

**The Ecumenical Network on South Sudan (ENSS)
Europe and North America Hub**

International Peace Day, 21st September 2021

High Time for 'Peace and Accountability' in South Sudan

An Ecumenical Call

In South Sudan, for generations now, too many lives have been lost or severely damaged, families have been torn apart, whole landscapes have been destroyed, development has been severely hindered and once again millions of people are facing hunger. For how long can people bear this going on?

Today, on the International Peace Day under the motto "Recovering better for an equitable and sustainable world" we, the undersigned faith-based organizations and members of the Ecumenical Network on South Sudan (ENSS) Europe and North America Hub, urgently call for 'Peace and Accountability' in South Sudan, joining the voice of the church in South Sudan. We call upon the leaders of South Sudan, both in government and in opposition, the security forces and citizens to finally take responsibility and resolve conflicts both national and locally through nonviolent means. We reiterate our strong solidarity with the women, men, boys and girls in South Sudan who have for too many years borne the burden of conflict. We express our deep solidarity with civil society, the church and traditional leadership, especially youth and women working for peace and justice and those denouncing violence on a daily basis.

We are gravely concerned about the often politically motivated violence in South Sudan, resulting in poverty, hunger, displacement and loss of innocent lives. Political ambitions combined with the availability of weapons among civilians contribute to increased inter-communal violence. The absence of accountability contributes to increased killing by so-called "unknown gunmen," who are not held accountable for their actions. Such gaps in accountability even encourage more violence; such as inter-communal violence, gender and sexual based violence, abductions of children and exploiting of resources. All this causes severe trauma and brings about gross insecurity, human rights violations and displacement.

We are also deeply worried about the recent tragic and violent attacks on church servants, condemning the recent killing of the two Sacred Heart Sisters Mary Daniel Abbud and Regina Roba, and their fellow travelers on the Juba-Nimule road on 16th August 2021 and other attacks on religious leaders and property. We strongly support the Church call for forgiveness and reconciliation as we call on all stakeholders for peace and accountability.

At least 128 aid workers, the vast majority of whom were South Sudanese, have been killed in South Sudan since 2013. We pray for our fellow sisters and brothers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice whilst serving their neighbors. We call on the government of South Sudan for increased preventative, investigative efforts and accountability to end devastating acts of violence in the country.

We urge all leaders in South Sudan to work as servants for the people, to follow the peace process in haste, and to provide the deemed necessary basic services to the people, building infrastructure and institutions for the people to allow a dignified human life without violence, constant fear, and extreme levels of poverty.

We support the call of the church in South Sudan to the leaders, security forces and citizens to resolve all conflicts both national and local through nonviolent means *“They will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles” (Isaiah 2:4). We insist that our country should never be taken back to war, whether by the government or the opposition.”*¹

We are concerned about the slow implementation of the R-ARCSS and call all stakeholders for its immediate implementation. Lasting peace does not come merely by signing a paper nor by sharing power amongst elites. It requires first and foremost the freedom of expression, speech and assembly, disarming hearts and minds of the people and addressing the root causes of conflicts through an inclusive process, bringing together all actors, both signatories and non-signatories to R-ARCSS. We call upon all leaders concerned to commit fully to the Rome talks. We are worried about recent splits and defections in the opposition and the adversarial style of politics causing instability and constituting just another threat to peace. We strongly support and reconfirm our commitment to support the work of civil society, the church and its council, the South Sudan Council, working for dignity of all human beings, subsidiarity, solidarity and the common good. We reiterate the call of civil society and the church upon the leaders of South Sudan to listen to the voices of the people as expressed in the National Dialogue and in many other occasions.

We strongly urge the international community to monitor and engage in the peace process and responsibility to protect. We call upon the international community to not abandon the people of South Sudan and to step up their support to the work of the civil society and the South Sudan Council of Churches', nation-wide and church-led Action Plan for Peace, for a peaceful generation to come. We call for multi-year and flexible funding to meet the needs of the people including humanitarian needs and while tackling the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

South Sudan is experiencing floods, environmental pollution, deforestation and the decline of wildlife. The theme for the International Day of Peace 2021 is “Recovering better for an equitable and sustainable world.” We call upon the government of South Sudan to inclusively and equitably share resources and to protect and nurture God’s creation for the next generation to come.

The conflict with multiple other challenges has led to a dire humanitarian situation with 8.3 million people requiring humanitarian assistance, and increase of 800,000 from the 2020 figure². 2.3 million people have been forced to flee the country and 1.71 million remain internally displaced³.

¹ South Sudan Catholic Bishops' Secretariat - Pastoral Message - “A Call to ‘Servant Leadership’ in our Nation”, 15th September 2021.

² [South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021](#)

³ [South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot, UN OCHA](#)

South Sudan is ranked third in terms of countries most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19⁴, and has one of the largest food crises in the world⁵.

As members of the ENSS, we continue to stand with the people and the church of South Sudan. We lift the nation of South Sudan to God and pray fervently that the people of South Sudan may finally live in unity and peace.

South Sudan Council Of Churches, Brot für die Welt, CAFOD, Christian aid UK, ACT Church of Sweden, Council of Churches in the Netherlands, Danish Church Aid, Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, Finn Church Aid, KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Mission 21, Norwegian Church Aid, PAX, PMU/ Pingstmissionens utvekkingsamarbete, The Church of England- Diocese of Salisbury, Presbyterian Church (USA), Trocaire, Christian Council of Norway, Church of Scotland.



⁴ <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/inform-covid-19-risk-index-version-0-1-2>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8786en/CA8786EN.pdf>