

## South Sudan and the question of "14 Mile area"

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By Sabrino Majok Majok

October 21, 2012 - The Cooperation Agreement recently signed in Addis Ababa on September 27th, 2012, has been received with mixed reactions in South Sudan with negotiators and their colleagues at an extreme end while people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal, civil society, and well-wishers at reconciliatory and balanced position of the agreement. In presence of these two opposing views, therefore, it's worth clarifying people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal's position.

Our position is that the so-called "14 mile," has never existed and has never ever been part of any peace agreements, including CPA.

Furthermore, the area that South Sudanese negotiators called "14 miles," is not part of any claimed or disputed areas whatsoever when it comes to Sudan and South Sudan post independence issues. As such it is mind boggling and absurd, really, to constantly hear and read comments on cooperation agreement by South Sudanese negotiators who portray themselves as gifted, Angel-like few in the country. They say that they understand "14 miles," better than citizens of Northern Bahr El Ghazal State; that the argument of the people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal State is "out of ignorance." But the opposite is true: Pagan, Salva Mathok, Makuei Lueth, Paul Mayom, and Dr. Marial's views are unfounded, presumptuous and imaginary that warrant strongest condemnation they deserve. Yes, Pagan and colleagues' views are just like somebody telling you that you do not know what is inside your house. Why? Because people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal know very well which areas are theirs and which are not, it is just simple as that. This general truth does not need Pagan, Makuei and the rest to interpret it; nor do we need rocket scientists for the same purpose.

But one thing is crystal clear. The area now being referred to as "14 miles" lies deep inside Northern Bahr El Ghazal territory and has never been contested at any time in history.

In fact, our villages are located many miles north of River Kiir. Had it not been for the unwarranted incursion into our land by Khartoum successive and dictatorial regimes during the long war, our borders with the North would have been more than 100 miles North of River Kiir.

Secondly, our gallant forces, SPLA, at Kiir Adem, Warguet and Majak-Wuoi are stationed many Kilometers North of River Kiir while Sudan armed Forces are stationed at Abumatharik (Majok Anei Yor) which is 50 miles North of Kiir while on the eastern side of Kiir River, SAF are stationed at Meriem (Rum Mamer) which is 35 miles North of River Kiir.

One therefore wonders why our forces would be required to leave their positions North of Kiir 10 Kilometers then continue moving Southward up to 14 miles (22 kilometers) then move further for additional 10 kilometers as stipulated by the agreement. If this goes as planned by the likes of Pagan, then it means our forces would be stationed 42 kilometers South of River Kiir only in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. I can't help posing a question here: how many kilometers would the Sudanese Armed Forces move back Northward from current position at Abumatharik and Meriem? I think it's high time that Pagan and the ilk educate the public, particularly the people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal whom he considers ignorant.

At this juncture, I would like to inform fellow South Sudanese citizens that the people whom Pagan Amum and his team continuously referred to as ignorant know what Pagan's group is upto.

To take you back in time, Pagan close ally and current Government spokesperson, Dr. Marial Benjam, once said before our historic referendum when he was interviewed on SSTV that the two Sudans have high chances of reuniting in the future like East and West German during the cold war era.

With this in mind I cannot agree more with comrade Del Rumdit Deng in his article published on Citizen News Paper dated October 15th, 2012, when he observed, "...by putting together all these agreements, one can clearly see unionists' invisible hands in full play for the rebirth of New Sudan Ideology...We have our independence but we don't control our international borders. Without our international borders we don't have our international sovereignty."

In any eventuality, Pagan's reference to Great people of Aweil as ignorant is a misnomer. Consequently, ignorance rightly reflects back to Pagan Amum Okiech and his team who assume that they know our villages more than we do.

And regardless what pro "14 miles" say on media, the Great people of Aweil will never ever relinquish an INCH of their land to Sudan.

One also wonder what level of English Proficiency should people of Northern Bahr El Ghazal attain to understand Cooperation

Agreement? What special linguistic qualities do Pagan Amum, Salva Mathok Gengdit, Michael Makuei, Paul Mayom, Dr. Marial and others have that make them understand the agreement better than people of Northern Bhar El Ghazal whose land was given to Sudan?

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