

Statement on the seizure of the car of the Bishop of Renk

On the evening of Thursday 23 June 2011 a vehicle of Renk Diocese was seized by four people in plain clothes. They held the passengers, some pastors and some laity, at gunpoint and forced them out of the car. With machine guns in their faces, the passengers had no choice but to hand the car over. Within the car was money for the diocese, some laptop computers and a few mobile phones. Although the car has been returned with the laptop, the diocesan money and the personal items of the passengers were not.

Is such harassment the fate southerners and Christians will now have to regularly face in northern Sudan?

I wanted to raise this issue with the international community in order for our plea for the protection of civilians in the north to be taken seriously. The suffering in Sudan is two-fold. On one hand you have the aerial bombardments in civilian areas, rapes and summary executions not to mention other horrendous crimes against humanity in places such as Southern Kordofan. On the other hand there also exists a discreet and systematic attack within cities and towns that some in those same towns might not even notice was taking place. The main offensive for this second kind of attack is harassment, belligerence and persecution. The fact that the seized car belonged to the Episcopal Diocese of Renk carrying pastors and other church workers and was being used solely for church work meant little to those who impounded it.

This incident is one of many that has happened recently within Khartoum and the second time it has happened to the Diocese of Renk. The first time the car was shot at several times within Khartoum City but miraculously, no one was hurt. It is absolutely essential for both government and non-government bodies in the international community to act as an aegis for the vulnerable Africans, whether Christian or Muslim, and the Christian whether African or Arabs, in order to ensure that the harassment and persecution of Africans and Christians still living and working in the north does not escalate into the kind of violence we are now witnessing in other parts of the Sudan.

I ask you all also to pray in earnest that the leadership of the government in Khartoum recognises such victimisation of its own citizens and works to bring it to an end immediately.

The Most Rev Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak

Archbishop Primate and Metropolitan of the

Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan and

Bishop of the Diocese of Juba