

AFRECS E-Blast: January 1, 2015

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A New Year - An Old Message

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

As we take cognizance of a year of renewed civil conflict in South Sudan and enter 2015, we are still wrestling with how we as friends of the ECSSS respond. Recently, upon hearing of ongoing suffering in the Diocese of Pacong, I inquired of Bishop Joseph what factors he saw as major contributors to the violence that plagues his diocese and the region of which Pacong is a part. Here is the explanation offered by the Bishop:

- (a) During the civil war (1983-2005), most young people got armed with automatic weapons. There has been a cultural and traditional culture break down. Young people growing up in the situation of war missed family upbringing and education in their customs. Killing of human beings used to be customarily sanctioned and prohibited, but it is now taken lightly.*
- (b) The availability of illegal weapons in the hands of the youth has made killing very easy and common. These weapons are being supplied to the civilian youth through corrupt individual officials and individual soldiers. Since the youth in rural areas are poor, hungry and unemployed they prepare to raid cattle from nearby communities and vice versa. The cattle gotten from raiding are used as a source of food or for marriage dowry.*
- (c) Weak and corrupt individuals have greatly contributed to escalation of these community conflicts. Killers, cattle raiders and sellers of weapons and bullets are not being apprehended, arrested and taken to courts for adjudication. There is complete breakdown of law and order. Justice is being denied to the victims.*

My sense is that what contributes to the horrific acts of revenge in Pacong might well account for violence in other areas of South Sudan where thousands experience the ravages of war and displacement.

Looking to the future, the challenges are pretty clear:

- The education of youth and the availability of opportunities for a better life should be priorities for the immediate future. While these are not easily produced, robust programs which bring literacy, education, and training forward are essential ingredients of any strategy to build a new South Sudan. Those who are now promoting education are to be commended for their efforts. These models need to be encouraged and multiplied if eventually youth are to embrace a life that is not defined by violence and revenge.
- The ease with which weapons can be obtained must be addressed if uneducated youth are to be enticed in the direction of peace. To talk of education and training while guns abound and warfare is promoted will have difficulty taking hold. The Bishop's remarks underscore the frustration in checking violence if those who dispense weapons with a message that tilts young people toward revenge are not held accountable for promoting conflict. This suggests that the establishment of judicial structures is essential if an end to revenge killing is to occur. This suggests another priority for a recovering South Sudan. As attention is given to the formation of a new constitution, a judicial structure that permeates all levels of government is a must.
- These more far reaching goals have relevance only if peace and an end to conflict occur. Peace and stability are precursors to development. Again we call attention to the role of faith communities as purveyors of peace and reconciliation training. Accelerating such efforts is imperative so that at least pockets of reform can give hope to those who see only a landscape of violence. New possibilities must be lifted up so that those who have lost hope can regain it. Tangible evidence of healing and recovery is needed even as the conflict continues. From all indications, the religious bodies are the crucibles in which reconciliation can be nurtured if the peace and reconciliation training is ecumenical and inclusive of all social groups and sectors, most especially youth and women.

Delaying peace and reconciliation efforts is to prolong a conflict that if not abated condemns South Sudan to an increasingly perilous future.

We have just observed the miracle of Christmas. We know that this miracle did not immediately result in a new order of peace and tranquility. We know that the message of bringing all of God's people together into one family required a lot of preaching and teaching. Possibly that continues to be our challenge and that of our sisters and brothers in South Sudan. But that old message must be constantly lifted up as plans for a stable and peaceful South Sudan are pursued.

Faithfully,  
Richard Parkins

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## South Sudan

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An interview with a [South Sudanese Lost Boy](#) who is now back in his country aired recently on National Public Radio. Working for the non-profit organization, Project Education South Sudan, Daniel Majook Gai helps girls find an education in this war torn land. He tells the story of Annah, a sign of change in the country. At 16 years old, she is studying to be a doctor, even though the cultural expectation is for her to marry and have a family. Daniel is still hopeful that the people of South Sudan will find peace. "I am still optimistic because of the people. South Sudan, that's where I was born. That's where my grand-grand-grandparents are," he says. "When I look at myself I feel that it is a call for me as an emerging leader in the country to do something for our people."

**The ECSSS mobilizes two hundred youth as peace campaigners for Lakes States.** [The Christian Times](#) article written by John C. Daau focuses on the movement initiated by Archbishop and Primate Dr. Daniel Deng Bul. "The Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan is rallying 200 Youth Peace Mobilisers and Campaigners to storm 8 counties and 15 cattle camps on January 7-21, 2015, in Lakes State, targeting youth with messages urging them to consider living in peace and stop revenge killings among themselves."

**UN: South Sudan rebels committed atrocities** in oil-rich Bentiu during October attack, as reported recently in [Al Jazeera](#).

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## Sudan

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**Darfur Deja Vu**, an article written by [African Arguments](#) Editor, Alex de Waal, begins with this statement: "There is an old joke that Sudanese politics is different every week but if you come back after ten years it is exactly the same." The author who is also Director of the World Peace Foundation adds: "That sums up my impressions of the Darfur peace talks in Addis Ababa two weeks ago, except that it is nine years ago, not ten, that I became engaged full time in working for the African Union on the last round of the Darfur mediation." This brief and insightful article ends with this statement: "Darfur's conflict can be settled but not by these means."

**"Sudan's Bashir to deliver important speech** on (59th) Independence Day anniversary" headlines a recent article in the [Sudan Tribune](#). The annual presidential celebration took place at the presidential palace in Khartoum with the participation of the several national figures, political leaders, civil society organizations, and foreign diplomatic missions accredited to Sudan. Meanwhile, Bashir received on Monday a congratulatory message on this occasion from his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, underscoring his keenness to promote Sudanese-Chinese ties in all spheres.

**"Sudan Defends Expulsion of 2 UN Officials"** as reported by [Voice of America](#). A government spokesman said Sudan will not compromise on its sovereignty nor allow outsiders to visit and disrespect its leaders and people without consequences. Recently Sudan expelled two UN officials connected with the UN Development Program. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the expulsions and called on Khartoum to "reverse its decision immediately." Sudan's Minister of Information, Ahmed Bilal, said Ban should not be quick to condemn Sudan without first knowing the reasons for the expulsions. Bilal said one of the officials made "insulting" comments about the Sudanese people and their leaders in comments to a foreign newspaper.

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Thank you to our readers for your interest, your prayers, and your support.  
Ellen J. Hanckel  
Editor

PARTNER, URGE, GIVE

If you'd like to be doing more to help address the crisis in South Sudan, please consider the following:

- \*Pray for peace and deep healing of the conflicts and rivalries in South Sudan.
- \*Join AFRECS or renew your annual membership on line at <http://www.afrecs.org/getInvolved.htm>
- \* If you have contacts in South Sudan and are able to get news of various parts of the country and the church from them, keep AFRECS in the loop by replying to this email or using our main contact email address: [info@afrecs.org](mailto:info@afrecs.org).
- \* Be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.
- \* [Donate](#) to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.
- \*Urge others to support AFRECS as well.