



1.10.17

SUDAN | CSW Calls for Peace Agreement Implementation

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling on the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to honor their commitments under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), by withdrawing unauthorized security personnel from the area and facilitating a referendum in accordance with agreed international stipulations.

According to the CPA that ended the Sudanese civil war, a referendum on the future of the oil-rich region of Abyei should have occurred in tandem with South Sudan's referendum on independence. The vote would allow the residents of Abyei to choose between remaining part of Sudan or joining South Sudan.

While the South Sudan plebiscite took place Jan. 9, 2011, the Abyei referendum was postponed due to ongoing disagreements between the Khartoum government and South Sudan over voter eligibility. Sudan claimed the nomadic Arab Misseriya tribe, which accesses certain pasture lands in Abyei for part of each year, should be accorded full voting rights. However, according to the CPA's Abyei Protocol and an international ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), only the Ngok Dinka tribe and permanent residents may vote.

As the delay continued, on Oct. 31, 2013, the Ngok Dinka General Conference organized an unofficial vote, the "Peoples Referendum," in which 98% of registered Ngok Dinka voters participated, and which resulted in a 99.9% vote in favor of joining South Sudan. However, Khartoum, Juba, the African Union and the international community refused to recognize the outcome of the vote.

Six years on, and a referendum on Abyei has still not been held. Meanwhile, both Sudan and South Sudan have made claims on the region. On Jan. 3, Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said the region belonged to Sudan in response to comments made by the South Sudanese Foreign Minister, Deng Alor, who is from Abyei, and who had said the region belonged with South Sudan. According to the UN Secretary General's report of October 2016

on Abyei, 120 to 150 “oil police” from Sudan remained in the Diffra oil complex and elements of the Sudan’s Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) were present in the region in violation of temporary arrangements made by the two nations regarding the administration and security of Abyei Area signed in 2011.

The mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the peacekeeping mission in region, has been extended until May 15, 2017.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “Today marks the sixth year that the people of Abyei have not been able to determine their future. In the last six months the security situation in Abyei has remained relatively calm; however, the presence of security personnel from Sudan and South Sudan is a potential threat to peace. The only path to a lasting solution is for the people of Abyei to participate in an internationally recognized, free and fair referendum based on the eligibility criteria set out by the Permanent Court of Arbitration. We call for the withdrawal of all unauthorized military or police units belonging to the SPLA and the government of Sudan and urge the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, the African Union Commission, and the government of Ethiopia to prioritize the implementation of a referendum in dialogues with the governments of Sudan and South Sudan.”