

AFRECS E-Blast: November 9, 2012

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In the church:

THE VOICE OF AN AUTHENTIC WITNESS:

A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins

A week ago several of us experienced the blessing and value of hearing an authentic witness of a church leader give powerful testimony to the needs and concerns of his people. We accompanied the Rt. Rev. Joseph Garang Atem, the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Renk, to a series of meetings with Congressional offices and key Administration officials where, in straightforward language buttressed with examples and facts, the bishop described the dire circumstances which the people of this diocese face as they attempt to respond to the immigration of thousands. His remarks were those of a Christian leader who is trying, along with his people, to live into the Gospel mandate of offering hospitality to the stranger and the oppressed.

The compelling message and the lessons which were gleaned from his message point again to a need to appeal for support for Bishop Joseph and the people of Renk.

Below are a few of the key points raised by Bishop Joseph. This summary does not adequately convey the depth of concern he expressed. However, it might prompt generosity from those who receive these E-Blasts and care about their Sudanese sisters and brothers:

- The Diocese of Renk is one of the most severely impacted areas in South Sudan because of the thousands of refugees and returnees who find Renk to be their only safe haven as they flee incessant violence.
- Renk's location adds to the severity of the crisis because it is seen by many international organizations as remote and dangerous. Also, the fact that access to Khartoum from which essential supplies might have come in the past is now blocked because of the sealed border. Renk's distance from Juba where supplies might otherwise be available presents another problem given the absence of a reliable road connection between the two cities. This makes the transportation of emergency supplies both time consuming and expensive, requiring the use of helicopters as the only means of transporting supplies. Fuel and related costs are prohibitive.
- Many donor organizations have requirements about prospective recipients of their aid which generally do not include assistance to the struggling host communities dealing with their own poverty. Thus, they are hard pressed to help thousands of impoverished guests. This produces strains between the host and the guest in a

setting where all struggle to survive. The Bishop and his priests find themselves playing the role of peacemaker and reconciler.

- The aid that might be available to the development agency of this diocese is often difficult to access because requirements for applying for aid are challenging in places where experience in applying for grants is virtually non-existent and guidance in meeting proposal requirements is absent. Church leaders with few trained staff find it difficult to work through the bureaucratic demands of aid agencies when they are angling to assist as many as 150,000 newcomers.
- Understanding the crisis in Renk should include the fact that many arrivals view Renk as a stopover before journeying to a destination farther south - a destination which becomes difficult to reach without funds to continue the journey. Also to be considered is the brutal departure experienced by those fleeing Khartoum and environs where they were relieved of all their money and possessions. The destitute were made more destitute, only to arrive into an area of destitution. Against this backdrop of misery and suffering, Bishop Joseph and his people try to respond.

The litany could be extended. The above points were forcefully set forth and dramatically illustrated by the bishop as he called on US decision-makers last week. We and they are seeking to address some of these impediments. Solutions will take time. In the meantime, the numbers of needy pile up in Renk; people need to be fed; the sick need attention; and messages of hope, encouragement and peacemaking must be offered.

We ask that you express your solidarity with Bishop Joseph, his people, and those to whom they reach out with a donation to AFRECS designated in the memo line "Diocese of Renk". All gifts received will be passed on to Bishop Joseph and the Diocese of Renk for relief efforts. Your gifts will be acknowledged with a note of appreciation.

Continue to pray for the people of Renk. As we approach our Thanksgiving observance, let us also give thanks for courageous church leaders such as Bishop Joseph who offer the hospitality that Christ calls us to offer to those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Richard Parkins

Archbishop's Report on his visit to Abyei 08-10 October 2012

Reported by Larry Duffee - ECS Finance Officer:

Here is the [full report with photos.](#)

Attached please find a copy of a report describing a recent visit by His Grace, Archbishop Dr. Daniel Deng Bul, to the Abyei area of South Sudan. The Archbishop visited Abyei after hearing from the ECS Bishop for Abyei, the Rt. Rev. Abraham Nhial, that everything in the town had been destroyed. His Grace wanted to visit Abyei to see the conditions first-hand in order that the ECS might be able to honestly advocate on behalf of the people of Abyei.

As the attached report details, the town of Abyei has been effectively leveled. Virtually all of the buildings have been destroyed and all of the infrastructure of the town demolished. It would not be possible under current conditions for the former residents to return to Abyei. Further, the humanitarian conditions of the estimated 100,000 people who fled Abyei are deplorable. People are living without access to clean-water, health care, food or education for their children.

The ECS is initiating a program of advocacy for the Abyei situation with the ultimate objective of helping the permanent residents of Abyei to conduct the referendum that they were promised under the CPA Agreement and to prevent any attempts to divide the Abyei area.

The ECS also wants to alert the international community to the plight of the refugees from Abyei to encourage humanitarian assistance for the people who are suffering so greatly.

Please read the attached report and share it with your lawmakers, media and any others who can help to spread the word of what has taken place in Abyei. If you need additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,
Lawrence Duffee, ECS Finance Office lrduffee@gmail.com

In politics -- the two Sudans:

The Anglican Consultative Council meeting in New Zealand has issued [resolution # 15.35](#) which includes thanksgiving for the 'growing peace in Sudan and South Sudan.' Click on the link to see the list of resolutions; then click on the resolution # to see it posted. Episcopal News Service also covers this in [their report](#).

[Enough!](#) The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity, posts a brief entitled, "President Mbeki's Moment: A Stand for Peace in the Two Sudans."

In politics -- South Sudan:

Political analyst, Isaac Kenya, issues a caution regarding [South Sudanese diplomatic inexperience](#), in this report from the Catholic Radio News. See this and other stories at this link including those on the topics of media laws, capacity of small & medium enterprises, high food prices, protesting youths and the resignation of the Commissioner in Wau County.

Commentary in the [Sudan Tribune](#) discusses the budding uneasy feeling of 'foreigners' on the streets of Juba. It is written persuasively by Remember P.D. Miamingi, the Managing Director of Sudan's Institute for Human Rights, Good Governance and Development (SIRD).

In politics -- Sudan:

President Obama renews [U.S. sanctions against Sudan](#), citing continued conflict. See Reuter's article by clicking above. See White House [official letter](#) here.

An article from [Africa Confidential](#) entitled 'Target Khartoum: Sudan, Israel & Iran' tells of growing tensions in the region following a recent attack on an arms factory in Khartoum.

Below are two excerpts from a speech made by a leader of the SPLM-North to the Sudan/South Sudan Conference held in Hermannsburg, Germany on October 31 - November 2. To read the entire speech, go to this link in the [Sudan Tribune](#).

Sudan: Change is the only road to peace

By Yasir Arman, Secretary General, Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement North (SPLM-North), Secretary of External Affairs, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)

To Sudan/South Sudan Conference, Hermannsburg, Germany, October 31-November 2, 2012

I was asked by the organizers of this august institution to speak about 'Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Khartoum... prospects for a peaceful solution'. I come from a school of thought that believes Darfur, South Kordofan/Nuba Mountain, Blue Nile are victims of Khartoum's policies.

And to start with: what has been labeled as the problem of Darfur or Nuba Mountain is in actual fact, and essence are Khartoum's problems. We ask ourselves what's Darfur's problems? Is it equal citizenship? Development? Relations between the Centre and the region? Equal distribution of wealth? Sharing of power? Recognition of diversity?...Etc. All these serious questions they cannot be solved in Kadugli, Al-Fashir, Al-Damazin, but they can be solved only in Khartoum- the seat of power. And where all the wrong policies originated, and indeed, it is Khartoum that waged war against the South, Nuba Mountain, Blue Nile, eastern Sudan and Darfur.

The Way Forward to Peace:

The National Congress Party has only two ways to respond to the present complex situation: it

either accepts change, or it will be changed! The Sudanese political forces, including the Sudan Revolutionary Front, express their desire for a just and peaceful settlement as their preferable option, through a holistic approach. It is Khartoum who has never responded to that call and continued to look for a piecemeal solution.

The piecemeal solutions are reproducing the Sudanese crisis. The only way to resolve the genuine Sudanese question is for us to go to the drawing board and to answer a fundamental question which was supposed to be answered on the eve of Sudanese independence in January 1956, "how Sudan is going to be ruled" before "who will rule Sudan." This will require a holistic approach whereby all the shareholders will have a credible national constitutional process that will answer the fundamental questions and lay down the basis of how Sudan is going to be ruled through a national consensus that will lead to a democratic rule.

The Sudan Union:

This conference adds value by bringing intellectuals and activists from the two Sudans. In the SPLM-N would go further and appeal to the Sudanese people from both countries to look towards a better future, we have inherited the past, but we can change the future in the interest of both countries and therefore, we will work tirelessly to realize a Sudan Union between two independent states. In Europe of today, as we are in Europe, there are many flags, prime ministers, presidents, queens and Kings in the European Union of independent democratic countries, that's what the two Sudans and Africa need without necessarily 'copying and pasting'.

Thank you for this great opportunity.

Yasir Arman

PRAY: Give thanks for the progress made by the cooperation agreements and pray for the 'growing peace between Sudan and South Sudan.'

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.