

Unity State's Payinjar County finally united after 2010 elections

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August 23, 2012 (BENTIU) - Payinjar County, which has been split politically since controversial elections in 2010 has resolved to unite under the theme: "one government, one SPLM party and one community", representatives, executives and constitutional post holders said Thursday.

Since the April 2010 elections the county has been divided between those who supported independent candidate, Angelina Jany Teny, the wife of South Sudan vice president Riek Machar Teny, and those who supported the official nominee of South Sudan's ruling party - former rebels the SPLM - Taban Deng Gai.

Recently the SPLM have been visiting the ten states of South Sudan, thanking their supporters for standing alongside them during the two decade conflict that led to the region's independence from Sudan.

A 2005 peace deal between the SPLM and the ruling National Congress Party in Khartoum gave South Sudan the right to secede, which it took by an overwhelming margin in 2011.

On Thursday Panyijar County representatives flew to the county headquarters to launch a developmental initiative for the next five years, beginning in 2013. The Panyijar County strategic development plan came as the result of a fruitful meeting, the local authorities said.

The groups also discussed, the need to improve the education system - currently less than 3 in 10 South Sudanese can read and write, a legacy of the civil war and underinvestment. At the meeting it was agreed that they needed to work together to develop the county and not be divided by politics.

Peter Gai Joak, the Panyijar County Commissioner, who chaired the meeting on Thursday added that said that the Nyong community should not be distracted by power struggles among politicians.

"Standing together, we develop our county and make it a comparable with the rest counties in Unity and entire Republic of South Sudan", said Joak.

The county commissioner emphasised that, "working for the common good of the communities instead of individual grievances". "Openness could be [a] tool" to mark "the way forward for the prosperity of their beloved county", he added.

However, community members from Nyong north criticised Unity State's Governor Taban Deng Gai for appointing the Commissioner and the current minister from Nyong South, while denying Nyong north the political opportunity to be represented.

Locals feel that Payinjar has been poorly dealt with in terms of development and communication networks since the SPLM came to power in the region 2005. In Payinjar County during the 2010 general elections around six times more people voted for the independent candidate, Angelina Teny, rather than Taban Deng Gai, according to electoral officials.

The Payinjar community has written to the governor many times demanding the removal of current Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Samuel Lony Geng, who also holds the post of deputy chairperson of SPLM in the state. If he was relieved of the one of these positions, people from Payinjar hope they would be able to have another representative at the top of the state government.

This is the first time the groups have been united by the current commissioner to work together as sons and daughters of the county to progress in term of development in the state. Joak has been struggling, since his appointment as commissioner in 2011, to encourage the groups supporting Deng and Teny to unite under one umbrella, to forget past controversies and work together.

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