

AFRECS E-Blast: January 28, 2015

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Another Chance

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

Last Sunday we received the final piece of the story of Jonah whose punishment for failing to heed God's request to warn the people of Nineveh of the consequences of their sinful ways landed him in a very strange place. But Jonah's repentance and God's mercy resulted in Jonah covering the vast city of Nineveh with a warning to repent - a message that was heard and saved the city from God's wrath. Is there a lesson here for South Sudan?

There are a few signs of hope emerging as we continue to deplore the ongoing violence in South Sudan. International voices are speaking out more robustly and China has added its significant voice to those asking for an immediate end to hostilities. But the conflict persists in spite of these pleadings and warnings.

What if the voices for peace and reconciliation, namely the churches and most especially the avowed Christians of this country where supposedly Christianity has been a major force, covered the country with a message of peace. Along with this message should come a warning that South Sudan's future is in jeopardy if the purveyors of violence do not repent and allow the voices of peace and reconciliation to prevail. Could it be that like Jonah, who was given a second chance to send a warning message, the true followers of Christ - the churches who have heard the Gospel message of reconciliation - embraced it as never before and invested all of their energy in a unified effort to bring peace to this war ravaged nation.

While the voices of peace are at work, possibly these voices could be more robust and united. Maybe they have not been forthright enough to counteract the forces of division that are now so prevalent in South Sudan. When given a second chance, Jonah seized the opportunity and tackled the difficult task of warning the people of Nineveh what devastation was before them if they did not change their ways and repent

We know that Jonah resisted taking on the task of preaching to a people who were not on friendly terms with the people of Israel. God often calls us to do difficult work but stands by us in the effort. We know that peacemaking in South Sudan will be an onerous task but one that must be done if this fledgling nation and its people are to move forward. Let us pray that the voices of peace and reconciliation will grow stronger in denouncing the forces of division that haunt South Sudan. The message should include an alert that South Sudan's future is bleak if reconciliation does not take root. Let us pray that, like the people of Nineveh, the people of South Sudan - especially those who foster a culture of revenge and endless retaliation - will heed the warning.

Faithfully,
Richard Parkins

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South Sudan

A joint statement on South Sudan peace negotiations was issued by the members of the [Troika: the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway](#). The final paragraph concludes: "We recognize the recent agreement in Arusha, Tanzania to reconcile the SPLM and encourage the parties to use the upcoming IGAD summit of 29 January to secure peace for the people of South Sudan. In the face of this deplorable humanitarian crisis, there can be no excuse for further delay in negotiations or for continued violence."

On 1/26/15 [Foreign Policy](#) published an article by United Nations reporter, Colum Lynch, titled **Inside the White House Fight Over the Slaughter in South Sudan**. "Many in the administration," the article continues, "believe an arms embargo is essential to stopping South Sudan's bloodshed. Why had Susan Rice been blocking it?"

For a thoughtful analysis of the question: [Does ethnicity matter in South Sudan's conflict?](#) read this opinion piece by Amir Idris, recently published in the **Sudan Tribune**. The author is Professor and Chair of the Department of African and African American Studies at Fordham University in New York City.

Some **good news** was reported recently by **UNICEF**: [3,000 child soldiers will be released in South Sudan](#). The United Nations children's agency said this after a group of 280 children were freed on Tuesday. More phased releases will happen in the coming weeks, according to UNICEF, which helped negotiate the freedom of the children, ranging in age from 11 to 17.

"The release of thousands of children requires a massive response to provide the support and protection (they) need to begin rebuilding their lives," said a UNICEF representative. The children were recruited by an armed group in Jonglei State whose leader, David Yau Yau, signed a peace agreement with the South Sudan government in 2014. Last year 12,000 children were used as soldiers by armed forces and groups across South Sudan, said UNICEF.

Sudan

[Nuba Reports](#) - local journalism from Sudan's front lines - shows the latest conflict in the Nuba Mountains. **About them:** Fighting broke out in June 2011 between Sudan's government and Nuban rebels that once fought with South Sudan. **Nuba Reports** was founded by residents of South Kordofan after the government cut off humanitarian and media access. Armed with cameras and journalistic training, their goal is to provide dispatches from the front lines of the conflict and to illuminate the war's impact on civilians.

[The UK will contribute a further 7 million pounds to the UN's Common Humanitarian Fund appeal for Sudan](#), a representative announced recently during a visit to Khartoum. The humanitarian situation in Sudan has further deteriorated in the last few weeks due to increased conflict in Darfur and in the Blue

Nile and South Kordofan states. UNICEF estimates that around 6,000 children have been displaced in the recent fighting around Jebel Marra, a situation made worse by unseasonably cold weather.

The UK representative, **Baroness Northover, said:** "The conflict in Darfur is one of Africa's longest running, and increased fighting has driven even more people from their homes. **Britain will not turn its back on families who are trapped in poverty by years of conflict.** While this new funding is helping to meet basic needs, **only lasting peace will allow people to build prosperous lives independent of aid."**

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.

* 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.