

Several days ago, I returned from South Sudan where I had the privilege, along with my Swiss colleague, Markus Weber, to welcome 400 men, women, and children HOME from jihadi slavery in Sudan. They are HOME and FREE. Thanks be to God and you. Here is Abuk's story.



Abuk Tong Tong

My first inclination was to embrace and hold Abuk, this tiny woman-child who was wrapped in a cloak of sadness and trauma. I would wait to give her a mother's embrace until our interview and documentation of her time in that living hell on earth called jihadi slavery in Sudan was over.

Abuk is 33 years old; she kept track of every one of the 25 years that she was enslaved. So petite is she that I wondered if in our country she would have to find her clothing in the children's section. She was mal-nutritioned, vulnerable and frail.

"Bad things happened, Abuna on the way North." Spontaneously she touched her hips and womb and added, "Four men raped me. I was eight years old. It would happen again and again."

"Bad things happened to us on the way," she said. "Two of my brothers were shot in front of my eyes because they were tired and couldn't walk anymore. The Baggara Arabs forced us to watch (she touched her eyes), they said if you claim to be tired, this will happen to you."

"In the North, I saw three of my people, Dinka people, executed." They were cultivating and took to the shade. "Why do you rest?" The Arab slave master asked. "It is hot very hot; let us rest in the shade, please." The master slit their throats. I fell silent at the gravity and sorrow as well as the pain coming out of Abuk as she recalled that day. It was 107 degrees when I met Abuk and from time to time we would have to seek shade, such a natural, healthy and innocent decision for us but that led to the death of the three Dinka men.

Abuk gave birth to a baby boy while she was enslaved who was taken from her when he was five years old. "I do not know where he is; I think of him and pray for him. I was able to keep him longer usually the babies are taken from us when they can walk."

"My work was hard, before sunup to sundown grinding sorghum, washing clothes and walking to bring water. In all this time, I only received food that was left over from the master's table. It was very little. I was forced to drink water like a dog and told that I was a dog."

"Bad things happened while I was away from home", she said, turning her face towards the ground, I saw the fan shaped marks stretching across her cheek; the marks of her slave master. She had other wounds as well. She was forced to undergo genital mutilation. "They took scissors and cut me and made me walk into the river. They never gave me medicine." Physical wounds, but it was the wounds in her heart and mind that came forth in her recalling of those years. I spent a long time with her.

"I was forced to be a Muslim but in my heart at night I prayed, but not out loud because I was afraid to be heard. I prayed at night to the Lord. I remembered because I was baptized before I was forced into slavery."

"I will remember this day," she said, "because the Lord has brought us home. I will remember you gave us the Word of God when you welcomed us. We will keep praying for you; remember to pray for us. My thanks I give to God and for all the people you told us about in faraway places

“I will remember this day,” she said, “because the Lord has brought us home. I will remember you gave us the Word of God when you welcomed us. We will keep praying for you; remember to pray for us. My thanks I give to God and for all the people you told us about in faraway places that helped bring us home. Please thank them.”

In parting, we embraced like mother and daughter, holding onto each other. All the while I was praying that she could leave slavery behind and embrace her new and free life back home among her people.

Luka Garang Kenyang, translator