an article published on Thursday last week, further claimed that President Kiir, in his alleged letter, also accepted offering support to rebels, but that he could not admit in a meeting earlier with Obama in September 2011.

But South Sudan's information minister, Benjamin Barnaba Marial, strongly dismissed the report, describing it as "untrue" and a mere "creation" by those behind the publication.

"There is nothing like that. What has happened is that President Obama wrote a letter to President Salva Kiir which was handed in by the Secretary of State Clinton, who came here to Juba and I was there watching. But the contents of the letter have not yet been released by the President," Marial said.

The minister, while addressing a press conference on Tuesday, further stressed that his government remains committed to peaceful relations with Sudan, adding that supporting rebels fighting its neighbors would contravene its vision.

Marial, also South Sudan's government spokesperson said the people of South Sudan remain sympathetic to situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, and that explains why President Kiir offered to assist his Sudanese counterpart, Omer Al-Bashir in finding solutions to end the conflict.

"President Salva has been saying that we are not supporting the SPLM-North, but the fact that we are sympathetic to them and that President Kiir can help to assist President Bashir if he negotiates peacefully with the SPLM-North as required by the [United Nations] Security Council 2046," he emphasized.

The minister, however, said the visit of US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton was instrumental in improving the relations and partnership between the two countries, in addition to ensuring peaceful relations between Sudan and South Sudan.

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