



World news focus - Sudan

Message of support from Bishop of Down to linked diocese; Anglican Communion churches express concern; Christian leaders say violence in South Sudan is political, not ethnic

Message of support from Bishop of Down to linked diocese

Bishop Harold Miller writes to Bishop Justin in Down & Dromore's [link diocese of Maridi](#).



Dear Bishop Justin,

On behalf of the whole diocese of Down and Dromore, I want to assure you of our love and prayers at this very difficult time in South Sudan. We pray for peace and reconciliation, for the presence of the One who is Emmanuel among you, and for the protection that Name brings.

As you know well, here in Northern Ireland, we are still working through what it means to live in peace with one another, even after many years since the main trouble ended. At this very moment, we are struggling together to find a way of copper fastening that peace for the future. So we understand well that new political situations take time to settle.

As you know, you in Maridi have a special place in our hearts, and in the hearts of the people of Albany as well – a threefold cord is not quickly broken! So you are remembered in prayer across three continents, and we greatly value your keeping us in touch with the situation so that we can pray in an informed way. Our diocese is about to enter into a year of 24/7 prayer and South Sudan will be in our constant intercessions.

May the blessing of Christmas be all the more real in these coming days.

In Christ, Your brother bishop

+Harold

Anglican Communion churches express concern



Diocesan Bishops Mauricio Andrade (Brasilia), Ruben Akurdid (Bor) and Cate Waynick (Indianapolis) during a recent gathering in to celebrate Andrade's 10th anniversary of ordination as a bishop.

Churches across the Anglican Communion with links to Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSSS). ECSSS have also spoken out about the situation.

England's Bishop of Salisbury Diocese Nicholas

Holtam has called for prayers for South Sudan.

"Many of us in the Diocese of Salisbury pray each day for both the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan, and for both Republics," he wrote. "In this run-up to Christmas, with all the hope Christ brings of God's peace in a fragile world, we pray for them particularly during this further outbreak of violence."

The Diocese of Brasilia in the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil has a close companion relationship with the Diocese of Bor in the Episcopal Church of South Sudan. In the wake of recent violence Presiding Bishop Francisco de Assis da Silva on December 18, sent a letter to members of his province asking that they pray for the people of South Sudan and its leaders.

The letter follows:

Santa Maria, 18th December 2013 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

Brothers and sisters,

During this time as we approach the celebration of the Prince of Peace, we are saddened to hear the news from South Sudan. The peace process in this country suffers from constant violent conflicts which have recently killed more than 500, left some thousand injured, and by latest counts, some 15,000 displaced.

We raise our prayers to God for the people of South Sudan and for their leaders, that they treat their political differences in a peaceable manner and in constant dialogue. We pray for our Anglican brothers, that their lives remain safe, and for their testimony, that they urge conflicting parties to abandon violence and seek peaceful solutions.

May our God comfort the families that live in this struggle, strengthen the wounded, and that the people of South Sudan may construct their nation in accordance with the motto: in justice, equality and liberty!

Our prayers are especially with Bishop Ruben Akurdid, of the Diocese of Bor, companion diocese of the Anglican Diocese of Brasilia. I urge our Province to pray for the people of South Sudan in their Eucharistic celebrations this Sunday the 22nd of December, demonstration that we are the body of Christ, desiring Peace and Justice to become reality in this country that is as a brother to us.

With my best wishes for a blessed Christmas,

++ Francisco de Assis da Silva
Primate of Brazil and Diocesan in Santa Maria

Christian leaders say violence in South Sudan is political, not ethnic

Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSSS), Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul Yak joined others from various denominations of the churches in South Sudan, and native members

from the Dinka and Nuer communities in expressing sadness and concern about the situation there.



An injured boy rests at a medical clinic inside the UN compound on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan

The letter, signed by clergy from the country including nine from the ECSSS, stated that they condemned the violence, but that they also "condemn and correct the media statements and reports that refer to the violence as conflict between the Dinka and Nuer tribes. Whatever has happened should not be referred to as ethnic conflict and not between the Dinka and Nuer communities. These are political differences among the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Party, political leaders of the Republic of South Sudan."

They went on to appeal "to the army and security organs of our Government of South Sudan to take control of the situation and protect its citizens. Our citizens are running for refuge in UN compounds because they do not feel safe from their own security forces."

However, a message seen by ACNS sent this evening by Juba priest the Revd John Chol Daau in Juba showed that not even UN compounds are safe from the violent unrest. Mr Daau wrote to supporters outside South Sudan that his brother was sheltering in one UN compound and was terrified that a



The Revd John Daau (l) with Revd Martin Olando Wesonga.

rebel group would make good on its threat to storm the compound and attack its inhabitants.

"The situation is getting out of hand in Jonglei," he wrote this evening.

"Akobo was attacked by rebels/defectors some three hours ago, kill[ing] all those civilians who sheltered there at UN compounds (particularly the Dinkas)...My brother Joseph just called me with high fear in Bor as he is sheltering in UN Compound there.

"The defectors are flying gunshot over the compound and threatening to enter the compound to kill all the civilians there. Bishop Akurdid of ECS[SS] is there but his phone has

run out of power. People are worried there fearing their safety. UN has lost contact with the base in Akobo."

News reports have confirmed the attack on one UN peacekeeping base in South Sudan's Jonglei state which was overrun by rebels who targeted civilians of the majority Dinka ethnic community. Al-Jazeera is reporting three Indian peacekeepers were killed, though there has not yet been any confirmation of civilian deaths.

South Sudan has been in turmoil since President Salva Kiir accused his ex-deputy Riek Machar of mounting a coup. The unrest, which broke out on Sunday, has killed some 500 people so far and about 20,000 people have sought refuge at UN facilities in Juba. On Tuesday the United States ordered its citizens to leave South Sudan immediately.

Other Church groups who have spoken out about the state of unrest include the South Sudan Council of Churches which issued a 'message of peace and reconciliation' on Tuesday. This also reiterated the fact that the conflict was political not ethnic.

"Reconciliation is needed between the political leaders. Violence is not an acceptable way of resolving disputes," it said. "This must be done in a peaceful and civilised manner. Reconciliation is at the heart of the Church's ministry, a key Gospel value, and so we offer ourselves as mediators.

"The way this incident is handled will have an effect on the future of our nation, whether positive or negative, both internally and in terms of international relations."

South Sudan's Christian leaders have reiterated their statement that recent violence in the capital was not a result of tribal conflict, but was politically motivated.

For two consecutive days, the leaders of the nation's Christian churches issued a joint statement urging the government and political leaders to protect the nation's citizens and to remain calm and not incite violence.

Their statements followed an announcement on December 16 by President Salva Kiir that the government had defended itself from attacks in the capital, including an attack on the headquarters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army by soldiers allied to the former Vice President Riek Machar Teny.

In a statement two days later, the bishops condemned the clashes at the military barracks but also said they wanted to "condemn and correct the media statements and reports that refer to the violence as conflict between the Dinka and Nuer tribes."

"These are political differences among the Sudan People's Liberation Movement party, political leaders of the Republic of South Sudan," the Church leaders said.

In a similar statement the previous day, the Church leaders urged reconciliation within the political party.

"The way this incident is handled will have an effect on the future of our nation, whether positive or negative, both internally and in terms of international relations," the Church leaders said the statement which was read to media on their behalf by Catholic Archbishop Paulino Lukudu Loro of Juba.



The longed for peace still seems elusive for the people of South Sudan - photo MAF UK

Both statements appealed to the government to take control of the situation and protect its citizens. The Church leaders said soldiers are asking people to identify themselves by tribe, which was wrong because “we are all South Sudanese.”

“We condemn such acts of abuse and hope that no more human lives should be lost,” they said, without mentioning how many had been killed.

“Our citizens are running for refuge in UN compounds because they do not feel safe from their own security forces,” said the December 18 statement signed by Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and other Christian leaders.

They appealed to political leaders to avoid hate speech and to initiate dialogue. They also asked the international community to respond quickly to the growing humanitarian crisis of people fleeing the violence.