

Nuer youth demand immediate release of detained army officer

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October 18, 2012 (JUBA) - The leadership of the Nuer Youth Executive Council (NYEC) has demanded the "immediate" release of Maj. Gen. Simon Gatwec Duel, a senior South Sudan army (SPLA) officer arrested over alleged links to rebels fighting the government.

In a press release, issued on Thursday, NYEC said it was "deeply troubled" by the events that led to the 11 October arrest of the officer, which reportedly occurred from his work place at the army headquarters in Bilpham - just outside the capital, Juba.

Maj. Gen. Duel's arrest, sources say, resulted from his alleged links with rebels loyal to renegade David Yau Yau, who currently leads a rebellion in South Sudan's Jonglei State.

"We thought that his arrest was something related to administrative issues until we read the press release of Jieng Community Association in Juba which categorically stated that Maj. Gen. Simon Gatwec was incarcerated due to his support to Nuer Prophet Dak Kueth and Murle rebel commander, David Yau Yau," partly reads the Nuer youth statement.

The Jieng Community Association, also extended by Sudan Tribune, claims Maj. Duel's arrest followed military intelligence reports, which reportedly linked him and other politicians to an alleged coup attempt against the leadership of President Salva Kiir.

The youth, in their press release, dismissed these allegations as baseless; saying South Sudan has since last year, been awash with rumors of coups plots.

Meanwhile, the NYEC claim the arrest of Maj. Gen. Duel is part of an alleged ploy to sideline Nuer army officers from the SPLA, specifically targeting its high-ranking officers.

"We have discovered that President Kiir wanted to implement a policy of purging the Nuer officers out of the SPLA army. This policy was delayed when Paulino Matip was alive because he was against it," further reads the Nuer statement.

Matip died in August having been the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) since 2006.

The spokesperson of the SPLA was unavailable for a comment on the allegations when contacted by *Sudan Tribune* on Thursday.

However, South Sudan's Kiir, on Wednesday, told army officers, that the international community would not recognize any government formed after a military coup.

South Sudan became the world's youngest nation when it gained independent in July last year.

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