

The World Withholds While South Sudan Burns by Nkeonye Nwankwo Ph.D.

Why Peace Negotiations Failed in South Sudan

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA, May 20, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Should peace mediators be held partially accountable for their negotiation's strategies, pronouncements, and failure to secure and sustain a ceasefire in a reasonable time? While reviewing the present civil war in South Sudan, focus will be placed on the handling of the peace negotiations so as to force a change in strategy and policy.

Background. After 22 years of the last war with North Sudan (1983 to 2005), South Sudan achieved its independence in July 9, 2011 with African and international support, especially the United States of America. Unfortunately, that would be short-lived due to a political conflict between two leaders, the President of South Sudan, General Salva Kiir Mayardit and his former vice-president, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, who was removed from office in July 2013.

When a war broke out in December 15, 2013, Kiir accused Machar of plotting a coup. The latter denied it but acknowledged being a rebel leader. Soon, the crisis transformed into Dinka/Nuer ethnic war, with over 10,000 civilians dead and over 1.3 million displaced. Kiir is Dinka and Machar is Nuer.

Peace Negotiations. An eight East African Organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), supported by the African Union (AU) and the U.S. mediated for peace. Together, they called for a ceasefire, declaring that an overthrow of a democratically elected government or the blocking of peace by any fighting party would not be tolerated. In January 23, 2014, a ceasefire was signed by the leaders of the warring parties, but the war escalated. There were no ceasefire monitors and consequences for violations.

Lack of Priority. Mediators did not focus on sustainable ceasefire and the protection of civilians. A truce transgressor should have been targeted early in the war as a viable and expedient action of nipping the crisis at the bud. It would also send a strong message that battle and territorial gains and could not be used for negotiations.

Free Passage. Supporting the rebel leader, the white army, a civilian armed Nuer youth marched to Bor, killed Dinka civilians and burnt down the area. Their action was reminiscent of their slaughter of 2,000 Bor Dinka civilians in 1991 when Machar broke away from the SPLM. Although the U.N. spotted the white army in a satellite image and reported it, the world watched as the ruthless youth marched for three days and carried out their atrocities. The white army derives its name from the ashes they rob to repel insects.

Untimely Pronouncement. The peace process was further damaged when the U.S. representative in the UN, Ambassador Samantha Power, discussed the U.S. options for South Sudan in a CNN interview (December 24, 2013). Among them are:

1. Removing both President Kiir and Dr. Reik Machar from power and handing them to the International tribunal for arraignment.

2. South Sudan to be governed by a coalition of The United Nations and a “coalition of South Sudanese political and civil leaders.”
3. Request for Americans to help with “droning” out Machar from his hiding.
4. South Sudan Oil Revenue account to be controlled by UN-governance in South Sudan

Regardless of their peace intentions, IGAD and U.S., inadvertently contributed to a vicious and cyclical warfare by lack of ceasefire enforcement, meaningful interventions and by frequent negotiation postponements. In May 9, 2014, the rival leaders signed another ceasefire on persuasion and renewed sanction threat by Secretary Kerry, but with no peace monitors and credible deterrents, the war continued.

Genocide. Despite the similarities between the South Sudan war and the genocides committed in Rwanda and Bosnia, the U.S. and other international countries ruled out the use of limited military interventions.

The world has a moral obligation to de-escalate or end the war, at least for humanitarian reasons. On the other hand, if the U.S. and the international community cannot intervene meaningfully and effectively, they should limit their narratives.

South Sudan is an African nation. IGAD and the African Union have always planned to dispatch an African ceasefire enforcement and task force to target any ceasefire violator and to contain or end the war. The plan should be implemented immediately.

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