

AFRECS E-Blast: February 26, 2014

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AN ILLUSIVE PEACE: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Tragically, the hoped for cease fire is not holding and violence continues in parts of South Sudan. In particular, fighting in Malakal heaps more suffering on a people and a community that has already endured unbelievable devastation. We mourn with our brother, Bishop Rueben of Bor, for the loss of those who were recently killed as their convoy moved from Juba to Bor. We receive daily reminders that peace and the end of hostilities are not yet realities.

In the midst of this saga of misery, the Church struggles to assert its role as peacemaker and healer. Both the Episcopal and Catholic bishops have met in emergency sessions to sustain each other through prayer and consolation and to plan a way forward as many of their own mourn the loss of loved ones and seek safety wherever it may be found. AFRECS seeks to be with them as they rally to be the voice of peace that has been so crucial to the credibility that they enjoy with their people.

The emergency meeting of the Episcopal bishops was partially subsidized by AFRECS who with friends from the Salisbury Diocese (UK) and Pax Christi contributed funds to allow the bishops to come together. We also extended financial support to the ECSS&S provincial office to foster broad participation at the Addis conference where the task of ending hostilities and establishing peace is seemingly stymied. Now we will join with other partners to provide assistance to bishops, their families, and their pastors who have dealt with displacement and upheaval even as they try to minister to their dispersed flocks. Sustaining the Church in the midst of this adversity is a paramount concern, for without that voice there is little hope that a peace process can take hold when hostilities finally cease.

As you reflect on this message, please consider a donation to AFRECS to allow us to be responsive to the daunting challenges which the Church faces. All funds received are dedicated to working with bishops and friends at the ECSS&S. Be as generous as possible for your generosity along with your prayers sends a vital message of Christian love to those who have for many decades been messengers for Christ in a very troubled land.

Faithfully,

Richard Parkins
Executive Director

Note from E-Blast Editor:

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You may also make donations on-line via Pay Pal: <http://www.afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>

On Friday, 21 February, the [Human Rights Division of the UN Mission in South Sudan \(UNMISS\)](#) published an 'Interim Report on Human Rights - Crisis in South Sudan.' The report covers the period of time between 15 December 2013, when violence broke out in Juba, to 31 January 2014, almost one month ago. Although the report is not current since it does not cover the last month when much has happened, its purpose is to provide an interim 'snapshot' on the progress of human rights investigations during the first six weeks of the crisis. A fuller report is expected in late April that can "underpin efforts to ensure that those responsible for violations of international humanitarian & human rights laws will be held accountable." So far, the focus has been on gathering information and addressing urgent issues of civilian protection.

Over 500 interviews reveal "the deliberate targeting of civilians, both nationals and foreigners, in extrajudicial and other unlawful killings, including mass killings, enforced disappearances, gender-based violence, such as rapes and gang-rapes, and instances of ill-treatment and torture by forces from both sides of the conflict."

The interim report focuses on the four (out of 10) South Sudanese states designated as 'red' because of their level of violence:

Central Equatoria...(Juba, where violence began on 15 December)

Jonglei.....(Bor, 18 December)

Unity.....(Bentiu, 19 December)

Upper Nile.....(Malakal, 23 December)

The dates show the quick succession of the outbreaks in the states where the most serious violence occurred during this time frame. In graphic terms, the interim report describes the details of the conflict which is on-going, despite the cease fire agreement signed in Addis Ababa on 23 January. In the editor's opinion, it provides a clear, credible picture of atrocities taking place in the recent past, even as it seeks to "point the way toward completing a further report." Although it is difficult to

read the account of these horrific crimes, it is well worth it in order to gain an informed perspective of this tragic reality. (EJH)

From another perspective, Hon. Wol Deng Atak, a former national legislator questioned the neutrality of the West in the current crisis. The East African news outlet, Gurtong, posted an article from Juba on 22 February, entitled 'A senior South Sudanese Politician has accused western countries of working for "Juba regime downfall."' In it, he said the West had "failed to pressurize the rebels to work for peace in South Sudan and cooperate with the government for development." Wol asked, "Is the (W)est truly concerned of the suffering of poor people in South Sudan? If they were concerned, their governments would be talking of justice like they call for it in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Angola, and Sierra Leone among others." The senior member of SPLM (South Sudan's ruling party) now turned a political analyst said, "Thousands have died in South Sudan's violence and all (the West) could say is release, release and release detainees without regard to justice." [See full article here.](#)

Yet another perspective comes from this first-hand account of the situation in South Sudan. Nancy McGaughey, a missionary with the Presbyterian Church USA, is currently there on the ground and writes a compelling story in words and pictures for her February Mission Newsletter. It reads in part:

"Hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese have sought refuge in the United Nations compounds in Juba, each with over 20,000 people cramped into small places. I visited one of those earlier this month to help with a training for traditional birth attendants. After the training, I talked with some of the people living there. I asked one of them how long he thought it would take before he could return to his home in Juba. He looked at me with sadness in his eyes and said, "I fear this is my home now. If we try to return to our homes, we will be killed. I must plan on living here."

In closing, Nancy makes the following request:

"Please remember the South Sudanese in your prayers. As leaders of the country compete for power, the people struggle to survive. Pray for: an end to hostilities; for justice, forgiveness, reconciliation amongst the tribes; for unity of spirit; for strong leaders, leaders with integrity and compassion; for people to be able to return home and start rebuilding their lives. If ever there was a time for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this nation," now is that time.

[See the full newsletter here](#) as posted on the Links page of the AFRECS website. It is the first article in the first section entitled 'Information on the Current Crisis & Humanitarian Response' with a brief

bio about the author, supplied by AFRECS Office Manager, Susan Jones.

Note:

As always, Susan's thoughtful and technical contributions to this E-Blast effort are much appreciated.

Ellen J. Hanckel

E-Blast Editor

PRAY FOR PEACE AND DEEP HEALING OF THE CONFLICTS AND RIVALRIES IN SOUTH SUDAN.

PARTNER, URGE, GIVE

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

* 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@afreecs.org.

* Pay attention to the evolving events and be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.

* Give to provide relief for internally displaced persons and others whose resources are compromised by the fighting and instability. One hundred percent of [donations to AFRECS](#) go to ECSS&S entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.

If you have received this eblast in a forwarded message, you may [sign up here](#) to subscribe. Then you will receive them from AFRECS on a regular bi-weekly schedule.