

July 14, 2016



JUSTICE - Pax Christi International denounces the fighting taking place in South Sudan between soldiers of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition. Hundreds of people have been killed in the last few days. Despite the 2015 peace agreement, hostilities continue, causing many people to be killed and thousands more to be displaced, forced to shelter in churches and other locations during the heavy rains.

Humanitarian assistance is needed throughout the country and people should be able to safely reach that help. They have immediate need for food, health care, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene services. We pray for the people of South Sudan, who have been experiencing decades of violence and, consequently, humanitarian problems.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation of violence contrary to the commitments made under the peace agreement. Also, we find that the recent attacks against the UN, its officials and on vulnerable people under their protection, to be outrageous. It is not the first time that UN sites have been under attack.

As long as parties do not settle their differences peacefully, grave human rights violations, crimes against humanity and severe humanitarian crises will continue to take place. Under these conditions, no stable future can be built and the South Sudanese people will only know what it is to live in war, not peace.

We urge all parties to the conflict to immediately cease the hostilities. Also, as the UN Security Council has unanimously requested in its latest statement [1], the UN Mission in the Republic of

South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian actors should be allowed access to civilians in need. Nevertheless, Pax Christi International wishes to underline that the main responsibility for protection of civilians remains with the South Sudanese transitional government.

Furthermore, we urge the leaders of the nations of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), who brokered the 2015 'Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan', to take an urgent and proactive role in resolving the current conflict in South Sudan and to ensure that the agreement is fully implemented.

Pax Christi International would also like to underline that an end is needed to the flood of deadly weapons around the world that facilitate violence and make the road to a just and lasting peace extremely difficult. In line with this, the South Sudan Council of Churches has reiterated the message of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International at the April 2016 conference on 'Nonviolence and Just Peace', that violence is never the solution and simply leads to more violence. [2]

With regard to the violence of recent days, we also support the latest statement of the South Sudan Council of Churches in which it states the following: "We pray for those who have been killed and for their families and we ask God's forgiveness for those who have done the killing. However we also urge repentance and a firm commitment from all armed individuals, forces and communities, and from their leaders, to create an atmosphere where violence is not an option." [3]

This year, the state of South Sudan marks its fifth anniversary as a nation, but there is little reason to celebrate, as many citizens are suffering from hunger, in constant danger and traumatized. We therefore call on our global member organisations to pray and to stand in solidarity with all the victims of violence, with our member organisations in South Sudan, PAX [4] and Holy Trinity Peace Village, Kuron [5], and the Church and its leaders who have had an important role in grassroots and political peace-making. [6]

Brussels, July 12th 2016

[1] The UNSC press statement can be consulted on this website: <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/security-council-press-statement-fighting-juba-south-sudan>

[2] The statement can be found on our website our non-violence and just peace: <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2016/06/28/a-message-from-the-bishops-of-south-sudan-do-not-be-afraid-rise-above-adversity/#more-480>

[3] See this website: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/07/11/south-sudan-church-leaders-condemn-recent-violence-and-pray-for-dead/>

[4] For information on their activities in South Soudan see their website: <http://www.paxforpeace.nl/our-work/programmes/south-sudan>

[5] For information on their activities see their website: <http://www.kuronvillage.net/>

[6] South Sudan: the people to people peace process, intervention by John Ashworth, Non Violence and Peace Conference, Rome, 11-13 April 2016. Online available at: <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/framing-papers/>

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