

AFRECS E-Blast: January 15, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

A Message About the Continuing Crisis in South Sudan from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

As we continue our prayers on behalf of peace in South Sudan, please pray most especially that leaders meeting in Addis will be open to a permanent cease fire and an end to the hostility that has plagued so many parts of South Sudan.

What is becoming abundantly clear is the immediate need for food and medical assistance to those displaced by the violence. Not only is their abrupt departure from their villages tragic, but their flight to nearby areas spreads the impact of the war in areas which have heretofore been spared the violence that has plagued Bor and Jonglei state.

Many who are hopeful that peace is a near term possibility, now must seriously consider what lies ahead, especially for churches and faith communities, as they attempt to accompany their church friends in South Sudan. The consensus that is emerging focuses on peace and reconciliation initiatives on a massive scale, underscoring that the effort needs to be comprehensive in reaching all sectors of South Sudan. What receives repeated mention is the need to include theological education (seminaries and Bible colleges), churches (pastors and church leaders), schools (teachers and educators) and various forms of grass roots engagement. A corollary of this ambitious thinking is an understanding that the task ahead is difficult and complex. A generous infusion of resources is necessary to launch an effort worthy of the magnitude and complexity of the problem.

This daunting task, however, does not eliminate the possibility that pilot efforts can move forward now and that work already in progress can serve as building blocks for a larger and more far reaching effort. There is also recognition that whatever is done to bring about the reconciliation needed to avert future crises must defer to South Sudanese leadership and reflect cultural realities informed by South Sudanese partners.

As we contemplate what we are called to do to support peace and reconciliation in South Sudan, we ask for your prayers that the peace and reconciliation hoped for will become real and that the efforts of all who remain hopeful that South Sudan can have a better future be blessed by Him who is the architect of the peace that we seek.

Faithfully,
Richard Parkins

More Information about the Continuing Crisis in South Sudan

Connect to this [link](#) to view the c-span video of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing about civil unrest and growing ethnic violence in South Sudan. The hearing was held intentionally on January 9th, 2014, a significant date for the new nation as it was the third anniversary of its referendum on independence. The five witnesses testifying on the panels included representatives from the Department of State, the US Agency for Internal Development (USAID), the Enough Project, and the National Defense University. A full two hours long, the dialogue is far reaching and deep, bringing much expertise, experience, and passionate interest, in order to search for a resolution of this crisis. You may also access this video under News items on the Links page of the [AFRECS website](#), where it will remain for current & future reference.

Also on the same, significant anniversary date, a [Joint Statement](#) was issued by the three governmental bodies in South Sudan mandated to work on peace and reconciliation in the new country. It reads in part, "...(We) have watched with growing concern and alarm as armed hostilities escalate and intensify, threatening to pull our country into a downward spiral of violence." In support of the dialogue process to end the violence and in the spirit of unity and reconciliation in building a collective future for all the people of South Sudan, "the three institutions offer this joint statement to the respective leaders who have started a crucial dialogue process to end the fighting and violent conflict..." The statement was issued by The Peace & Reconciliation Commission, The Specialised Committee of Parliament on Peace & Reconciliation and The Committee for National Healing, Peace & Reconciliation. It is posted on the AFRECS website for continuing reference.

The UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) published the latest Situation Reports ([#001](#), [#002](#), [Uganda Update](#)) on South Sudan and Uganda, detailing the extremely difficult conditions in refugee camps as people try to escape the violence. In a separate report published by the International Crisis Group, [the death toll estimate](#) in South Sudan since December 15th is now 10,000. [The New York Times](#) reports this figure in a recent article that also updates and summarizes the situation.

[Click here](#) to see a recent interview with Rebecca Garang, the widow of the fallen leader, John Garang. Originally aired on Urban TV, the half hour show, "In Focus - South Sudan Conflict" is now available on You Tube.

Here is a [summary report of a recent South Sudan forum](#) at the US Institute for Peace, written by an AFRECS founder, Richard J.Jones, who is now a professor at the Washington Theological Consortium.

In another response to the violence in South Sudan, at least one resolution will be submitted to a diocesan annual meeting. For example, [click here](#) to see one that will be brought before the Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia to be held January 24-26 in Roanoke. It seeks to strengthen the 35 year relationship that has existed between this diocese and the Province of Sudan, now known as the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan. There may be other similar resolutions that are in process. If you know of one, please send it to AFRECS by email for sharing in future eblasts and/or posting on the website.

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@afrecs.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 ECSSS entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.

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