

South Sudan objects to Sudan's proposal to divide Abyei

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September 1, 2012 (JUBA) - South Sudan on Saturday reiterated its position against the alleged proposal by the government of neighbouring Sudan, seeking the division of the contested region of [Abyei](#).

"The interest of the Sudanese government in Abyei have always been clear to us. We know what they want. They are only interested in resources. Their interest is oil. They do not have any genuine claim in the area," Michael Makuei Lueth, a member of South Sudanese delegation at the talks said in an interview with *Sudan Tribune* on Saturday.

Abyei is a contested region on the north-south border, which was due for a referendum in January 2011 to allow residents to determine whether the area would remain in Sudan or become part of South Sudan, from where it was transferred during the colonial period.

However, the two sides disagree on which groups have legitimate claims to be considered residents and therefore eligible under the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement to vote in the plebiscite. The delay has also been caused by the inability of Khartoum and Juba to set up the body to implement the vote.

Armed conflict in broke out in the region in May 2011 when SAF troops took control of the region after three days of conflict following an [ambush by a South Sudanese armed group](#), leading to the displacement of over 100,000 people. To stabilise the security situation Ethiopia sent peacekeepers to the region to form the [UN Interim Security Force for Abyei](#) (UNISFA) and oversee the demilitarisation of the area and the formation of a civilian Abyei administration with representatives from both Sudan and South Sudan.

Progress has been made with both Juba and Khartoum recently agreeing to withdraw their troops. However, Juba alleges that [clandestine SAF troops remain in the region, especially around oil installations](#).

Lueth, who is the country's minister of parliamentary affairs, is currently a leading member of South Sudan's team of negotiators led by Pagan Amum, the Secretary General of South Sudan's ruling SPLM. The minister said they have rejected a proposal by the Sudanese delegation at the latest round of talks seeking to divide Abyei.

"We rejected demands by the Sudanese delegation to divide Abyei because we do not see the reason. Their proposal was not justifiable. It lack[s] basis", said Lueth.

He explained that South Sudan's leadership is seeking a final settlement to the dispute, for which he said there are only two logical resolutions; the first being a referendum, "so that the citizens of Abyei decide their own destiny"; and the second is that Sudan "transfer the area from [South] [Kordofan](#) [State in Sudan] to [Warrap State in the] Bahr el Ghazal region [of South Sudan]."

Arop Madut Arop, member of parliament representing Abyei in South Sudan's [National Legislative Assembly](#) also objected to Khartoum's proposal to divide Abyei, adding that the international community had "let down" South Sudan in the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, which was a key part of the 2005 [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#).

The people of Abyei were to vote in a January 2011 referendum to decide their destiny but the international community failed to impose the requisite pressure on Khartoum to carry it out, according to Arop. South Sudan's referendum on independence did go ahead as planned and the result - an overwhelming vote for secession - was recognised by Khartoum.

Arop accused Sudan's ruling [National Congress Party](#) of "deliberately delaying the passage of the Abyei referendum act" by delaying the nomination of members of the referendum commission and insisting on the inclusion of the traditionally Khartoum-aligned Misseriya ethnic group.

As a nomadic group spending part of the year in Abyei the right of the [Misseriya](#) to be involved in determining the future of the region is a matter of contention. The international community's failure to intervene in this "let down our people" according to Arop.

South Sudan insists that the nine Dink Ngok Chiefdoms are the traditional residents of Abyei and they alone should take part in any vote over the future of the area.

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