

US ambassador calls for community dialogue to end cattle rustling in S. Sudan

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February 20, 2013 (BENTIU) - The United States has called on South Sudan to engage with rural communities on the ground to help address the ongoing issue of cattle rustling, which continues to cause widespread unrest.



The US ambassador to South Sudan, Susan Page, made the comments while on a visit to Unity state on Wednesday to discuss challenges facing the state as a result of the nation-wide problem of cattle raiding.

Cattle rustling presents an enormous challenge to the new nation and has continued to hamper the country's development and stability even before independence.

Page said part of the government's role was working towards engaging various ethnic groups through dialogue and the creation of a peaceful environment.

"I'm here to help mitigate conflicts especially with migration and over cattle rustling and other issues", the ambassador said.

South Sudan has been plagued by unrest largely due to cattle raiding in the bordering states of Warrap, Unity, Lakes and Jonglei, which are home to the highest number of affected communities among the country's 10 states.

Page urged the national government to pursue more dialogue between tribes in South Sudan in order to promote the free movement of people for purposes of settlement.

"It is very important I think that the chiefs and others working at *boma* (district) level, up to state and then national level, that people are working together to make sure migration is peaceful but also so that people can live together in peace and harmony whether they are from the same ethnic groups sharing water points or sub-clans that are different, it should not matter, people should be able to live together peacefully," said Page, adding dialogue is an important part of spearheading that process.

Reacting to [last week's deadly bombing in Unity state](#) by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the ambassador says her

government is working hard to engage both countries in a peaceful process to settle their border disputes and normalise relations through dialogue.

“Well, as you know, the US government has been very active on this matter and we have been sending people to [peace agreement] negotiations in Addis Ababa. We released another statement just yesterday both here in South Sudan, as well as from our embassy in Sudan to try to get the parties back together and back to implementing the agreement they already signed”, she said.

The South Sudanese government has accused the SAF of dropping seven bombs in Unity’s Jau area on 14 February, killing two people and eight cows.

In a statement released following the latest aerial attacks, the US embassy in Khartoum urged the two countries to “refrain immediately from any actions that could further destabilise the border areas between South Sudan and Sudan”, saying the incident signalled a dangerous increase in tensions.

Unity state deputy governor Michael Chieng Jiek Geay described the US ambassador’s visit to the state is an important step for his government. During his briefing to the ambassador, Geay said his government welcomes US support on mitigating conflict through peaceful dialogues.

Geay also called on the US government to apply pressure on both Sudans in order to reach a deal on a series of joint peace agreements signed on 27 September in the Ethiopian capital.

“We are hoping that the US government will put more efforts on both governments of the South and the north to implement the cooperation agreement”, added Geay.

Geay said although his government had been working hard to control the rampant issue of cattle raiding, it couldn’t do it single handedly.

He said he appreciates the US government’s continued funding of projects in the state and called for further support in order to overcome the challenges facing the new nation.

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