

N.Bahr el Ghazal official warns against conceding land to Sudan

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September 22, 2012 (WAU) - Legislators and government officials from South Sudan's state of [Northern Bahr el Ghazal](#) on Saturday broke a long silence over their exclusion from post-secession talks involving neighbouring government of Sudan which allegedly led to the concession of [14 miles of disputed territory](#).

Members of the Northern Bahr el Ghazal government has repeatedly asked for the inclusion of the knowledgeable members of the communities from the contested area, arguing that negotiators have scant knowledge of the area and that it would be better a team including elders and politicians from the area be part of the negotiation.

"We have been keenly and patiently following every single step of negotiation process in Addis Ababa since they began. We do not doubt the ability of our negotiating team at the talks. We trust them and hope that we do not expect our negotiators to compromise an inch of 14 mile area to Sudan," Agany Kawac Agany, a member of Juba based National Legislative Assembly told *Sudan Tribune* on Saturday.

Agany said he has held a series of meetings with traditional leaders and local authorities as well as with intellectuals from the area after returning from Juba for recess in order to provide briefing about negotiations in the neighbouring country of Ethiopia between the two sides.

Agany said he hopes that the international community will not compel president Salva Kiir to make any concession on the area, warning that a "slight mistake" would drag the two sides into war.

Majang Ngor Kuany, a former speaker of the state legislative assembly on Saturday told *Sudan Tribune* that the area in question "is the area where we have our graves of our ancestors. It is where we were born so if it is annexed it means we are also annexed because there is nowhere we can go."

Simon Deng Duang, another member of parliament in the national legislative assembly in Juba explained the whole state of Northern Bahr el Ghazal has already made its position clear to the government and the negotiating team at the talks.

"We have said this time and again in all the meetings and discussions with our government and negotiating that the area lies deeply inside January 1st 1956 borderline with Sudan. The border line is more than 40 miles northwards," Duang explained in an interview with *Sudan Tribune* from Juba.

The state governor [Paul Malong Awan](#) also warned against conceding the area and reportedly told president Salva Kiir his decision to resign should the government fails to address the issue at the negotiating table.

"This is not a simple issue. The issue of land is actually one of the key reasons why our people took up arms. It was to defend this area," a presidential source quoted Awan as telling Kiir in a meeting on Wednesday. The aide said the Governor has threatened to resign from his position if a compromise is made on the area.

"The issue of the 14 mile area is getting serious. I tell you governor Malong Awan was very serious... the president asked him to relax and assured him that the area would not be given away to the north even if the government were to make concessions on some of the issues being discussed at the talks," he explained.

Northern Bahr el Ghazal is one of the states bordering Sudan. The area shares borders with the Sudanese states of South Kordofan and Eastern Darfur whose nomadic communities move with their cattle during dry season, looking for water and pasture land south of the river Kiir.

Local communities in the border states between the two countries have in the past lived peacefully and moved freely until the outbreak of civil war between the north and South erupted in 1983.

Since the signing of the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) in 2005 there has been a simmering violence between the two states which erupted into [all-out conflict in March](#). Both signatories are attending ongoing negotiations held in Addis Ababa.

South Sudan's negotiating team under the secretary general of the country's governing [Sudan People's Liberation Movement \(SPLM\)](#), [Pagan Amum](#), has had difficulty in mediating the demands of legislators and prominent community members asking for their inclusion at the Addis Ababa talks on post-independence issues.