

Is this current South Sudan Republic the country we fought?

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An open Letter To President Kiir

By Bol Garang de Bol

November 30, 2012 - Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Sudan, General Salva Kiir Mayardit, as you may be aware, although our request, advice, opinions seem to be ignored by you and your Ministers, we, will not abandon our responsibilities as citizens of South Sudan to let our voices be heard. I write to you or about you not to attacking your policies or interventions either in the present or in the past. However, on this occasion, I am writing to you to let you know that many South Sudanese including myself still believed that there was still South Sudan, our country, which we had once fought for, our freedom, democracy.

But where is it now? The aim of this article is to ask you to use your powers and position to tackle the issue of ethnic cleansing through parliament and in your cabinet.

There are two distinct issues in connection with political turmoil in South Sudan that has claimed at least estimated 120,000 lives since 2005 and displaced more than 250,000 people.

The failure of government to address corruption and violence that has transmuted into ethnic cleansing across the country is the biggest issues facing South Sudan. The second issue has alarmed the entire international community because the world views it as the way Rwanda genocide began.

Your Excellency, President Salva, over the last seven years, I have always dreamt that one day; a single God or a group of gods will come and solve South Sudan's problems. In the process of waiting for these gods, I have realised and even learnt that the New Nation's biggest problem is the dangerous mind-set of our people, yours and mine inclusive which needs no superman to solve because I/we and you can do it.

Ending the political violence and ethnic cleansing must be accorded the top priority for two reasons or more. First, a stolen verdict can be fixed in a year or two but it will take decades or a generation to fix a country destroyed by ethnic violence. If, I may recall that the collapse of South Sudan began in 2005 immediately after the death of Dr. John Garang de Mabior. The country used to be part of old Sudan has not recovered socially, economically and politically and it needs estimated number of years to be rebuilt. It is so easy to destroy but formidable task to rebuild. Second, ignoring ethnic violence is the major threat to nation security in our country and contributed to the failures of our country. The failure of government to delivery services to the people proved that the Republic of South Sudan is not the country we had fought for.

Mr. President, General Salva Kiir, during the 22 years of SPLA struggle, you, late Dr. John Garang, William Nyuon Bany, Dr. Riek Machar, Dr. Lam Akol, Commander, Arok Thon Arok, James Wani Igga, Kuol Manyang Juuk and many more always talked about an important country deserve to be liberated. Shall we wait for that country? Or you mean, the current South Sudan under your leadership is the country we had fought for? If this newly independence South Sudan, is the country we had fought for, the past years since our country signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) are characterised by a pile of disappointing experiences such as; failures, let downs, state/rebel sponsored murders, torture, rape, forced-sodomy, social neglect and other awful experiences which many South Sudanese have had to endure, have caused a great deal of anger, hate, revenge-motives and the dangerous social divisions which exist in our societies. These negative experiences have and continue to re-affirm old suspicions, doubts in the future, deepen mistrust, shatter hope and have now started producing even greater despair and this is not the country we had fought for or we proud to be citizens.

You and many politicians point at social capitalisation as the only way to redeem this country out of the dark abyss in which it is. And I agree that social factors most especially those which are negatively associated with health, cause disorganisation and disruption, perceived helplessness and lack of support, low educational attainment, and poverty. I the same reasoning, I also posit that you cannot achieve these development goals when the majority of the people in our communities are angry, revengeful, hateful, and are waiting to carry-out their unfinished business.

In my opinion, I would argue that whilst there is a need for massive development projects which we all think that will develop our country, there is a need for all sections of the society to develop a new relationship which can take account of our importance to each other and which will also inculcate a reciprocal nature of our connection that will help to avoid a repeat of the painful past experiences which our people have endured.

Since June 12 1947, at the time of Juba Conference, South Sudan has not had the opportunity to address their past, neither

have they ever addressed the pains it causes them.

Our people have never healed because they have never been given the opportunity to heal.

All they get is the threats of revenge, genocide, and hate by different aggrieved parties. How can a society with hidden dirty feelings forge a united future without any remorseful spirit being coached between and amongst them?

President Jaafar Nimeiri used a wrong approach since he took over in a military coup in 1969 by only focusing on security and development and forgetting to help the nation to heal.

President Nimeiri never gave the Sudanese the opportunity to bury the hatchet and to start a new emotional chapter since the signing of Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. The same mistake done by President Nimeiri is facing President Kiir Mayardit. By so doing, the current development in South Sudan may turn into dust.

Mr. President Salva, the purpose of this letter is to inform you that South Sudan needs an amnesty law which will help those who have perpetrated injustice to fellow South Sudanese to apologies and be forgiven unconditionally. This will help South Sudan to draw the line with their past, open a new chapter in their history and start re-building the nation all over again. I am fully aware of the expired amnesty law but this law only catered for recent events yet, the grievances of our people pre-date this period.

H.E. President Mayardit, to me and other advocates of social justice, it is very challenging, to sort out and work through the barriers which exist between the perpetrators of injustice, their victims, and the social political environment that inhibit progress. This has increasingly made it difficult for us to turn the painful experiences of our people into opportunities for growth and change. However, I do have hope that this can happen because it occurred in South Africa and Kenya during Mau Mau War.

The positive experiences which this amnesty law shall bring will engender hope and trust, to the people of South Sudan. It will also convey a comforting sense of being understood and accepted to the changed-perpetrators of injustice. Mr. President, this desire is also true for people of South Sudan who keep asking questions about their experiences and getting no answers from the perpetrators of injustice. At the same time, the perpetrators of injustice are very insecure and in one way of the other, their insecurity even drives them to carry out more injustice out of fear that people are out there waiting to kill them.

I do have a strong believe that healing will be brought about by the kind of forgiveness which will be protected by the amnesty law. By making such a huge political intervention, we will be able to address other issues such as health and social inequalities. At the same time, we have to be mindful that if we do not support healing through forgiveness, we shall be fuelling the continuous cycle of political and military abuse of our people's human rights.

It will of paramount importance for our country and for all men and women of good will if my request meets your consideration. As such, the outright denial of bail for certain offences would constitute a fundamental breach of human rights which accord equal protection of the law to all.

Lastly your Excellency, to add rioting to the list of the category of offences that should not be granted bail, assumes that all persons who may choose to peacefully demonstrate and voice opinion on matters affecting them are criminals. This will have the net effect of deterring South Sudan from exercising their fundamental human right to freedom to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peacefully.

The Executive arm of government, in simple term, your Ministers must respects and upholds the rule of law and that all organs of the Government are independent and free from interference. The Government has to ensure that all criminal cases are dully investigated, prosecuted and that individual criminal responsibility is apportioned impartially without undue regard to an accused person's political inclination. This will go a long way in eliminating impunity and will deter the wanton abuse of human rights by state and nonstate actors.

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