

Rumbek fighting leaves 12 dead and 23 wounded

Friday 9 November 2012

November 8, 2012 (RUMBEEK) - Inter-communal violence has killed 12 people and wounded 23 in Rumbek Central County in Lakes State after fighting broke out on Tuesday in a cattle camp 34km north-east of the state capital, according to a local official.

Lakes State Minister for Local Government and Law Enforcement, Benjiman Makuer Mabor, told *Sudan Tribune* that the conflict is alleged to have begun when young men from the Panyon and Amothnhon communities of the Dinka ethnic group, exchanged verbal insults.

The government of Lakes State's response has been to deploy heavily armed police and military patrols to the area in and around the Luak-Makuer Gol cattle camp.

Maker Ater, one of the cattle-herding youth who took part in the violence, which began on Tuesday morning told *Sudan Tribune* that the "situation is very bad" adding that he had seen "many people being killed in Luak-Makuer Gol".

He said that the police and military fired heavy machine guns "across the row of youth fighting."

Lakes State's government instructed police to bring wounded persons to local medical facility in Rumbek but since the fighting began access to the Lakes State Hospital has been restricted so *Sudan Tribune* was unable to speak to those who had been shot.

The Minister of Local Government and Law Enforcement visited the area with Rumbek Central Commissioner Abraham Mayen Kuc to gather information and try to prevent further violence at the cattle camp.

Lakes State Governor Chol Tong Mayay called upon people to stay calm and to identify those who participated in the clashes so they can be prosecuted.

"I need everyone to stay in peace from both [the] communities fighting each another. Let [us] have peace in us. Time for aggressive attitude[s] are over and this is time for making peace" said Governor Chol.

He also added that there was "no need to fight" as Lakes State belongs to all citizens, urging youth to engage in dialogue to resolve disputes.

This is the first violence in Luak-Makuer Gol cattle camp since South Sudan gained independence on 9 January 2011. Lakes State has a history of inter-communal violence, with politicians from the fighting communities suspected by many to be behind the conflicts.

Recently, South Sudan's ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Lakes State has been at odds with itself rejecting the appointment of Mabor Ater Dhuo to replace the party's previous Chairperson Samuel Mathiang Keer. Both men are from Rumbek Central County, the scene of Tuesday's fighting.

Governor Gai and members of his cabinet are engaged in preaching peace to youth in the state. A civilian disarmament campaign has attempted to take arms away from cattle herders with mixed success.

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