

## Why South Sudanese must disrupt President Al-Bashir visit to Juba

Monday 29 October 2012

By Steve Paterno

October 28, 2012 - Finally, it is officially confirmed, early next months, the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir will make an official trip to the Republic of South Sudan. This visit is intended as a gesture of good will and a measure of confidence building in sorting out the remaining outstanding post referendum issues. The visit is as well as it is a means of mending a soaring relationship between the two countries. The last time such meeting was arranged, and just three days before the scheduled visit, President al-Bashir ordered his troops to invade South Sudan and as such, the South Sudanese military beat back al-Bashir's forces and overtook their strategic staging barrack at Panthou, a border area, which is actually contested between the two countries. As a result, President al-Bashir protested the defensive posture of South Sudanese military. He decided to cancel his visit and vowed for a war with South Sudan. International community pressure reigned on both sides to tune it down and go back to the negotiating table or else, they will face stiff sanctions.

Caving to the international community pressure, in an extraordinary summit held at Ethiopian capital, President Salva Kiir and President Omar al-Bashir, were forced to ink a vaguely proposed deal, dubbed as Cooperative Agreement between the two countries. The agreement, touches in passing, on security, economy, trades, freedom, and borders, without clear mechanization for implementations. The core issues such as Abyie, other contested areas, and border demarcations are left untouched for future negotiations. The fact was that both sides went to the negotiations while holding positions, which are incompatible.

Currently, the government in Juba is struggling to explain to the general populous, what was that it just signed. Opposition against the deal is ripped. Even high ranking party and government officials in South Sudan are publicly voicing their disagreement with the signed agreement. The regime in Khartoum faces similar challenges to sell the deal to its people. War in most of the country is still raging, with worst humanitarian catastrophe as a consequence. Sudanese economy reminds in shambles. Therefore, the controversial agreement has no place in both countries. To salvage the situation, the core issues must be resolved, and be resolved very soon. Hence, insistence for President al-Bashir visit to Juba as a matter of confidence building in ironing out the remaining differences.

The problem with President al-Bashir though is that every time he paid a visit into South Sudan, he always instigated something sinister against the South Sudanese people, whether that is sending his troops or proxy militias to attack South Sudan or sending his war planes to drop bombs in the country at the very moment he is visiting. One will not know for sure, whether this is just playing a real bully or there are probably some hidden underlying motives for such contradictory gesture from the President of Sudan. This time around, if President al-Bashir elects to visit Juba, he must sure meet his match on the streets: the people of South Sudan. On the day that President al-Bashir comes, the people must pour into the streets in their thousands and put their points across. Here are some of the few reasons why the people of South Sudan must turn into the streets en mass to protest President al-Bashir's visit to Juba:

For many years, President al-Bashir has been killing and subjecting the people of South Sudanese to the harshest conditions humans could ever endured. For all these times, President al-Bashir is never been held to account for his acts. In other words, President al-Bashir cannot claim he is for peace without accepting accountability for his deeds. This is an opportunity for an average South Sudanese to stand in the face of al-Bashir and pisses him off. It is payback time.

President al-Bashir is an internationally indicted criminal who is suppose to be facing trial and not visiting other countries. The people of South Sudan must come to the streets and tell President al-Bashir that they are striving to establish a country of laws and orders, which is part of international community. Therefore, the people of South Sudan don't tolerate the presence of al-Bashir in the country, given his tainted record.

The people of South Sudan must come to the streets in great numbers to simply remind President al-Bashir that they are free people and can exercise their God given freedom in challenging his visit. Gone are the days when President al-Bashir used to subject the people of South Sudan through imprisonment, harassment, curfews, and roadblocks. Today, the people of South Sudan are empowered with freedom that can rival President al-Bashir absolute rule.

In President al-Bashir's country, a peaceful street demonstration are often brutally crashed. However, this time around—in President al-Bashir's face—the people of South Sudan must sent a clear message that they stand in solidarity with the victims of al-Bashir's brutalities—the people who are simply denied their democratic rights to hold peaceful demonstrations. Such message must reverberate on the streets of Khartoum and must rejuvenate with the spirit of all those victims of brutalities. And hopefully, they, the victims too can be able to face President al-Bashir, right in Khartoum.

Finally, by turning out to the streets in big numbers, the people of South Sudan may just accomplish what their government failed to do with President al-Bashir in the negotiating table. After decades of war, belligerence, and bullying, a thuggish al-Bashir proved beyond reasonable doubt that he is not interested in peace. For had President al-Bashir been interested in peace, it is just within his grip, but he demonstrated otherwise. It is time to poke the bully in the eye. Welcome to Juba Mr. President and meet your match, the masses of South Sudan, for they are ready for you.

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