

## I fear for the future of Abyei and other disputed areas

Sunday 14 October 2012

By Isaiah Abraham

October 13, 2012 - Sudan and South Sudan have agreed on oil production fees, freedoms for their nationals, buffer zones for their two countries, certain economic matters, banking, trade, post service benefits and security. But the future of Abyei and the status of the disputed areas of Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas, Kofi Kingi, Mile 14 and Kaka remain uncertain. Though there have been ballyhoos from stakeholders that a chapter has been opened between Sudan and South Sudan, the absence of will to put to rest disputes in the aforesaid areas is a reminiscence of trouble ahead as far as the relations between the two countries is concern.

To begin with, there can never be peace on the border between Sudan and South Sudan if the issue of Abyei and other disputed areas isn't resolved. Khartoum and Juba have no choice but to confront this fact and agree. Whether modalities are the problem or not, it seems as if one side is dragging its feet and won't like these questions to go away. The agreements were just conspicuous of the situation on Abyei, Panthou and others, and that was just not right. South Sudan in particular should not be excited about the signed agreements. The agreements to this author are just bad. They only serve short term goals,, even if they are for three and half years. That period is long and will dire repercussion in many years thereafter.

I know the negotiators on the side of South Sudan would want to save faces after their disastrous approaches to issues on our streets. They are also avoiding international claustrophobia but the truth is that we have negotiated as weak partners, and ended up with nothing concrete. Abyei future really bothers me after this agreement. I hear the Chief Negotiator on the Southern side upbeat that someone somewhere will use a stick to force Khartoum to accept the African Union Road Map. I doubt! Khartoum will never be moved with sanctions or otherwise. Where does the confidence brother Amum is exuding coming from? Realistically we could have accepted the idea of a referendum Chair coming from the North, and then get our acts together to let our people (Ngok Dinka) who are still hanging in the Northern Sudan come home and vote.

There will be no Misseriya single soul to vote of course, but Ngok alone can make history to vote 100% for South Sudan. We can do it if the likes of Dr. Francis Mading Deng are serious. We have stake in Abyei not just people but the land, this is South Sudan piece and shouldn't be left to Northern Sudan that way. Dr. Barnaba Marial (South Sudan Information Minister) has become another Iragi Mohammed Al Sahhaf. He says we shouldn't be alarm, even if it takes years. He cited the United States vs Canada border disputes, North Korea vs South Korea etc, and the question is: can we wait indefinitely for Abyei and Panthou status? You wrong sir! We can't wait.

Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas, Kofi Kingi and Kaka town, the Sudanese Armed Forces are firmly there, and if that is the case, what does South Sudan have as an option after the failure of talks over these areas? I'm not buying any threat from UN, AU and Mr. Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki against Khartoum. The talks to me have failed. I call them failed talks because they never addressed real pressing issues of land ownership and political destiny for Abyei. The give given (dead line) given for soul searching is already approaching. The next round of talk after twenties is likely to yield nothing since the principles leaders of Al Bashir and Kiir won't be there. There is still too much bad blood as hard liners are digging in. Doubts hover over the said freedoms, banking and trade agreements.

Khartoum hates South Sudan and want it die. We sometime back predicted that peaceful resolutions of land in favor of South Sudan will be remote. We are at it, and time will justify us again that we have achieved basically nothing. Viability beta chunu are these people talking about when one side is superior, established and grounded. South Sudan is disadvantaged. It has been compounded by poor judgment and bad governance on the side of these leaders. They are giving up Abyei slowly unfortunately.

The Abyei matter can't be treated like that and expect the public to keep quiet. The negotiators are blowing hot and cold at the same time. Somewhere they thought the case will end up in the court, and in another they are for a political decision from Khartoum. This is a risky business and I suggest that our people follow this matter to the end without giving it up. We can do the same to Panthou and areas in Western Bahr El Ghazal. We must not leave our small piece to Northern Sudan. It wasn't in place to leave Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and Abyei behind and expect Khartoum to accept peaceful negotiations of these areas. Stakes are high, and look forward for our leaders to go to the drawing board.

But now that there are different voices against and for on the said agreements, what do you make of the whole lot as a concern citizen or observer of the Sudanese affairs. Well, I for one don't want to reinvent the wheel, the agreement was sanctioned by our leader Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit; it was also negotiated and passed by people we are confidence of their ability. The Council of Minister on Friday moreover passed the text in toto; the ball has moved to its irreversible stage with Parliament on its way. Who cares again here if there are questions hanging over the so-called 'excellent' agreements?

My query however what our leaders should doing in the next phase especially on Abyei, Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and Kofi Kingi. I want our leaders to know that people are not happy that the negotiators have succumbed to so-called to internal and external pressures to accept a bad deal. Economic issues yeah, are necessary but political. People had high hope that the Addis Ababa Summit will yield final resolutions of the pending issues of Abyei and Panthou. Our people will one day go it alone on the ground without the knowledge of the Juba. Nothing is easy; they got to pursue the issues above with the vigor it needed to ensure acceptable solution for all.

*Isaiah Abraham can be reached at [Isaiah\\_abraham@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Isaiah_abraham@yahoo.co.uk)*