



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SOUTH SUDAN AND SUDAN

DIOCESE OF KAJO KEJI

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Update on current situation in South Sudan

I have received enquiries to provide an update on the current situation in South Sudan. I would like to provide such information. In short: the situation in the country as a whole is troubling but in Kajo-Keji area there is no direct impact of the conflict. We need to continue to develop our country and pray and work for peace. Let me give you some more details.

Background information on South Sudan

South Sudan became an independent nation on 9 July 2011. This was after over 60 years of conflict between Southern Sudan and successive regimes in Sudan. The first civil war was from 1955 to 1972; the second civil war was from 1983 to 2005. There was only one brief period of peace between 1972 and 1983.

During the years of conflict that took place 1983 to 2005, over 2 million people died and over 4.4 million people were displaced either internally as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or as refugees outside the then Sudan. During the many years of conflict, the entire physical infrastructure of South Sudan collapsed with limited functional schools and health services. There were no all weather roads in most parts of Southern Sudan. Let me give you some examples: the whole of South Sudan did not have any paved roads until after independence in 2011, there was less than 50 kilometers of paved roads before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9 January 2005. Most schools and health centers were destroyed during the war. We have had to start from scratch as a country.

After the signing of the CPA, a lot has been done in building the infrastructure as well as in the provision of the needed health, educational and other services. The church and NGOs have played an important role in this.

In Kajo-Keji, the Diocese of Kajo-Keji with its partners have built over 10 primary schools, one secondary school and one College. Five of these primary schools, the Richard Earl Secondary and Kajo-Keji Christian College (formerly known as Canon Benaiah Poggo College) were built with funds from New Hope Campaign, a project between the Dioceses of Kajo-Keji and Bethlehem.

Recent events in South Sudan

There was joy when South Sudan became an independent nation in 2011. We were aware of the challenges that we would face as a country. However, the hope of South Sudanese and their friends were dashed when war again broke out in South Sudan on 15 December 2013 from Juba, our capital. This conflict that is now in its 18th month has directly affected 3 of our 10 states; the States affected are Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile State.

It is unfortunate to have to go through this senseless war again. Our South Sudanese politicians in their struggle for power fell out with each other. Others have taken advantage of the situation to fan negative ethnicity.

This conflict has led to the death of thousand of people and displacement of over 1.5 million people. There has been many rounds of peace negotiations that have not yielded the long awaited peace that we have been yearning for. The Inter-Governmental Authority of Development (IGAD) has led the peace process. IGAD consists mainly of countries within the region and those neighboring South Sudan.

Recently there was an announcement that the talks will be resumed under an expanded process known as IGAD plus. This would include 5 additional African countries and the Troika which includes USA, UK and Norway. Please pray for the peace process.

"Be shepherds of the Church of God which he bought with his own blood. (Acts 22:28)"

Role of the church in peace and reconciliation

The church has been doing what it can to encourage the two sides to talk peace and to bring reconciliation at local and national level.

A recent statement from South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) which was signed by the top leadership of South Sudanese Churches rightly raised the concern on the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. The statement called for an end to this senseless conflict as well as a speedy end to the endless negotiations. This strongly worded statement called on our leaders to heed the cry of our people for peace.

The impact of the war is now being felt across the whole nation and also in the region especially as the economic impact of the decrease in the oil revenue with the fall in the exchange rate of the South Sudanese pound against the US dollar has led to high prices and shortage of essential commodities and fuel. The ongoing humanitarian crises and looming famine is also a major cause of concern.

Situation in Kajo-Keji

The conflict has not directly affected Kajo-Keji, however it has indirectly affected us in the following ways:

1. There is an increase in the price of commodities and a shortage of foreign exchange. The income from oil has reduced because of the fact that most of the oil fields are in the three States that have been directly affected by the war. The drop in oil prices has also contributed to the reduction of national income
2. The continuous lack of income has also meant that little development is taking place, hence proposed projects like road construction linking Kajo-Keji and other towns have been affected.
3. There are delays in salaries of government staff, some of whom work in the community schools that we run.
4. There have been incidences of armed robbery on some of our roads; this even affected a team from the Diocese of Kajo-Keji that was travelling from Kajo-Keji to Juba resulting to the loss of telephones and cash. This is the second time this year that our staff has been affected on this road.
5. Although we have not experienced too much fuel shortage in Kajo-Keji, we have seen an increase of prices.

What can we do?

I would like to request you to do the following:

1. Please pray for South Sudan for peace to prevail. Pray that the next round of peace talks will yield fruit.
2. Continue to support us in undertaking the needed development of the needed school infrastructure.
3. We are going ahead to build a Primary Health Care Centre, as areas where there is peace should continue to provide the needed services.
4. We are encouraging farmers to increase their food production so that excess food can be taken to areas without food and hence give the people income to help improve their lives and the local economy.
5. We are really encouraging our partners to continue to support the development in areas where there is peace. This can also act as an incentive for people to aspire for peace especially in areas that are experiencing war and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Thank you very much for your continuous interest in Kajo-Keji and on South Sudan.



Rt. Rev Anthony D Poggo
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