

Dear all

While attention has been focused elsewhere in South Sudan, **a series of attacks by Misseriya militias on villages north and east of Abyei has left scores dead.** The attacks have accompanied Misseriya migration and hit Tajalei, Marial Achaak and particularly Maker, where 105 were killed on Sat 1st March & 21 on Mon 3rd.

The Sudanese Government has been up to its usual tricks, claiming that SPLA troops are in Abyei Area illegally and initiated fighting, and Misseriya leaders have also issued a complaint that UNISFA are biased against Misseriya. These claims are a cover for their own actions. There are a few decommissioned soldiers in Abyei Area but they are citizens of Abyei who returned to their homes to vote in the referendum last October and stayed there, as did many other Ngok civilians. A complaint that UNISFA are biased against Misseriya is aimed at protecting the status quo, where **UNISFA are prioritising Misseriya migrations** over and above the Ngok's right to live in their own homes, **to the extent of withdrawing protection from Ngok villages north of Abyei and encouraging them to leave their homes and migrate southwards** so they are out of the way of Misseriya migration routes. Some have done so and moved to Abyei, Agok, or out of the area completely and back to Wau. Sudanese propaganda is aimed to obfuscate and make people think both sides are to blame with UNISFA somewhere in the middle, or that the situation is too complicated to understand. In reality the situation is that Ngok returnees are being attacked and driven out of the villages yet again, despite the agreement in theory that returns will be facilitated.

Again as before, **the Church is the only actor supporting those who are most vulnerable.** Abyei Catholic Church has been able to cultivate on an area between Agok and Abyei town and distribute the grain harvested to those who returned to vote in October and stayed, in Dungop and other northern villages.

South Sudan has still not yet recognised the results of the Abyei Community Referendum, but could well do soon. A parliamentary motion with the backing of an unprecedented number of MPs (and, supported by the office of the President) was scheduled for 9th and then 13th Dec, but other matters took precedence and parliament then went on recess. It is due to be tabled again when the South Sudan Legislative Assembly reconvenes in April. It is difficult to see any further progress being made internationally until this happens.

Deng Alor, the Chair of the Abyei High Referendum Committee who took part in a press conference critical of Salva Kiir and was subsequently detained, has been included on an SPLM Committee tasked with preparing the agenda for the meeting of the SPLM Political Bureau. Taban Deng (the lead negotiator for Riek Machar's SPLM in Opposition) is also on this committee. It is to be hoped that Abyei will be included on the agenda for this meeting and that Deng Alor will represent Abyei and a "third way" of reconciliation within South Sudan, not only himself & the 6 other political detainees who were released by Salva Kiir after the initial period

of the crisis which started in December. Ngok have refused to fight for or endorse either side in the internal conflict, instead pushing for reconciliation.

Please pray:

with thanks for the church & role they play, uniquely, in supporting the large numbers who have returned to Abyei

for the withdrawal/disarmament of Sudanese Armed Forces from Kec, who facilitate the armed attacks on northern villages

for courage and protection for those who returned to northern villages for the referendum and subsequently stayed

that UNISFA would do their jobs. finding a way of facilitating Misseriya migrations while offering effective protection to Ngok and without driving Ngok out of the villages; for an improved relationship between UNISFA & the Ngok; for increased honesty & transparency in way UNISFA report events

that the South Sudanese parliament would endorse the results of the Abyei Community Referendum when they reconvene in April, and that this would help to move things on internationally

for wider reconciliation within the South; for Deng Alor and others as they prepare the way for internal reconciliation within the SPLM

Love & solidarity

Tim