



ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES CONFERENCE DES EGLISES DE TOUTE L'AFRIQUE

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PRESS BRIEFING

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The Sudan Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches are deeply concerned about the unfolding situation in South Kordofan, in the Sudan. After the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and its militias fought and forced a retreat of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), civilians were left vulnerable and have been a target of SAF and its militias. More and more voices on the ground are now describing what is going on in South Kordofan as "ethnic cleansing" and are comparing it to the genocide which took place in the Nuba Mountains in the early 1990s. Clearly, this calls for an urgent international response.

Information received from local leaders on the ground point to a very disturbing development where homes, schools, churches and places that could be of refuge to the displaced are being burned and destroyed. An eye witness account says that churches and pastors were directly targeted. On 7th June 2011, Militias and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) broke into houses, looting or burning all the valuables inside. In a pastor's office and residence, the SAF burnt or destroyed sound systems, a projector, beds, chairs, VSAT equipment, 8 computers, new photocopier, big TV, Tents, refrigerator, Solar System and two motor bikes. They attacked a church guest house looking for pastors and the bishop before they continued to the head office of the Diocese where they burned all the offices including that of the bishop, and destroyed all their content. We strongly denounce this violence and its extension to the civilians and property as completely unacceptable.

According to the Sudan News Agency on June 8, 2011, Khartoum has explicitly declared its intention to "spread its forces throughout [South Kordofan] state after it gained military control in Kadugli. SAF has been carrying out intensive air attacks using Jetfighters, Antinov airplanes and gunships which have been used to hunt down civilians who are escaping from conflict areas to the mountains. The humanitarian situation for the Nuba and non-Arab populations of South Kordofan has immediately become critical. The 10,000 civilians who have sought security at the UNMIS base in Kadugli are desperately short of water and facing growing security risks. Many have already left Kadugli, and the town of Dilling to the north is reportedly deserted. One

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AACC is a fellowship of 173 member Churches and Christian Councils in 40 African countries

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estimate from a Nuba source is that 75,000 people have already been displaced. According to survivors, the civilians who went to seek refuge in the UNMIS camps were captured, dragged outside the camps and summarily executed by SAF troops. One of those who were executed this way on 6th June 2011 is Numery Philip, a Sudanese civilian. This is a clear indication that UNMIS has completely failed to play its role as the protector of unarmed civilian population. Indeed, UNMIS is fast losing credibility among the local population who feel that the UN peace keepers, who happen to be Egyptians, are collaborating with the north, partly as a result of the policy that they can only evacuate via north.

Attempts by senior leaders of the SPLM including Yasir Arman (head of the SPLM in North Sudan) and Malik Agar (governor of Blue Nile and senior member of the SPLM) to arrange a cease-fire with Khartoum officials on June 5 were fruitless. As soon as they flew out of Kadugli, SAF's military aircraft and artillery reportedly attacked five villages south of Kadugli as well as Talodi, Heiban, Kauda, Abdel Aziz el-Hilu's compound on the outskirts of Kadugli, and many other towns. Civilians are reportedly fleeing from these locations. The death of Abdel Aziz el-Hilu, SPLM candidate for governor of South Kordofan in the May elections and a popular figure among the people of the Nuba, could have had huge consequences for Nuba Mountains. That Khartoum knows this and was willing to take the risk, is an indication that the north is already determined on a course of war.

The reports being received from various quarters point to a deliberate process of Ethnic Cleansing; unfolding before us is yet another human tragedy in Sudan. This is one massacre too many! The cry of the people to the international community, to the church, to anybody who cares to listen, is please tell the world what is going on; appeal to the UN to protect the people; appeal to the AU to do their part.

All these atrocities contravene the Machakos protocol which is a part of the wider Comprehensive Peace Agreement(CPA). We therefore call upon the guarantors of the CPA to intervene decisively to make the signatories of the agreement to abide by all its provisions. In particular, we call upon the Troika (US, UK and Norway), IGAD, and the AU to fulfil their responsibilities by ensuring that a ceasefire is in place. We call upon the United Nations to ensure that protection of civilians by UNMIS is duly implemented in all places in South Kordofan and that corridors for humanitarian assistance and the safe passage of unarmed civilians be opened forthwith.

Please pray and act for lives saving.

**God of Life, lead Africa to Peace,
Justice and Dignity**

(Theme for the AACC 10th General Assembly which is to take place in Kampala, Uganda, in June 2013).

Rev. Dr Andre Karamaga (signed)
General Secretary