

AFRECS E-Blast: November 6, 2013

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

**In the church:**

**Invisibility - The Most Serious Casualty: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins**

I have had the rare opportunity and privilege to share time with two wonderful bishops of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) these past several days. Bishop Anthony Poggo and Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail accompanied me on visits to various offices, both government and NGO, to lift up our shared concerns for peace and stability in South Sudan and Sudan. This reflection focuses on what I learned from Bishop Andudu's presentations and the extended conversations that we had throughout the visit.

Others can recount the horrors of what is happening to the people of the Nuba Mountains. My intention is to share as best I can the special concerns of a pastor and shepherd for the victims of possibly today's most egregious assault on a people's human rights.

After learning of the total destruction of his diocesan office and home in Kadugli while seeking medical assistance in the US, the bishop had to face the dispersal of his people to five adjacent countries, knowing that they fled with nothing except a deep sense of desperation. His first challenge was to reach out to comfort a traumatized, uprooted flock and their pastors in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt and South Sudan.

And then there are those who remain in the Kadugli diocese in an area protected by the South Sudanese Liberation Army (SPLM). How are they to be fed, clothed, educated and comforted? Garnering resources to respond when access to your people is difficult, and where corridors through which help might normally flow are closed. Telling the story of untold human suffering caused by the relentless bombing from hostile neighbors to the north and the starvation that comes when food cannot be delivered and cultivation is impossible as bombs rain down upon you is another challenge. And not being able to easily tell the story makes the challenge of telling the story and generating support all the more daunting.

Maintaining a semblance of normalcy as people flee to caves, live in constant fear of more bombs, and deal with unremitting hunger is to be tackled with a meager flow of assistance. Schooling ends when destruction, hunger and fear take over. As people seek the solace of their faith, how are priests to be recruited and trained to be the spiritual resource that is so urgently needed in the midst of this desperation, and how is this caring bishop to tend to his multiple flocks throughout a region where travel is very expensive and only intermittently available?

How is a world to hear the story and feel the suffering of these people and appreciate the efforts of their bishop if the media is thwarted in getting to places where this painful reality is happening, And how does this wrenching situation get recognition and visibility as it competes with horrendous crises in other parts of the world? How can we help this bishop to prevent his people from becoming casualties because their plight is virtually invisible? How is their pain and courage to be really understood if their faces are not seen.

We can and must do more. AFRECS will seek opportunities for those who want to encourage and assist Bishop Andudu. To allow a people to be a casualty of indifference and invisibility is about as close to an unpardonable sin as one can imagine.

AFRECS [will receive funds](#) to help Bishop Andudu buy school supplies and pay teachers in a primary school in a secluded area of the diocese – secluded enough hopefully to avoid the bombing that daily threatens the area. A modest \$8000 can make this happen. The training of pastors is another urgent goal of the Bishop for which \$14,000 to support a Bible college is needed. A bishop who travels from country to country to visit his people needs financial support to make these journeys. Of course, food and medicine are a constant need, but funds to support this kind of assistance are more readily forthcoming than support for pastors or teachers. Funds for schools and theological training are in scarce supply. Yet both are urgently needed by children and the community if learning and spiritual support are to continue. These mainstays of a decent life must not be cast aside amidst the destruction and suffering that has for months plagued the people of the Nuba Mountains. Please be in touch about those in Kadguli or await a visit from their caring, compassionate bishop as he ministers to them.

Richard Parkins

### **Attacks on the Cathedral of the Diocese of Twic East**

In last month's surge of violence in Jonglei state, the cathedral of the diocese of Twic East was attacked and burned. Greg Miller, from the Diocese of Mississippi, told the [story](#) for Episcopal News Service. The Bishops of Bor and Twic East made an [extensive statement](#) on the events.

### **In politics -- the Sudans:**

#### **Abyei**

The African Union's Peace and Security Council issued a [statement](#) apportioning blame for current difficulties in the Abyei area. Meanwhile the Dinka Ngok of the Abyei area began voting in a [referendum](#) unsupported by the AU or the government of either of the Sudans. The Dinka voted Sunday through Tuesday, October 27-29, with an [outcome](#) of 99 percent wishing to join South Sudan. The Misseriya, a nomadic people who graze their cattle in the Abyei area during parts of the year and whose right to participate in the referendum is a matter of dispute, have

[vowed](#) to hold their own counterreferendum. The Small Arms Survey [sums up](#) events and their meaning.

### **Relations with Ethiopia**

The precarious position of Ethiopia in relation to its fractious neighbors is analyzed in this [report](#) from UNISCI (Research Unit on International Security and Cooperation).

### **Questions of Humanitarian Aid**

IRIN News has an [analysis](#) at how aid organizations approach Sudan, and an [opinion piece](#) on the AllAfrica website looks at the balance of good and ill done by foreign aid workers in South Sudan -- food for thought.

### **In politics -- Sudan:**

#### **Darfur**

The African Union Peace and Security Council has a new [communiqué](#) on the deteriorating situation in Darfur.

#### **The NCP and Its Critics**

Several reformers in the ruling National Congress Party plan to create a [new political party](#).

#### **The Nuba Mountains**

There is a [new film](#) out from Nuba Reports, The Bombing Campaign.

### **In politics -- South Sudan:**

#### **Jonglei**

Some 31 SPLA soldiers have been [sentenced](#) to death for crimes of murder, rape, and human rights violations in Jonglei state.

#### **Flooding**

More than 150,000 South Sudanese in seven of the country's ten states are suffering from [severe floods](#).

#### **Oil**

The opening of two new refineries in South Sudan will bring the country closer to [fuel independence](#).

## President Kiir

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir has returned from a [trip](#) outside the country on which he is said to have sought medical care. Government sources are not commenting substantively.

**PRAY:** Greg Miller's plea for prayer after the attacks in Jonglei state seems fitting far beyond its borders: "Let us pray for the survivors and for the children separated from their families, perhaps forever. Let us pray for peacemakers."

**GIVE:** Please help the people of the Nuba Mountains. AFRECS is receiving funds for teacher salaries, school supplies, and pastors' education to be passed along to Bishop Andudu for these pressing needs of his people. See how to [donate](#) on our website.

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