

## South Sudan skepticism on security deal with Sudan is real

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October 19, 2012 - Juba leadership on the Cooperation Agreement has started to be dismissive and abusive to those questioning some pieces in the agreement. Some of our lawmakers have joined the prey and are out to criticize whoever criticizes the agreement. They have even cracked as there are calling some section of our society 'Northern Bahr El Ghazal' people verses others. Legislators everywhere have moral duty to protect the larger interest of the nation and not just their local constituents.

Constituent bigger like South Sudan is what binds us all. It was uncharacteristic, just unfair therefore for lawmakers to localize national pressing matters to specific individuals or groups to fight it out. Why leave the border matters to states affected, I have asked such question many times? MPs for the areas of Mile 14, Abyei and Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and Kaka are like any other MPs in Western Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes etc whose lands have no dispute with the Northern Sudan.

I found it cruel when the matters in question were left to people affected to sort it out, while the rest of the country goes indifference. This should not have been the case. The issue of Mile 14, Abyei, Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas is for the entire nation called South Sudan not for Northern Bahr El Ghazal, Western Bahr El Ghazal, Western Upper Nile or Northern Upper Nile.

People everywhere aren't happy that the negotiators allowed Khartoum a foothold on these lands. We have made a mistake to sign away Mile 14 just to repeat ourselves, under the pretext of a buffer zone. We have allowed our lands to be occupied and expect others from outside to help us out. No amount of explanation will extinguish the fire of anger against the President and his team on this matters of Mile 14, Panthou and Hofra Al Nahas. Abyei, Mile 14, Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and others are becoming disputed because someone has entered them by force, and we never responded earlier on the ground or diplomatically.

These places are 100% South Sudan lands. Our negotiators succumbed to pressure from unknown, and hence a failed test for our leadership. President Kiir is to be blamed on this occupied South lands by Arabs, and now he has gone further to be offensive against anyone who questions his judgment. His statement that he fought the war and should be left alone rub salt to injuries. Again that he 'won't cede an inch of land to the North' came too late too little. We aren't buying this belated chest thumping statement from the man we all know his previous promises. We know him better. No one has faith in Arbitration Court courses either.

Who is this that wants to fool us that the argument isn't about land but military disengagement? Remember someone argued that it is just a temporarily arrangement to allow forces to disengage and later on the border demarcation will determine the real owners of the land. That is a lie. Why apply disengagement partially? Buffer Zone practice is applied when the two sides lay claim on an area. All disputed areas could have been demilitarized. That is exactly the trend. Mile 14 moreover has never been one. Why didn't the AU call for the demilitarization of all disputed lands? There is a sinister, and hence a problem.

The same way mediators avoided Panthou, Hofra Al Nahas and other lands that are disputed, where Sudanese Armed Forces are embedded, should have been the case for Mile 14. Mile 14 is used by Rezeigat Arabs during the summer, demilitarizing it after Sudan Army was chased away from there makes it an automatic disputed land. Allowing Khartoum to talk about another claim is too far an aggression. They will return to Mile 14 that now people are talking of it being a disputed land; they are immune to condemnation. Forget about International Community, we should have learned by now how the world out there works.

Badme a disputed territory at the heart of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea was awarded in 2002 to Eritrea by UN backed Commission but to date the Ethiopians troops are firmly on the ground. Is that scenario not going to repeat itself in our case for Mile 14, Pantou, Hofra Al Nahas and other disputed areas? I do think so. Majority of our people are stricken with fear that someone hasn't articulate well to protect the right of people on our land; we have lost out our rightful lands to Sudan through cowardly and ignorant or both.

Why is it that our leaders want to play politics in the face of an anomaly? This is arrogance at best and a skullduggery! Our leaders know where the truth is, but aren't telling it. The issue of Mile 14 and other disputed lands isn't small thing for the head of state to dare sarcastically that people who oppose the deal are to go to war. Sir, people will go to war with you first if you don't stop your clumsy approach to such critical matters of our existence! Khartoum has found a weak character they can manipulate. In the face of challenges our president has clearly become another challenge to our people. Our people didn't elect Kiir to give away our land, and then spew disparage at his disgruntle people.

Mr. President has sharpened his derogative remarks against those opposed to the agreement during his address to security

officers on Tuesday that those who are unhappy with the agreement 'are people who were with the Jalaba/Diaspora, and never had time to fight with him in the bush'. How about me sir, I was with you in one of the battalions (Tiger/Tumsah) you led, what will you say about me? I participated in the demonstration on Monday in Juba, all the way to parliament, to denounce the buffer zone dog for Mile 14; I went there for reasons known to all- land, land, land. We had expected our lawmakers to reverse the arrangement on Mile 14 and go with the rest of the agreement.

People have started to believe that someone has given away our land in exchange for an oil deal with Khartoum. The document should not have gone like that, people. Unfortunately, we have people who aren't standing up for their rights. Shame them! Kiir must go! He has proven disrespectful to his people. His foul mouthing isn't tolerable anymore.

Get it right and just to emphasize the matter we are trying to say, we are not rejecting the Cooperation Agreement with the Sudan, especially for an agreement that will last for few years. But if the matter touches land, it becomes so complex to clear even after the expiry time. The agreement isn't all bad. People became happy that at least the oil production will flow again for the economy to resuscitate and that there will be relative harmony between Sudan and South Sudan once belligerent countries. But look, there are eight (8) agreements for the intended cooperation, but one known as security agreement has spoiled the rest. The agreement has no meaning if the issues of Panthou, Kaka, Abyei, Hofra El Nahas and Mile 14 aren't resolved. The security agreement should have been thrown out of the window by the lawmakers until grievances or grey areas surrounding these matters are resolved. This is where we are coming; the issues of land are so grave for anyone to dip his/her fingers.

Our president should own it up. This is what we are saying and he got to fix it. He failed to show leadership, so do the lawmakers in our land. Our legislators could have gone to amend the document before ratifying them. What is this argument that if the president signs it the document can't be challenged. Who is this god in South Sudan that when he does something it can't be reversed? Whether Kiir or Garang sign it, people are supreme; they can redo what has been botched for the good of all. Mile 14 and Panthou are sold out for no reasons at all. Oil or no oil, we have been cheated by a ruthless clique in Juba. To them the agreement is 'excellent', the agreement 'hasn't been understood', the 'media has failed' to articulate it to the people, 'reactionary forces' are behind rejection of the agreement, 'insignificant number' in our society, people who objected to the agreement are 'diaspora' and that they also 'opposed CPA but' later cheered it when the flag was raised. That is utter nonsense!

Majority of our people are not opposing the agreement for the sake of it but had hoped that the leadership in Juba would do the necessary changes before going for a law. Bad deals create more troubles than solutions and hence uncalled for under the face of realities surrounding our rights.

My people have suffered under President Kiir and his heartless clique; I have no kind words again against these people. The demonstration we made as people of South Sudan on Monday- not as Northern Bahr El Ghazal people- will go to history as the beginning of things to come. Mr. President isn't apologetic and this is worrying. The people of this country deserve a leader that respects their views; we have never had problems with him since he accidentally ascended to power in 2005, because situation dictated that people exercise patience.

For the past eight years we have learned bitterly that Mr. Kiir is the problem and should be removed. He has failed us in many fronts, and on this matter of land he must not be forgiven. Our men in uniform in Mile 14 therefore are to remain in their places and let Mulana Makuei, Mbeki or Pagan come and dislodge them by force. AU must deploy any troops around Mile 14. We will see how to go about Panthou and Abyei now that someone is selling our lands to Arabs.

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