

## The SPLM-N factor in Sudan-South Sudan border hostilities

Monday 26 November 2012

By Machien Luoi

November 25, 2012 - The September 27, 2012 - Addis Ababa Cooperation Agreement signed by Sudan and South Sudan is getting undermined by Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-North Sudan (SPLM-N) activities and presence along the common border of the two countries. The movement claims control over 40% percent of the agreement's Safe Border Demilitarize Zone (SBDZ) and vows the agreement will not work without its involvement or consent. Its strength to sabotage the whole agreement and undermine the security arrangement was either under-estimated or ignored by the two neighboring states in Addis Ababa deliberations. SPLM-N's influence along the border is significant to be overlooked. Instead, Sudan need to negotiate with SPLM-N or the two countries agrees to incorporate the SPLM-N in the Cooperation Agreement implementation process, at least to secure its consent or else no arrangement will work with current state of affairs at the border in which the SPLM-N is an active actor.

After South Sudan officially seceded on July 09, 2011, a new South of the Sudan emerged at war with Khartoum led by SPLM-N. The movement aims at realization of the "New Sudan," an idea championed by SPLM/A prior to South Sudan secession. Yasir Arman, the Secretary General of SPLM-N believes, "crisis emanating from the lack of an inclusive national project of nation-building and a correct national formation process based on the objective realities of Sudan and on the historical and contemporary diversities; building a society for all regardless of ethnic, religious and gender background; and based on democracy, social justice and a balanced relation between the centre and the peripheries" is what cause his movement to fight Khartoum. SPLM-N fighters and loyalists are pressing the Sudan government to "Change or it will be changed."

During the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) negotiations in Kenya, views and aspirations of the people who reverberate with SPLM-N vision were represented by SPLM. CPA promised Popular Consultations for the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State. The consultations were to help the respective communities confer with one another about their future in Sudan after South Sudan left. SPLM-N task itself with responsibility to ensure interests of the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile citizens maintained and their dreams for peace and development recognized. However, Khartoum government admonishes existence of SPLM-N wish it disappear from the two border regions, culminating to exclusion of SPLM-N in the Addis Ababa cooperation agreement discussions in which security; trade, four-freedoms, and oil transport resumption were agreed amongst other items. In paper the agreement worked. Practically, it will not without SPLM-N contribution or consent since they claim authority and are working in areas bordering South Sudan. The movement is fighting to liberate the same people security arrangement were to protect, and who trade and four freedoms are expected to benefit. Besides, SPLM-N leaders signed Popular Consultation clauses (Abdel Aziz Adam El Hilu signed for Nuba and Malik Agar signed for Blue Nile) as part of the CPA. If South Sudan could not negotiate on behalf of SPLM-N and Sudan does not want to see it involved, who will follow up the Popular Consultations or post CPA issues in which the two areas are part of?

Addis Ababa Cooperation Agreement was intended to safe the two countries from economic collapse. In reality it is to the detriment of SPLM-N. The oil resumption agreement could worsen the SPLM-N case particularly if the Sudan acquired more money out of the oil deal to enhance its capacity to fund initiatives to end the SPLM-N insurgency in Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. Sudan could also see it the other way, particularly with its consistent accusation of South Sudan's support to SPLM-N. The trade agreement could be viewed in the same context. Sudan traders may cooperate with SPLM-N to secure permission to trade with South Sudan, but Sudan government will view such traders as danger to its security. From the security stand point SPLM-N may also look at Sudan traders as spies for government particularly if they knew areas of Sudan where SPLM-N hides and operates. It is a difficult game to play with SPLM-N dictating the situation.

To conclude, if the SPLM-N cannot disembark from the above issues, Sudan and South Sudan will continue to have hostilities between them; Sudan will continue to bomb South Sudanese civilians deep into South Sudan territories like it did on November 20-21 in Kir Adem area of Northern Bahr El Gazel State, where Sudan's Antonov killed 6 and injured 20 civilians and Sudan government claimed it operated inside its jurisdiction to smoke SPLM-N and allied rebels out; South Sudan oil flow will continue to be on halt leaving both countries to economically struggle; Trade between the two countries will depend on illegal smuggling of goods; and regrettably the Addis Ababa agreement will not be implemented. Therefore, Sudan need to negotiate with SPLM-N or the two countries agree to incorporate the SPLM-N in the cooperation agreement , at least to secure its consent or else no arrangement will work with current situation at the border in which the SPLM-N is an active actor.

*The writer is a South Sudanese residing in Bentiu, Unity State and can be reach at [mjluoi@yahoo.com](mailto:mjluoi@yahoo.com) or [dhuretingting@gmail.com](mailto:dhuretingting@gmail.com).*