

AFRECS E-Blast: April 17, 2013

Editor's Note: Just as this E-Blast was in the final stages of preparation, we were made aware of an announcement by the President of South Sudan that could profoundly affect the atmosphere of the country. (See [here](#) for full report.) By withdrawing powers from the Vice President and suspending the holding of the National Reconciliation Conference, the current direction of the Republic of South Sudan has changed dramatically. A decision was made to send this E-Blast as is while we await further news from the front. ejh

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

In the church:

A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins

THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY

Two weeks ago, we lifted up the prospect of a national reconciliation project for the Republic of South Sudan. The launching of this effort has been moved to early June. Plans are underway with the help of an outside consulting group to establish the framework and the mechanics for the conference. However, there is still an unsettling discussion around how the effort is to go forward with the Government of South Sudan making demands that are not agreeable to some of the key players, such as the faith community, whose participation is critical to the success of this urgently needed venture.

The help of the South Sudan Council of Churches (see the update [here](#)) is being sought as an indispensable voice in this effort at truth telling and reconciliation. There can be no doubt that the leadership of the faith communities, both Christian and Muslim, could make a positive difference in how the conference unfolds, the extent to which there is meaningful participation in the conference by those who can influence the behavior and attitudes of the Sudanese people and thus add to the credibility of the project.

We have also learned of the murder of five UN peace keeping workers in Jonglei state. These persons were targeted, presumably to deter the peace keeping role of the United Nations. Jonglei state continues to be a place where violent ethnic conflict thwarts attempts at peace and reconciliation.

Recently, I was able to meet with a member of South Sudan's Constitutional advisory commission who lamented the lack of progress in moving forward with a permanent constitution which would replace the temporary one that has earned the disfavor of many who feel that it gives the central government excessive authority. Without debating the merits of a more decentralized system of government for South Sudan, the fact that the interim constitution is not widely embraced as the blueprint for the future governance of South Sudan is troubling. Also, the recent expulsion of human rights workers from South Sudan is an ominous sign of South Sudan's shaky democracy.

All of the above point clearly to the need to push any legitimate effort toward a national conversation which has peace, justice, and reconciliation as goals. While such an exercise is hardly the panacea for the many challenges facing this new nation, it could be the beginning of a much longer journey where all sectors of the nation engage in moving toward a genuine democracy. Seeking consensus on the principles of democracy and eliminating those barriers to creating a society where all groups live together harmoniously is a tall order but one toward which our prayers should be directed. We are reminded of similar efforts in South Africa and Sierra Leone where deep and painful divisions have been greatly ameliorated in the recovery process. As an Easter people, we must believe that similar recovery is possible for South Sudan and pray for such a result.

Richard Parkins

News from AFRECS:

The AFRECS National Conference is scheduled for October 18-20, 2013 in Chicago at Seabury Western seminary. A recent eblast inadvertently provided the wrong date for the conference. Please save the dates of Friday, October 18th through Sunday October 20th and plan to join us in Chicago.

Reminder: Please check the [AFRECS web site](#) for the Winter edition of SUDAN CONNECTIONS.

In the church (continued):

Dear Friends,

There are times when the challenges of a problem are so daunting that we do not see a way of offering help. That could easily be the case with South Sudan with what are often seen as formidable challenges. However, investing in leadership is a good option, particularly for a country recovering from over a half century of violence and displacement where opportunities to gain the education and thus the skills needed for leadership were virtually absent. For this reason, the efforts of St Paul's parish, Alexandria, Virginia, to assist Sudanese students with higher education becomes a compelling option, especially when those being trained commit to returning to South Sudan, adding to the leadership resources of that new nation. Investing in gifted young Sudanese, allowing them to get advanced training in a first class educational environment, and building on their commitment to be a nation builder back home makes a lot of sense. Please be generous in supporting the work of St Paul's in helping this to happen for deserving Sudanese students.

Richard Parkins
Executive Director

In both Sudan & South Sudan:

A senior South Sudanese Catholic priest was expelled from Sudan on the day that the President of Sudan, Bashir, visited Juba. See [here](#) for the full story.

Amnesty International releases their findings from a thorough investigation into human rights abuses in the Sudan states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The conditions in refugee camps, principally Yida in Unity State located in South Sudan, are explored and found severely lacking under the extreme pressure of 70,000 refugees currently (with the total expected to rise to 100,000 by the month of May) as a result of people escaping the indiscriminate bombing of civilian sites. "The international community continues to watch this catastrophe unfold as the humanitarian situation worsens in conflict-affected areas of Southern Kordofan. It's time for some concerted action," said Khairunissa Dhala, Amnesty International's South Sudan researcher. Recommendations to all government and international organizations involved are a part of this report. See the press release [here](#) and the full report [here](#).

In South Sudan:

Recent violence in Jonglei State is addressed by the South African Institute of Justice and Reconciliation (IJR). In the strongest terms, the statement calls for the cessation of violence and the protection of civilians during the armed conflict. An earlier press release from the UN is quoted in this recent media release from the IJR. See [here](#) for the report.

This State Department press release (see [here](#)) details the South Sudan economic partners forum that the US hosted on April 16. It was an invitation-only opportunity for representatives of governments and international financial institutions to discuss strategies to address South Sudan's economic challenges with South Sudanese Government officials and offer support for sound government policy-making. Also of interest is this article on the same subject published by the [Sudan Tribune](#).

In Sudan:

The Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) in the US Treasury Department has issued to Sudan a General License which authorizes certain academic and professional exchanges between the US and Sudan which are otherwise prohibited by the Sudanese Sanctions Regulations (SSR). See [here](#) for full details.

Pray

Thanksgiving for the continuing recovery of Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail of Kadugli and the Nuba Mountains who will make plans to return to South Sudan when he regains his health.

Again your prayers are requested for the Principal of Bishop Gwynne College (BGC), Joseph Taban Lasuba who will be receiving on-going treatment in Nairobi for the next several weeks.

He, his wife, Esparansa, and their family appreciate the prayer support, as do the students and staff of BGC in Juba.

Pray for an overwhelming response to the advocacy efforts detailed in these E-Blasts. Pray especially for the cessation of indiscriminate bombing in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan and for the people of Yida, as well as other refugee camps, located in Unity State of South Sudan.

Urge

Prayerfully consider going to the [Enough Project Advocacy](#) event in DC, Monday, June 10. See [March 20th](#) E-Blast for more information.

Urge others to write letters to government representatives as outlined in the [March 7th E-Blast](#). It's not too late to do so.

Give

Give a modest amount today to further the work of AFRECS by becoming a member. (See [here](#) for how to join.)

Learn

Learn more by reviewing the last E-Blast: [April 3rd](#) and by going to the [AFRECS home page](#).

In Christ, with thanks for your efforts and prayers for peace,
Ellen J. Hanckel, Editor

This bi-weekly Sudan update is from the American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan. You are receiving it because you are currently on an AFRECS listserv. Feel free to forward this newsflash to others who may find it helpful.