

## Murle leaders distance themselves from South Sudan militias

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August 31, 2012 (JUBA) - Leaders of the Murle ethnic group denied Thursday that they had any links with David Yau Yau, who is leading a rebellion against the government from Pibor County in Jonglei State.

Speaking at a meeting in South Sudan's capital Juba the Murle leaders strongly condemned recent attacks by the rebels on a South Sudan Army (SPLA) base in Pibor County, Jonglei State.

The Murle leaders, during a meeting with senior SPLA figures, also vowed never to compromise the security of the people and stability of the young nation, which witnessed its first independence anniversary less than two months ago.

The joint meeting, according to the minutes obtained by *Sudan Tribune*, was urgently convened by the senior Army officers to review the security situation in Pibor, days after the top brass of the Army, led by the Deputy Defence minister, Majak D'Agoot visited the troubled county.

While in Pibor, the senior army officials, who included the acting Chief of General Staff, Gen. Obutto Mammur Mette reportedly held talks with the county commissioner, the security committee chairman, and elders led by the Paramount Chief, Nganthou Kawelajok.

An Army official told *Sudan Tribune* on Friday that the meeting, held on 27 August at the SPLA brigade headquarters in Pibor, was organized by the deputy defence minister to assess the security situation in the area, understand the movement of Yau Yau's militias and get more information on challenges of the ongoing disarmament process.

A state-wide campaign to collect arms from civilians in Jonglei State began in March this year following widespread violence in 2011 spilling into 2012, mainly between the Murle and Luo Nuer over cattle and the abduction of women and children. Over 100,000 people were affected.

D'Agoot, according to the minutes, assured the Murle community of the Army's firm commitment to closely work with local leaders in the area in order to resolve the security situation in Pibor.

In addition, the SPLA assured the Murle community representatives of its seriousness to implement the rule of law to those who committed human rights violations during the disarmament process, which involved over 15,000 strong Army and Police.

The SPLA has been heavily criticised by a report by US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), which accused the Army gross human right violations, including torture and rape during the disarmament exercise. The Army, despite denying the accusation, promised to institute investigations into the matter and has so far dismissed over 30 soldiers.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on Friday voiced concerns over increasing spate of recent violence in Jonglei State. The attack, it said, threatens the important gains made this year in restoring peace and security.

UNMISS, in a statement, said it is particularly concerned by the apparent emergence in Jonglei of an armed insurgency group allegedly linked to the militia leader, David Yau Yau, which is believed to be acting in concert with groups of armed youths who have evaded the civilian disarmament operation.

"It is essential to preserve the gains achieved over recent months in the improved security situation in Jonglei and ensure the civilian disarmament process goes forward as a key element of this effort," UNMISS said in a statement.

The organization, however, urged the South Sudanese authorities to take all necessary measures in order for the displaced population to safely return to their homes, while reiterating its role in backing a series of confidence-building measures in the Jonglei peace process.

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