

Upper Nile State arrests 15 members of SPLM-DC's "military wing"

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August 21, 2012 (JUBA) - The Governor of Upper Nile State, Simon Kun Puoc, on Tuesday accused South Sudan's main opposition party of having an armed wing backed by neighbouring Sudan.

He accused the Sudan People's Liberation Movement for Democratic Change (SPLM-DC) of sabotaging security of the area allegedly by collaborating against stability of the state with the Sudan Armed Forces, from which the new nation seceded in 2011.

"There are people who still look to the north as where there is leadership. They are mentality still feeling that we are one and under Sudanese leadership in Khartoum. They still see themselves inferior to the north. These people, especially the leaders of the so called SPLM-DC are still collaborating with Sudan", said Governor Puoc.

The leading member of South Sudan's ruling SPLM claimed that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which became the country's official military after secession from Sudan in 2011 had captured fifteen members of an armed militia group who identified themselves as an armed wing of the opposition party.

"We have said many times with clear evidence that SPLM-DC is supporting militia groups. It has an armed wing. This has been confirmed by fifteen members of the armed groups which the SPLA captured recently. They confessed it themselves", the governor explained.

However, the SPLM-DC has dismissed the allegations.

"These are just allegations without evidence. We have said this many times but individuals within the SPLM continues to spread lies about our party so that they create negative impression about the activities of our party for no reason", Anyoti Adigo, a leading SPLM-DC member told *Sudan Tribune* on Wednesday.

Adigo challenged the country's ruling party to produce evidence linking his party to armed group.

"This is not the first time individuals within SPLM have come up to make these allegations. They have always made these allegations to just create [a] bad impression about [the] activities of [our] party from the general public. It is not true that we have [a] connection with any armed groups", he explained.

He claimed that the allegations were aimed at eventually removing the SPLM-DC from the electoral register making the party an illegal entity. According to the results South Sudan's last elections in 2010, which opposition groups complained were not free and fair, SPLM-DC are South Sudan's largest opposition group.

The attacks against his party, Adigo said, were because SPLM-DC were becoming a clear and viable alternative to the SPLM.

The spokesperson of South Sudan's Army (SPLA), Colonel Philip Aguer, did not comment on the most recent allegations when approached by *Sudan Tribune* earlier this week.

He did, however, repeat the military's assertion that the SPLM-DC support rebels militia groups backed by Khartoum in order to destabilise the young nation.

"There are evidence that SPLM-DC sponsor militia groups. Some of their members who have defected have always said it. Those caught during attacks beginning in 2009 have always confessed being used by SPLM-DC. So it is clear that it is linked to militia group", the Colonel explained.

Most of the SPLM-DC's support comes from Upper Nile State, which borders Sudan. The SPLM-DC's leader Lam Akol, who hails from the Shilluk tribe is also from Upper Nile.

UPPER NILE'S EID MESSAGE

Speaking at to mark the Muslim festival at Eid El-Fitr, Governor of Upper Nile State, Simon Kun Puoc, said his administration will neither entertain not condone hateful religious preaching as well as behaviour that might endanger the fabric of society, aiming at thwarting religious peaceful coexistence and development efforts.

Governor Puoc said the objective of his administration was to create a peaceful, happy and crime-free state where every citizen has a chance to participate in the development of the country without fear of threats and intimidation.

The leading figure of the country's ruling SPLM made the remarks in a 2-page message delivered on the eve of Eid El-Fitr, marking the end of fasting of Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

He denounced banditry, murder and other subversive activities against the state and its people, saying it will not be tolerated, and his administration will take whatever legal action necessary to expunge deadly and heinous acts from the area with immediacy.

"Together, we must ensure that we do not only abide by the laws of the land, but also compel the criminals in our midst to retract permanently or amend their ways. There is no other option", he said

The top state executive officer said security forces and the judicial system will continue to be empowered to enforce the law, where applicable.

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