



Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan
Office of the Archbishop

**Remarks of His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Deng Bul Yak,
Archbishop and Primate of the Province of the
Episcopal Church of the Sudan,
to the
General Convention of the
Episcopal Church of the United States of America**

July 2009 – Anaheim, California

Your Grace, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America,

My fellow bishops, priests, deacons and laity of the Church of God,
Brothers and sisters in Christ, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the entire congregation of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, and on my own behalf, I am humbled and honoured by your invitation to this convention and I greet you all in the precious name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to address this General Convention and to therefore cement the ever growing relationship between our churches on the sure foundation of mutual understanding, true partnership and above all the love of Jesus Christ our Lord who covers all multitudes of sin.

I would like to take this opportunity to relate some of the difficulties facing my country in 2009; how my Church, the ECS, is working tirelessly with God's help to tackle them; and how these trials can be better faced by Sudanese Christians if they are effectively supported by overseas partners such as yourselves.

Over the past year I have undertaken major tours of Southern Sudan, covering almost all of Equatoria, Lakes State and Jonglei State. During these visits I have witnessed first hand the suffering of my people and the increasing fear of communities on the ground because of a situation of ever-increasing insecurity. In the Church's opinion, this is the biggest problem in Sudan today, and prevents any further material or economic development, as well as the free and fair elections desperately needed in February 2010 and the referendum on Southern secession scheduled for 2011.

Peoples in Western and Central Equatoria are being attacked, murdered and displaced by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), rumoured to be supplied by people within Sudan. A large number of civilians in Eastern Equatoria, Lakes and Jonglei states are armed. The proliferation of modern weapons has caused traditional tribal conflicts over cattle ownership and grazing rights to increase and escalate into far bloodier warfare all over Southern Sudan – warfare that is now damaging the unity of the people and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) process as a whole.

We are urging the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to retain the peace of the Sudan as a top priority, working to prevent further genocide and assisting in the humanitarian effort to bring better living conditions to believers.

I am here today appealing to you not to forget the people of Sudan and I ask you to urge the United States' Government to do more for Sudan, before we witness another genocide which is our future fear. The problems facing Sudan at present are many and are as follows:

1. The Government of National Unity has failed to make unity attractive to the people of Southern Sudan
2. The Government of Southern Sudan (Goss) has rejected the Census
3. The upcoming elections are already behind schedule and there are doubts whether really they will actually take place.
4. There has been no referendum law passed to date, despite the provision in the interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (10 : 1) that the referendum law should be promulgated by the beginning of the third year of the Interim Period that is, by 9th January 2008
5. There is still disagreement between the government in the South and in the North on the North-South border and Abyei Protocol issues.
6. Without trying to minimise the humanitarian tragedy in Darfur, the international community has, in recent years, concentrated almost exclusively on Darfur whilst ignoring the problems and deaths of thousands more people in Southern Sudan. The focus must shift back to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). If the CPA fails in Sudan, there will certainly be no peace in Darfur either.
7. Within Southern Sudan, militia and tribesmen are being re-armed by unknown groups in order to destabilise Southern Sudan and make it appear un-governable.

According to the Human Rights Report released in June 2009, arbitrary arrest and detention by the National Intelligence Security Service (NISS) military or police continues to be widely spread in all areas of Sudan, and is often linked to other serious human rights violations, such as incommunicado detention, ill treatment, torture or detention in un-official places. As UNMIS and UMAMID Human Rights Officers have no access to most places of detention, the exact figure of those detained is impossible to verify.

Regarding the rearming of militia groups and tribesmen and their subsequent fighting, the only conclusion one can draw is that these are ancient disputes that are being deliberately stirred up into something much more damaging for the local people and the stability of our country as a whole. Who is doing this is still largely unknown, but it is evident from local reports received through the Church network that the arms smuggling, re-armament and incitement of tribal violence is being carried out by enemies of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This view has since been publicly shared by the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, H.E. Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit, in speeches at the SPLA Day celebrations on 26th May and at the recent opening of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly on 15th June, at which I prayed for the Government of Sudan.

During Easter 2009, I visited Jonglei State, travelling from Bor right up to Ayod in the Nuer lands. Although I and the vast majority of the party I was travelling with are Dinka, we were welcomed, and I as a Church leader spoke about love and peace between tribes. On my return to Juba I was informed that following the visit all cattle raiding and violence in the Ayod area has ceased. I take this as proof that the Church is one of the

most effective ground-level players in the peace process and as proof that our message of love and reconciliation is one that is most effective in peace building amongst the tribes of Southern Sudan.

The Church has a presence in almost all small villages in the South, coverage unmatched by any organisation, including the Government of Southern Sudan. Following the Jonglei visit I made a passionate and heartfelt appeal to those governments and organisations that form Sudan's international diplomatic and donor community, in particular the United Nations agencies and the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Netherlands, all of which have a major presence in Southern Sudan and are guarantor signatories of the CPA.

As a guarantor, the US Government has a duty to prevent Sudan from returning to war, and I urge this convention to increase your advocacy on behalf of the Sudanese people to President Obama, Secretary Clinton and Special Envoy Gration. We need to let those in the west who support the cause of peace, freedom and justice for Sudan know that the churches are key partners in the work of peace-building on the ground.

This is a problem that requires an ecumenical approach – all churches need to be supported by international stakeholders in the CPA to be tools of peace work. With the ECS community-level network that surpasses any other, we need to be empowered to spread peace in our land as I have been doing in Jonglei State last month. We must teach our people that they are part of much bigger politics of which they are unaware, but which they are destabilising. They must also be empowered to make free and fair democratic choices in the upcoming elections and referendum.

My worry, and the fear of many thousands of people I have spoken to across Southern Sudan in the past year, is that the current escalating violence will add to the current disputes between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) over the North-South border and the Abyei Protocol, that are already threatening to cause the CPA to collapse. If the CPA is not guaranteed now, war can start again all too quickly, during which a return to peace will be incredibly difficult, the Sudanese people will be further devastated and the whole region will be destabilised.

If this and other countries are guarantors of the CPA, then why is the international community allowing this violence to continue? I beseech you to act now to prevent it and protect the peace of my people.

In his letter to the Romans, Chapter 12, St. Paul appeals to the people "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think", but to act together with others: "so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another". We need to remember that though we come from completely different countries and cultures, we are still one people in the body of Christ – the perfect partnership – and we are all working for the same body – the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

St. Paul also asks us to use the talents that we have in the service of God: "if prophesy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teachers, in his teaching" and so on. As churches we must recognise where our strengths are and concentrate on how to strengthen the Church itself as a crucial institution in the fabric of a community. A community which in Sudan's case, has still so recently been torn apart by war.

St. Paul finally says that we should “never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit and serve the Lord”. Let us take up this challenge together today. Through twenty one years of civil war, Sudanese Christians have never faltered in this duty and the ECS has been the fastest growing church in Africa since the year 2000. Whilst our people are full of zeal and the Holy Spirit, many lack any education, theological or otherwise.

My mission as Archbishop is the building of a firm, indigenous foundation for the Church and the nation. Christ said to St. Peter, “on this rock I will build my Church”, and one of my goals is to leave ECS as a Church built upon the rock and sure foundation of educated, indigenous, trained people, both clerical and lay, who are honest in their business, ambassadors of peace and are trained in the faith as well as being filled with the spirit. I therefore ask for your help, in whatever way the Lord may allow.

I am hereby appealing to you, and the International Community to save the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) from collapsing.

I am appealing to you to strengthen the Episcopal Church of the Sudan to be able to give basic service to the returnees’ communities in the Southern Sudan and the marginalised areas.

God bless Episcopal Church of America. God bless our partnership; and God bless the Episcopal Church of the Sudan.

Thanks

The Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Deng Bul Yak

Archbishop and Primate of the Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan

30 June 2009