

Dr. Jakenya, South Sudanese not monkeys

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By Zechariah Manyok Biar

September 10, 2012 - Sometimes war of words happens when brothers do not know how to choose words in expressing their anger. There are words that are like taboo to use however much angry you are. A country of educated people like Kenya is often expected to know how people communicate in addressing problems. This is seemingly not the case when some Kenyans express their anger against South Sudanese.

Regardless of how much our unprofessional police or security investigators handle both South Sudanese and foreigners during criminal investigation, I am seriously saddened by the choice of words by the Kenyan writer who calls himself Dr. Jakenya. In his article published by The Kenyan Daily Post, Dr. Jakenya wrote: "I must admit that I find Sudanese people very ugly. They are as black as charcoal, ugly and stupid!" He wrote like this because of the second case of a Kenyan who mysteriously died under investigation in South Sudan.

Stupid is a word that no educated person uses to describe the people of a whole nation like South Sudan, although Dr. Jakenya knows little about the difference between the Sudan and South Sudan. He did not only call South Sudanese ugly and stupid, he also said: "These are the same monkeys who we Kenyans babysat during the conflict, we welcomed the mongooses in Kenya like brothers and now the monkeys are turning against our countrymen."

Calling people monkeys and mongooses is a step too far than calling them stupid. Are South Sudanese monkeys because Kenyans have died under investigation in mysterious ways and the Kenyans who killed South Sudanese in Kenya openly, without even a reason for them to go for investigation, are people? What is a difference between criminal South Sudanese police and Kenyan criminal police? Or is the author not aware of how Kenyan police treated South Sudanese he now claims to have been babysat by Kenyans?

Leave that alone. Was it not less than three months ago when a South Sudanese University student from Pathuyith community in Bor County, Jonglei State, was knifed to death by few criminal Kenyans in Nakuru while visiting his potential South Sudanese in-laws and no arrest has yet been made, or is the Doctor a person who reads the news of Kenyan killings only?

I hate being defensive, but I think it is not acceptable for anybody to describe us the way this Doctor did. He might be a relative to the killed person, which is understandable. But he should have known better how to choose better words to express his sorrow. If his aim is to provoke our government to act against these unprofessional investigators, then there are better ways of doing it without minimizing people by calling them monkeys. These people might even be on your side in their condemnation of the ongoing killings of innocent people here in South Sudan. Hosting of South Sudanese during the war is not a big deal if we are not respected as people with dignity.

Nobody among us here in South Sudan would underestimate the contribution made by Kenyan government in making sure there was peace between South Sudan and the Sudan. We attribute current independence of South Sudan to the effort made by the government of Kenya. Our appreciation of Kenyans is shown by thousands of Kenyans working and investing in South Sudan today. We see them as brothers and sisters. We are not happy when we hear any of them dying in the hands of security people who are supposed to protect them.

However, we cannot lightly take any diminishing of our people to the level they are called monkeys simply because the Kenyan government helped negotiated peace between the Sudan and South Sudan. We count good things that Kenyans have done to us, but that does not mean everything they did to us was good. In fact, bad things they did to us outnumbered good things they did, if writers like Dr. Jakenya are not aware of this fact.

What it means to be a good friend should not be pushed down our throats with derogative terms. We know what a good friend is. A true friend is the one who takes time to understand why his friend behaves the way he does towards him.

Kenyans should have taken time to understand whether or not South Sudanese who end up in the hands of our unprofessional security officers often come back in good shape or alive. If they do not, then why would Kenyans take their side of the problem as isolated from what South Sudanese experience in the hands of these security personnel?

It does not matter whether we are stupid or not, what we understand from what Kenyans always claim about babysitting us is that they want to move around in South Sudan, misbehaving like they do in Kenya and not be questioned. We are not going to accept this. Criminals must be held accountable for their misbehavior regardless of where they come from. The only thing we condemn our security personnel about is their senseless torturing of wrongdoers. Criminals should be treated as humans and be given chances to defend themselves in court instead of being tortured to death.

Having said this, I still do not think Kenyans who think they know better than what we know are licensed to smear us with whatever term they read from English dictionaries. We don't care who gives us what if they diminish us because of that gift. When you give somebody something and start using that gift to force him/her meet all your interests at his/her expense, then that person

will take it that the gift was in bad faith and therefore no longer deserve his or her appreciation.

If Kenyans do not stop misusing the effort they made to make sure that CPA succeeded, then we South Sudanese, regardless of how we disagree with our unprofessional security personnel, will stop appreciating Kenyans for what they did to us during our civil war because the bad they did outnumbered the good. A person who calls us stupid and monkeys is worse than the enemy he said to have helped us fight.

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