**South Sudanese Civil War**

**About it**



South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in July 2011 as the outcome of a 2005 peace deal that ended Africa's longest-running civil war. However, conflict broke out in South Sudan on 15th December 2013 and has left thousands dead and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

In addition to widespread displacement, reports of mass killings, sexual violence, and other war crimes have emerged from the recent round of violence.

US's top aid official, Rajiv Shah, has warned: "South Sudan is on the brink of famine." The EU said the world was witnessing a humanitarian disaster of appalling proportions, and the UN's humanitarian aid coordinator, Toby Lanzer, said that without immediate action the South Sudan crisis will be more serious than anything seen in Africa since the Ethiopian famine of 30 years ago.

On Tuesday (May 19) the world's major donors will meet in Oslo to decide on a response to the crisis. The UN says current pledges amount to less than half of what is needed: it wants another $1.26bn (£750m) to pay for urgent assistance until the end of this year. Without it, four million people will be left at risk of avoidable diseases, hunger or death. Up to 50,000 children could die from malnutrition. Cholera could spread and tens of thousands of people could die from other diseases such as measles, pneumonia and malaria. If no seeds are planted during the rainy season, famine will follow within months.

Update on May 19:

Aid agencies sought a total of US$1.8 billion this year for South Sudan. As of 12 May, US$ 536 million had been mobilized for the South Sudan Crisis Response Plan. In Oslo, donors pledged more than $610 million in new funding for both South Sudan and the region.

**What happened on 15 December 2013**

President Kiir accused Machar and other leaders of trying to overthrow him militarily after a tense meeting.

Opposition leaders Dr. Riek Machar, Pagan Amum and Rebecca Nyandeng voted to boycott the Sunday December 15, 2013 meeting of the National Liberation Council (NLC).

President Salva Kiir ordered the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Major General Marial Ciennoung, commander of the Presidential Guard (The Tiger Battalion) to leave the meeting venue and return to the barracks to disarm the troops.

After disarming all ethnicities within the guard, Marial ordered that the Dinka members be re-armed. His deputy, from the Nuer ethnicity, began to question this order and a fight ensued when surrounding officers saw the commotion.

The Nuer soldiers also re-armed themselves.

Kiir and Machar are each from the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan – the Dinka and Nuer.

Fighting erupted between the Dinka elements of the Presidential Guard and the Nuer elements. As fighting between the two armed groups spread beyond the capital city, violence increasingly moved along ethnic lines.

**The Statistics**

Since fighting between government troops and rebel forces erupted last year:

* Over **900,000 people have fled their homes** and are now displaced within South Sudan.
* More than 80,000 people have sought refuge at various UN compounds across the country. In Juba where civilians have been targetted, 80 percent of displaced people are women and children.
* **300,000 people have fled to neighboring countries**, many of whom had to cross the Nile River on their way to Uganda, leaving everything they had behind and risking their lives.

**Role of the South Sudanese government in the conflict**

President Salva Kiir spoke on national television on 16 December, having abandoned his traditional suit and cowboy hat for military fatigues, and said, while surrounded by government officials, that the coup had been foiled and that it was orchestrated by a group of soldiers allied with the former vice president. “The attackers went and (the) armed forces are pursuing them. I promise you today that justice will prevail. Your government led by the SPLM has articulated the ideals of democracy in the party as well as in the government, and I will never deviate from them at any cost. The SPLM is fully committed to the peaceful and democratic transfer of power, and will never allow political power to be transferred through violence.” However, the former vice president has denied any coup attempt.

-To what extent can a government be democratic?

Kiir was re-elected with 93% of the vote in the 2010 Sudanese election. However, the vote was criticised by international observers. Yet, to what extent is his government really for the people?

**Peacekeeping efforts**

Limitations:

UN staff have received threats from the body guards of Senior government Information Minister that demanded armed access to UN Mission Camps where civilians are sheltering.

On 19 Dec 2013, a UN compound was stormed in Akobo, Jonglei, resulting in the deaths of two Indian UNMISS peacekeepers.

**Aid**

Methods and feasibility

Delivering assistance to people in need also faces challenges. With the rainy season underway, South Sudan’s mostly dirt roads become impassible, cutting off large populations. River barges at times have come under fire.

“The only other means of accessing these areas is to airdrop food into them,” said Mike Sackett of the World Food Program, “which is seven times more expensive.”

And then there is the looting. In Malakal, United Nations food warehouses were looted this year. Tarps that covered them have been stripped off and empty oil cans and water purifier packets are all over the place.

May 19 Oslo Conference:

How to create a better environment for the delivery of aid (access)

1 . Parties to the conflict should not deny freedom of movement for the people of South Sudan. Further, the parties and neighboring countries should respect and ensure freedom of movement for humanitarian staff, assets, and supplies by the most effective means possible (i.e. air, land or water) including cross-line and cross-border, to reach people in need, wherever they are.

2 . The parties should prevent acts, which threaten or harm humanitarian staff or operations, including the theft, looting, seizure, commandeering or impounding of humanitarian vehicles (including boats), premises, equipment or supplies, and hold those responsible for such acts accountable.

3 . The Humanitarian Coordinator should ensure the monitoring, collection, analysis, and reporting of access violations. This will be fed into a mechanism to ensure the parties are accountable to address and remove all access constraints. The welcome commitment at the political level must be translated into action on the ground. Failure to facilitate access shall be reported to the international community as a breach of commitments under the cessation of hostilities Oslo 22 May 2014 agreements.

4 . Aid agencies must be committed to scaling up operations with or through national partners when available. Humanitarian agencies should place experienced personnel in those locations where the urgent need is greatest.

Funding: the four largest donors currently provide about 65% of total humanitarian funding, and a further 15 Member States provide 18% of total humanitarian funding.

-Cooperation of countries. Really out of goodwill?

**Role of the media**

On 21 December, the government announced on *Twitter* its unconditional readiness to hold peace talks with any rebel group.

- The government has leveraged on social media to connect with civilians and non-state actors because social media transcends the communication gap between the government other actors, allowing them to conveniently get their message across to the other party. Also, any announcement on such a public platform signifies commitment to such an action. However, that this platform is also an informal platform reveals the condescending attitude of the government towards opposition groups.

Suppression:

“These people [in government] are telling our journalists to report in a certain way that favours the government. They don’t want voices of people in the opposition to be heard. But as a union we are telling journalists that they should stick to their ethics and ensure they have balanced stories,” said Oliver Modi Philip, chairperson of the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS).

On Apr. 10, National Security Service (NSS) operatives confiscated copies of the Juba Monitor because the newspaper published an opinion piece profiling the life of former Minister of Environment Alfred Ladu Gore, who is allied to Machar, Kiir’s rival.

Nichola Mandil, a reporter for a Juba-based radio station and his colleagues were interrogated because they station ran an interview with Gore who criticised Kiir, calling for him to step down. The editor who approved the interview for broadcast has since had to return to her home country.

“I feel it’s not worth working as journalist in Wau anymore,” Atit, a journalist said, explaining that he was considering quitting due to insecurity over his movements being monitored.

**Implications for the rest of the world**

Economically, China is the foreign country that stands to lose the most, either if the violence persists or full scale war breaks out, as the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) is the largest foreign investor in South Sudan's oil industry. In 2012, approximately 80 percent of South Sudan's oil exports went to China.

In contrast to Beijing's traditional 'non-interference' approach to foreign affairs, China played an active role in pressuring both Khartoum and Juba to resolve their disputes and resume the flow of South Sudanese oil to global markets via Sudanese pipelines. This has emphasised the conflict between traditional ideology of non-interference and securing essential natural resources.

Sudan also relies on South Sudan for oil supply as it controls the pipelines for transport of oil to global markets. Uganda’s oil fields are near the conflict region and thus oil production could be hindered should the conflict spread. A loss in oil revenue could cost the government its support.

Oil prices have risen due to limited oil production.

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