

Is Dinka Bor against Dinka Bahr el Ghazal?

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January 8, 2013 - The killing of Isaiah Abraham and the anger it generated in Dinka Bor Community has made some people wonder whether Dinka Bor now see Dinka Bahr el Ghazal as their enemies. Ateny Wek Ateny of Northern Bahr el Ghazal who gave a speech on behalf of opinion writers on January 4, 2013 during the memorial service for Late Isaiah Abraham organized by opinion writers said this: "The killing of Isaiah has driven wedges amongst communities; the government was made to shy and bite its tongue in disgrace, for the fact that it has failed to protect writers; the forces of darkness might have clearly celebrated that the Dinka Communities would be dividing along clans Bor vs Dinka Bhar El Ghazal. The detractors treat government to be synonymous with Bhar El Ghazal as a region. However, for us as opinion writers in South Sudan, this equation is wrong. Our communities command a very brilliant understanding of what is meant of a government."

This is a very important point to look into. In fact, Ateny was not the first to say this. In my article entitled, "Who killed Isaiah Abraham?" published by Sudan Tribune on December 5, 2012, a day Isaiah Abraham is believed to have been killed early in the morning, I wrote: "When I visited Isaiah father's house today, I saw the anger I have never seen from our people. This means that damage has been done to our loyalty to the system. Whoever did the killing has succeeded in causing suspicions among our people."

Both my point and Ateny's point do not mean that Dinka Bor and Dinka Bahr el Ghazal have now become enemies because of the killing of Isaiah. What we are saying is that the killing of Isaiah has caused the loss of trust between the two major Dinka regions. Ateny was even more to the point when he said: "Whilst the killing of Isaiah by unknown gunmen has landed South Sudan in the abyss of mistrust amongst South Sudanese and their government, his assassins are made to rethink their strategies."

What I called a "suspicions among our people" is the lack of trust or mistrust caused by the killing of Isaiah Abraham. What looks like an enmity between Dinka Bor and Dinka Bahr el Ghazal is not enmity but the loss of generalized trust. I have observed that the loss of generalized trust leads to the loss of particularized trust. Bor members who have very closed friends from Bahr el Ghazal, for example, now do not confide in them because they do not know who is associated with the system and who is not.

As a reminder, I would bring it to the attention of brother Ateny that the system is often associated with the region or the community the President comes from. It was true when Dr. John Garang was the leader of SPLM/A. He was often associated with Bor Community whenever something bad had happened, but not when he had done good things.

If the above is what we believe, then it means that the loss of trust in the Government means the loss of trust in the community the President comes from. This is not a good way of looking at things but it is a reality we have in South Sudan. We will, however, work hard to change it so that individuals are held responsible for their crimes, not the community they come from. Even failing leaders must be held accountable as individuals, not as part of a community.

Even though it is a practice in South Sudan to associate leaders with their communities, it would not be true to think that people from Bor would consider the people from Bahr el Ghazal as their enemies.

The way that things are done in Bor is that we study the situation first before arriving at a long term decision. That is why we are known for "wait-a-minute" behavior. The decision that most of us have now arrived at is that we do not trust the President and his associates, the organized forces and the National Security at the generalized sense of the word. It is only the army that most of us still trust as the protector of the people. Yet, we still trust individuals within the organized forces and the National Security.

When Isaiah was killed, it took us some days before deciding that the above mentioned institutions are not trustworthy. I wrote this on December 5, 2012 in an attempt to prevent the above situation: "It would be very important for our Government to find the killers to know exactly why they killed Isaiah so that we are convinced that the killing was not politically motivated. Otherwise, the anger I am now seeing will remain in us for a long time."

The Government did not understand my point until after many people in Bor and other communities concluded that some elements in the Government might be responsible for the killing of Isaiah and, therefore, should not be trusted. It will now be difficult to convince most of us on the sincerity of the Government in dealing with the situation until we see concrete evidences.

People from Bor are often seen as unforgiving, but that is not true. We treat different situations differently. What we hate

mostly are the politically-motivated killings and the terrorist-like killings. The killing of Isaiah fits both.

When we in Bor find out that anybody or any community practices the above killings, we distance ourselves from such a person or a community for long time until we see changes in them. To prove this, take your time to study what types of killings are common in Bor. Study also the incidents of killings people talk about in contempt in Bor and the community fighting which takes a long time to be solved. You will find what I am saying above.

Having said the above, people from Bahr el Ghazal are known. They do not come from the same community. There would be no reason to generalize them. We know very well that most of the communities from Bahr el Ghazal, including many people from Warrap State where the President comes from, are against the killing of Isaiah Abraham. Why then should anybody generalize them as enemies of Bor people?

Besides, we in Bor have not yet concluded that the Government was directly responsible for the killing of Isaiah Abraham. What we are not happy with is that it looks like the Government was first trying, until pressured to act otherwise, to cover up something when some elements within it threatened or even attempted to kill additional writers. Yet, we still treat the problem as a Government problem not Bahr el Ghazal problem.

Even though we know the people who attempted to kill some of us in December, 2012, we still believe that they were sent by some people in authority. It might not necessarily be the President. It might be people who think the hand that feeds them would lose power because of our writings, not knowing that our writings would help that hand retain power for long time.

Despite the fear expressed by some people that Bor would now regard their brothers and sisters from Bahr el Ghazal as enemies, I should say the opposite is true. The reality is that most of us are still waiting to know who was behind the killing of Isaiah Abraham and the attempted killing of some of us. We will take these people as individuals, not as Dinka Bahr el Ghazal or any other community they come from.

I should conclude here that Dinka Bor will never see brothers and sisters from Dinka Bahr el Ghazal as enemies even though the level of trust now damaged will take a very long time to rebuild.

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