

AFRECS E-Blast: September 10, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

A Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Peace! Peace! But there is no peace...

The quest for peace continues in South Sudan as the conflict that has displaced thousands goes on. The peace process in Addis Ababa has been thwarted by the intransigence of both adversaries even while starvation threatens the lives of 350,000 persons. To make the climate for peace seem even more remote, we are faced with the recent downing of a UNMISS helicopter while that international body attempted to do its job - protecting civilians in harm's way. All of this is occurring as crises in Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and the growing Ebola epidemic in West Africa dominate the news. Still our Sudanese sisters and brothers whose lives are at risk continue to need our prayers and support. These we must extend as visibly as possible, so that those who feel the greatest sense of despair can know that we care and that they are not forgotten.

Gestures of support matter. Those who can influence the prayer cycles at their parishes and churches should keep peace for South Sudan as a constant prayer item. Opportunities for describing the crisis in South Sudan should be sought. Most particularly, the role of the faith communities as a peace and reconciliation resource, needs to be told. While the news has been somewhat more attentive to what is happening in South Sudan, still, many of our friends are unaware of the extent and persistence of the crisis. Neither do they recognize that we are talking about a country that has a sizable Christian population whose church leaders will be key to any peace that finally emerges. Those who can share stories of suffering from friends and partners in South Sudan should do so because stories are a powerful means of making the crisis real. Many of you are in communities across the country which have significant Sudanese populations. Perhaps you are worshiping in places where Sudanese friends are a part of that worship experience. They may have friends and family in South Sudan who are feeling the effects of the conflict. I urge you to understand their concerns and offer prayers.

There are tales of peace efforts that should be lifted up as evidence that the churches are seeking to be a catalyst for reconciliation, even as conflict rages. Always, we must remind ourselves that vast areas in South Sudan remain relatively calm. That fact must not be overlooked while we engage in responding to and understanding the depth and severity of this horrific civil conflict. Likewise, the daunting circumstances facing about one third of South Sudan, where the displacement has been most severe, should not be a pretext for disengagement. Thankfully, some mission minded souls understand that where the need and suffering are greatest is where we need to be representing the church as faithful Christians.

All of this is to remind ourselves and others with whom we might engage that peace is still the goal. God and the Gospel that defines us are ours to live into and to convey.

Faithfully,  
Richard Parkins

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[This article](#) includes the latest update from the UN investigation into the shoot-down of the UNMISS helicopter on August 26, mentioned above. A press release dated September 9 reports that experts concluding the first stage of the investigation ... uncovered evidence indicating that the aircraft was shot down. In the same release, UNMISS confirmed that during a phone call ... Peter Gadet, commander of opposition forces in Unity State, alleged that UNMISS aircraft was being used to transport SPLA troops and threatened to shoot down the Mission's aircraft. Included in the same link, a September 8 article by Eric Reeves details the circumstances of the shoot-down by Peter Gadet and transcribes much of the audio intercept of Gadet speaking with an UNMISS official in charge of air flights into Bentiu, the capital of oil-rich Unity State.

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A [September 7 report from Nairobi](#) states that security agents in Sudan padlocked a 500-member church's building on August 24. This Morning Star News article is according to Christian sources who fear the government may try to sell the building.

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An article posted on [September 4 by African Arguments](#) , begins "...(An) Islamist uprising is spreading from Syria in Northern Arabia to Mali in West Africa and threatens to produce terrorism in Europe and the US." The Western response to that immediate danger may signal the end of the American-led global prescription which came after the Cold War in 1989. "Washington proclaimed democracy, human rights and the free market. But from now on those values may be trumped by one simple demand: security." Richard Dowden, an author and Director of the Royal African Society, writes this opinion piece entitled, "Battle against Islamism brings realpolitik back to Africa."

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[Crisis Action](#): A catalyst and coordinator for organizations working together to protect civilians from armed conflict, is promoting a campaign to Stop the Bombing in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The following information is taken from the press release:

In marking the third anniversary of the resumption of conflict in the Two Areas - Blue Nile and South Kordofan, Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG) launched a campaign on September 8 which highlights the effects of the conflict on civilian communities. The campaign includes a [series of posters, videos](#) and infographics calling for an end to the Government of Sudan's (GoS) aerial bombardment of civilians and civilian structures including schools, hospitals, mosques and churches in areas under rebel control. These campaign materials can be found on the [SDFG website](#).

Crisis Action will be sharing a selection of these materials with UN Security Council members next Monday ahead of Thabo Mbeki's informal briefing with the Council on Wednesday September 17.

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Welcome back to our readers after an August break from AFRECS E-Blasts. Thank you for continuing your interest, your prayers, and your support.

Ellen J. Hanckel  
Editor

If you have received this eblast in a forwarded message, you may [sign up here](#) to subscribe. Then you will receive them from AFRECS on a regular bi-weekly schedule.

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Requests from the AFRECS Treasurer:

Renew your membership online at <http://www.afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>

Make an additional donation to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.

Encourage others to support AFRECS as well.

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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@afreecs.org](mailto:info@afreecs.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 ECSS&S entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.