

DOR Statement on 2010 Elections / 2011 Referendum

The present and future development of the tense current situation in Sudan has become a matter of concern both in the international political community, and especially among people who are sensitive to enhancing global solidarity with the developing countries of the world.

Peace, or at least the cessation of open warfare between the Northern and Southern forces, began in Sudan between North and South, on January 9, 2005, with the official signing of the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) that took place in Nairobi, Kenya. The signing of peace ended the bombings of civilians and open military conflict between the North and the South that had been ongoing since 1983.

Since the signing, an alarming rise in criminality and abject poverty has resulted in rampant insecurity, unrest, and brutal violence. These internal conflicts have the ability to escalate into a rapid return to open warfare. Most of the population of Southern Sudan has no assurance of basic life necessities, salaries or fair, standardized prices in the market. Rather, the common people are to a very open and shameless black market.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement called for a series of steps to be taken in order to end the conflict, develop and rebuild the South, and put in place a democratic process for semi-autonomous self-government followed by a referendum on whether or not to secede from the North. Now, nearly five years since the signing of the CPA, one must admit that the six protocols stated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have either been implemented in a much delayed fashion, or not fully implemented, particularly for the people of the South. At present, the economic situation of Southern Sudan is one of total poverty and lack of necessary infrastructure. The construction, or "reconstruction," of Southern Sudan is taking place in a very unevenly distributed, disorderly and costly manner.

In keeping with the general orientation of the CPA, Southern Sudan underwent a national census beginning in April 2008 in order to prepare for elections scheduled to be held in July 2009. However, the census results were sabotaged, government-backed militias harassed and terrified voters, and the Khartoum government published totally untenable and clearly falsified results. As a result, the census was a disappointing failure, resulting in distorted figures regarding the population distribution in Southern Sudan. This totally irregular census taking and arbitrary publication of fictitious results certainly jeopardizes the prospects for legitimate elections, and even more seriously for the referendum regarding secession for which the South is now preparing.

At this juncture, Southern Sudan finds itself in not one, but several crises. First, the CPA had called for national elections to be held in July 2009. The government already postponed these elections by nearly one year from their original date of July 2009 to April 2010, or maybe even later. This indicates not only a purposeful lack of preparation by the Khartoum government, but also reveals an intentional and purposeful disruption of fair and free elections by the Khartoum government. These upcoming elections will form the basis on which a proper referendum in 2011 is conducted, and will serve as a barometer to measure the effectiveness and capability of the electoral process of Sudan as a whole. Should the elections suffer as the census was made to suffer in 2008, after long postponements and lack of preparation and equipment, as well as violent intimidation by the militias, then the referendum will be affected very negatively.

The postponement until April 2010, or maybe June 2010, has already damaged the prospects of an easily accessible election. These are the most undesirable times of the year for people to participate in the election. In the entire Bar el Gizaal region, April is the hottest and driest season of the year, which means that people will be seeking water for themselves and their livestock for survival. In seeking water, they will be forced to leave the villages where they are registered to vote and be unable to cast their ballots. This will diminish the participation in the election to a considerable degree. At this time also, the Khartoum government is not providing the food which the South is requesting; this is further evidence of the outright persecution by the Central Government of areas where the cultivation has been poorest, especially in 2009, and as a consequence many people will be forced to migrate, at least temporarily, to the North. A significant food shortage will most certainly begin in January or February, causing people to be absent from their place of registration and be unable to cast their votes.

Secondly, the South by itself does not have the capacity to prepare, oversee, and sanction properly the outcome of the elections and eventual referendum. This is due to several factors, including the damage and destruction caused by decades of warfare, inadequate resource allocation and support from the Central Government, lack of logistical capacity for large undertakings, and extremely poor or non-existent infrastructure.

Thirdly, one of the most pressing needs of the South is for capacity building and training of the people of Southern Sudan so that they are able to make an objective decision regarding their own future. The democratic process is something new to them, and, while it has always been desired that the people of Southern Sudan have a voice for themselves, the practical implementation and realization of this dream will require significant assistance from the international community *immediately*. The need of observers to prepare, oversee, and sanction the elections is mandatory for an objectively run process, and trainers and organizers in the community must prepare the people at a grass roots level to participate.

Most fundamentally is the need for basic physical security and protection. In many parts of Sudan, government-backed militias terrorize the population, increasing fear and heightening tension between tribes and ethnic groups. This systematic terrorization, so publicized in Darfur but present in many areas, will certainly destroy any hope of elections unless the security of voters and candidates can be assured.

Therefore, the presence of the participants of the CPA and of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) countries of the Horn of Africa should be requested by the government and allowed to be operative in the electoral process by training and preparing the people voting in the elections, and those responsible for implementing the election, observing and monitoring so that a fair, free and secure democratic process is carried out

The call must reverberate through the international community: the elections must not only be prepared for properly, making use of outside assistance, but also monitored and regulated to ensure that they are properly carried out. The elections *cannot* be delayed further. Any more delays risk jeopardizing not only the electoral process, but also the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as a whole.

The referendum on secession will depend on the successful implementation of these elections. The international community must ensure not only that the elections take place throughout Sudan in April 2010, but also that the referendum takes place in 2011. The people of the

Sudan are anxiously waiting for a chance that will enable them to express their choice of how Sudan should be set up and governed in the future.

Other obstacles to the elections must be overcome as well. The relationship between North and South is extremely tense, and it appears that the Khartoum government, the National Congress Party, is exercising a closed-door and closed-mouth attitude towards the semi-autonomous government of Juba, the capital city of the South. The fifty percent sharing of oil resources between Khartoum and Juba, agreed upon in the CPA statutes, is by now a forgone contract. The national committee for petroleum and natural resources, established as part of the CPA, has been dormant since September of 2008 and no benefit is coming to the South from this fifty percent sharing. The oil-sharing had been the one of the only sources of immediately available income for the new government of Southern Sudan in 2005, and this resource pool had been providing the necessary capital for most of the salaries given by the government to the various departments of Southern Sudan, and also to begin basic infrastructure development. As a result of this withholding of resources by the Central (government of the North) Government, most government arms of Southern Sudan do not receive monthly salaries, while the cost of living escalates continually. This forced poverty by the North has resulted in rapidly degenerating conditions in most, if not all, demographic and economic sectors in Southern Sudan.

The effects of the economic turmoil in this resource-rich and war-torn nation cannot be ignored. Since the CPA, there has been a very evident growth in the wealth of the financial elite of both Northern and Southern Sudan. This elite group has capitalized on the insecurity and taken advantage of the crisis. As a result, they are doing well, in spite of tension, conflicts and insecurity. In fact, in many cases they are doing well *as a result of* the tensions, conflicts and insecurity. For many of the individuals who have made “war money,” it is in their interest that the elections and referendum do not occur. These individuals would lose much of their profit were peace and regulation to finally come to the region. They call for it to be postponed at least until 2013. Politically, events such as the elections and referendum would interfere with the war-elites’ prosperity. It is imperative that a few well-placed war profiteers do not ruin the chance for an oppressed people to finally have their own voice.

The lack of cooperation and severe exploitation by the Khartoum government has resulted in a growing lack of trust by the Southern Sudanese in the government, which wants to undertake matters without Southern Sudanese or outside interference so that it may further its own economic goals. In the end, the results of initiatives such as the census that are supposed to be joint, cooperative movements are arbitrarily determined by the government of Khartoum that, through intimidation or lack of proper information, are passively accepted by the Sudanese, at least for now.

The internal security situation, both in Southern Sudan and in Darfur, is deplorable. In spite of the CPA of 2005, in Sudan today a “cold war” atmosphere of tension between North and South prevails. Open warfare between North and South is limited to brief clashes, but over the entire country criminality, violence and inexplicable tension from insecurity are rampant, particularly in the South. The indications are that this tension and violence are silently, but effectively, designed, supported, and engendered by an outside steering hand, perhaps the Khartoum government itself, among others. In this situation of total unreliability, the South has become financially depleted and powerless in many respects, particularly in dealing with the government of Khartoum. The instability of the Abyei situation and Southern Khordofan, not to mention Darfur, are very bad omens about prospects of peace and tranquility in Sudan.

The CPA called for monitoring of the demarcation and the demobilizing process. However, adequate monitoring is conspicuously absent. The Abyei border demarcation is an example both of a violation of the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and of the abuse and exploitation of the Southern Sudanese by the Khartoum government. In May 2008, the armed forces of the Khartoum government invaded Abyei, an oil rich town on the border between Northern and Southern Sudan. In addition to killing, looting and destroying property, they afterwards burned and razed the town to the ground. An independent commission was set up that ceded the oil extraction rights to the North. However, land usage beyond oil extraction was still the prerogative of those living there, namely the Dinka people of the South. However, Abyei, which was declared a presidential city that allows for both Northern and Southern Sudanese to live there, has been closed for cattle grazing to the Southerners, and many have been expelled from their ancestral homes. The North is essentially slowly and surreptitiously invading the South, prior to even the elections and referendum.

Actions like these call into question the will of the Khartoum regime to give a free hand to the outside international community to intervene and assist South and North in the preparation, carrying out and monitoring of the results of the elections. Even if the international community offers its support and assistance to facilitate the elections, it is unlikely that the Khartoum government would be agreeable to this. Yet without outside support, the elections will go the way of the census, and a democratic process for the Southern Sudanese will be little more than a dream. The international community must immediately implement serious evaluation and intervention policies in Southern Sudan, particularly by the participants of the CPA, the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The Churches are convening quite regularly to express their high degree of apprehension about the fact that the CPA protocols were never fully implemented, and that the people are totally dissatisfied with the dividends of peace in their lives. As part of their ministries, the Churches of Sudan have brought many Christian communities together to participate in reconciliation, justice and peace workshops and covenants to counteract the insecurity, violence, criminality and conflicts generating from revenge. The voice of the Sudan Council of Churches continually speaks out, exhorting the Christian communities but also addressing government leaders and the leaders of the international community to save the CPA from a total collapse.

The Churches of Sudan insist that the architects of the CPA and the countries of the IGAD, together with the international community, should exert all their political influence to take control of the CPA mismanagement for the nation of Sudan. It can still be accomplished, but time is running out.

There must be a global effort on the part of both international agencies at the political level and churches at an ecumenical level to create the civic awareness necessary to make the elections meaningful by educating the people and by accompanying them in their first step to freedom, and also by obtaining from the Khartoum government the assurance of outside monitors and workers being able to operate throughout this election period. The present agents organizing the elections are at a loss as to how they can get the people to respond in preparation for the elections. The only chance for election success comes from the ability for a grass-roots mobilization movement, aided by the international community.

A great deal of urgent diplomacy will be needed to obtain a *bene placito*. Financially, additional resources must be invested in the election infrastructure so that the election can be carried out with well-instructed coordinators, with a functional logistical system in place, and

the essential materials to carry out and monitor the elections can be acquired. Above all, both the Khartoum and Juba governments must allow and facilitate an international election monitoring and implementation team that can guarantee the reliability of these crucial elections, and also guarantees the security of the voters themselves.

The elections, however, are only the first step. The most monumental task in the development of Southern Sudan will occur the following year with the 2011 referendum on secession. Once again, delays cannot be allowed to happen. Sacrosanct as the referendum may be considered (particularly by the South), if it does not take place before 2011, then the consideration and authority of the CPA itself will be invalid. Provided that the elections take place in a constructive way, the road will be clear as to how to prepare for the referendum.

Important questions remain that have huge implications for the global community, not just Sudan. Unprecedented proceedings in the International Criminal Court have focused the eye of the world on Sudan. Should Omar Bashir be brought to trial, what kind of government will take over in Khartoum? Will there be a delay or even a moratorium on the referendum? Given that the North does not want to see the South separate, what alternative route will Khartoum take to delay, unduly or for good, the possibility of a referendum? These questions need to be answered and the people of the South will *not* remain indifferent to betrayal of the terms of the CPA on the part of Khartoum. This is an explosive matter. In the minds of the Southerners, postponing or sabotaging the elections would be a just cause for a return to war. This likely return to the war scenario has been feared by many and therefore strong precautions to protect the elections and the referendum must be taken by the international community to prevent a conflict that would involve the whole of Sudan this time, and not just the South.

The instinctive attitude of the Southerners is well-known to be in favor of the separation of North and South. At the same time, the lack of human resources to sustain the government, the development and the overall security of the South should be cause for concern and action should not to be delayed. To save the situation, the South needs more than just capacity building; it needs solid formation of leadership at all levels of society for health, education, development of resources and for good governance and administration. The churches have done their best and are continuing the work for the formation of future leaders, but that only affects the development of maybe fifteen percent of the male population, and ten percent of the female population in becoming capable and reliable leaders. A long road remains to be traveled.

In summary, the fruitfulness and validity of elections if people are not prepared properly must be questioned. Unless the preparation of future leaders is intensified in the next two to three years, it is even more plausible that also the referendum may not bring the desired results for the people.

The leaders of the Khartoum government have shown by their actions that they cannot be trusted. There is little doubt that this oppressive regime will only acquiesce in word to the demands and requirements of the CPA, and will ensure no action is taken until it will be too late for people of the South to react and save their own plans and dreams. Be assured that the undermining of the free electoral process and democratic procedures in Southern Sudan by outside forces is well underway. Unless the international community intervenes immediately, by the time the full effects of the democratic sabotage are felt, it will be too late for the people of Southern Sudan.

In the face of such uncertainty, violence, and suffering, nevertheless there is an element of indomitable endurance in the core of the Sudanese soul that enables this long-suffering people to face boldly the most seemingly insurmountable obstacles or difficulties. Therefore, one must always look at the foreseeable scenarios of Sudan, humbly and not with a mathematical certainty and predictability. Twenty-eight years in Sudan have shown me that even what I considered unendurable has endured. It is a source of hope, and is a tremendous human resource embedded in the charism of the Sudanese culture.

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