

REMNASAS view on the South Sudan crisis and approaches to solving it

The current war in South Sudan was ignited by Dictator Salva Kiir when he ordered for the systemic massacre of innocent Nuer men, women and children in what REMNASAS terms as scotch earth ethnic cleansing. These people were brutally murdered, raped and their bodies either burnt beyond recognition or buried in unmarked graves. This was planned to be the culmination of a well thought out strategy to wipe out one of the second largest tribes in South Sudan so that no other tribe can challenge the sectarian regime in the country. Despite how tragic this incident was which continues to bedevil the country, REMNASAS strongly believes that the crisis in South Sudan began soon after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Soon after the CPA, a junta of elitist so called liberators emerged with the sole aim of pillaging and vandalizing the economy of South Sudan for their own benefit.

In order to achieve this long drawn out aim and objective, a scheme of marginalization, exploitation, impunity and tribal hegemony had to be created. This strategy was to be achieved legally and militarily. Therefore right from the beginning a transitional constitution had to be enacted. This constitution was designed to create a dictator or imperial president in the country. This president was to be the most powerful and empowered to use his powers to violate even the very constitution that brought him to power. He was mandated to rule with impunity, removing elected leaders and subjugating the Parliament and judiciary under the executive. Therefore, these two arms of government became rubber stamps to the executive decisions instead of creating effective checks and balances on the executive.

In order to strengthen his leadership and protect it, the junta decided to marginalize the national army by ensuring that it cannot become a professional army. The SPLA became neglected. The soldiers were under paid or their salaries were delayed for three to four months. The much heaved professionalization of the army was put on halt. Money meant to buy modern arms and equipment ended up in the officers' pockets. While the regime was undermining the army, the president decided against military advice to create his own army meant to protect him as well as to ruthlessly deal with any challenges to his leadership. It is this private army that was unleashed on the Nuer civilians in Juba that culminated in the extermination of nearly 20,000 lives within 3 days; something never seen in the history of South Sudan.

Having successfully subordinated the parliament and judiciary and made them rubberstamps for executive decisions, the sectarian regime in Juba began to institutionalize corruption, nepotism and

favouritism. Accountability and transparency in dealing with national resources was thrown out of the window and through the door entered impunity, land grabbing, dictatorship, oppression and subjugation. Freedom of speech and democratic principles became alien and punishable by detention. Thus journalists became targets; media houses muzzled and calls for reforms in the country were resisted. Within 8 years the country was economically ruined, pillaged and vandalized by a ruthless regime that has no inch of care for its people. As a result South Sudan became a failed state. During this period, it is estimated that over 4 billion US Dollars disappeared into pockets of only 76 government employees while the people suffer from lack of proper education, sanitation, health care services and clean drinking water. The country's infrastructure such as roads, housing and river and air transport remain undeveloped. Agriculture and livestock that traditionally remains the lifeline of the people has never been tapped. Therefore while the junta and its cohort immersed itself in the ill-gotten resources of South Sudan, the majority of South Sudanese continue to wallow in a state of adjunct poverty, misery and completely dependent on nature for their survival. Without the international community thousands and thousands of South Sudanese could have perished from a mire of preventable diseases and starvation.

On the other hand, the sectarian regime, having trained and heavily armed its 20,000 strong private army and also weakened the unity of the SPLA by dividing it into a tribal army, decided that it was time now to identify, isolate and liquidate its opponents within the SPLA. Therefore, when the regime ordered the attack on the Nuer soldiers and subsequent massacre of the Nuer civilians in December 2013, the regime thought this was going to be the final act in its scheme to rid itself of the democratic forces in the country and to firmly strengthen and consolidate its firm grip on power. If the regime succeeded, its face would be one ethnic group. The aim was to continue looting, pillaging and laundering the country with impunity.

In light of this, REMNASA strongly believes that the struggle in South Sudan is not for unification of the SPLM as the talks in Arusha would depict. Neither is it for giving back Riek Machar's position of Vice President. The struggle is fundamentally to dislodge a monstrous regime that has turned on its populace; a regime that has used a default constitution to enshrine dictatorship and sectarianism as a way of managing the country. This regime has failed the peoples' aspiration and killed their desire for socio-economic development. The regime has destroyed the SPLA as a national army while preferring to create a private army that has terrorized the people, killed, maimed and raped them. Overall the regime has made the country to be a failed state and dependent on foreign resources. It has mortgaged South Sudan to foreign forces because the private army can no longer defend it from the

democratic forces.

Therefore, REMNASAs recognizes that all opposition forces fighting the regime in Juba are natural allies because the sectarian regime is the only enemy at the moment that is against the people of South Sudan. REMNASAs welcomes the SPLM-IO call for democratic change in the country and the institution of federalism as the best form of governance in South Sudan. It acknowledges its call for the strengthening of independence institutions of governance such as the parliament and judiciary so as to enable them to carry out their oversight role of being checks and balances to the executive. REMNASAs supports the SPLM-IO reform agenda. REMNASAs believes in not only reform but actually transformation in the security sector, civil service and administration and addition to complete devolution of powers to the federal states. REMNASAs upholds the principles of accountability and transparency in governance of state affairs. Above all REMNASAs welcomes the SPLM-IO call for freedom of speech, independence of the media and respect for human rights, equality and equity.

However, REMNASAs has major concerns with the SPLM-IO strategy of solving the problems facing the people of South Sudan. First they are the two track peace talks taking place in Arusha and Addis Ababa. As everybody is aware, the peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania are aimed at unifying the SPLM because the organizers of these talks perceive that the problem in South Sudan started with disagreement between SPLM members and therefore by uniting the SPLM, it means solving the problems and thus it will bring peace to South Sudan. This is really absurd because it appears that the South Sudan problem is being reduced to an intraparty problem. It should be understood that when reformists within the SPLM were agitating for reforms and accountability within the SPLM the aim was to usher in changes that would go to reform the country's system of governance and bring democracy to the country and not to the SPLM as a party. The dictatorship, tribal hegemony, nepotism, corruption, intolerance, impunity, violation of human rights, inequalities, inequities and land grabbing policy existing in the country cannot be solved by reconstituting the very SPLM that created these problems in the first place. REMNASAs believes that reconstitution of the SPLM means solving intra-SPLM disagreement so that they can continue to loot, plunder and pillage the economy for the benefit of the Juba clique while allowing the majority of the people to remain in adjunct poverty.

Secondly REMNASAs is absolutely dismayed by the trend the IGAD led talks in Addis Ababa is taking. It appears clearly to the whole world that IGAD deems that the fighting in South Sudan is centered on government positions rather than looking at the root causes of the South Sudan problem and finding a strategy of how to solve them so that peace and reconciliation can be achieved. IGAD seems to be satisfied with knee-jerk solutions to finding peace instead of looking for peaceful co-existence in South

Sudan. REMNASA wonders how stupid the people of South Sudan would be to kill thousands of their own because they would like Riek Machar to be the Vice President or Prime Minister of South Sudan. How can such a position help heal the rift that has come into the country when Riek Machar held this position for nearly 8 years yet the country slit into chaos and into a failed state. This means that the problem of South Sudan is not who holds which position but it is a fundamental institutional problem that has been intentionally and systematically created by a sectarian regime in order to perpetuate itself in power. Therefore such a problem can only be solved by removing the regime and instituting concrete reforms that will not breed another sectarian regime in future. The hoodwinking of the opposition forces to the IGAD led talks and Arusha forum means no solution will be found to the real core of the South Sudan problem even if the SPLM is to be united and Riek Machar made Vice President of the country. Unless the proponents of these talks as well as the SPLM-IO realize that peace, reconciliation and good governance can only come to South Sudan when the core issues of governance and institutional building are solved, these talks will either postpone the issues in South Sudan or accelerate the disintegration of the country.

Conclusion

REMNASA sees eye to eye and stands shoulder to shoulder with the SPLM-IO in as far as they are fighting the enemy of the people in Juba. REMNASA is ready to collaborate and share strategic information that can enable the two armies to engage effectively in the struggle to remove the sectarian regime in Juba. However, having said this, REMNASA acknowledges major differences between it and the SPLM-IO. These are basically concerned with the Federal system where it appears the SPLM-IO federal system is geared towards balkanizing the South Sudanese into mini enclaves of tribal zones based on colonial administrative structures. These structures were created by the colonialists so as to keep South Sudanese disunited and make them economically non-viable. They were created to weaken the communities so that they could not pose any significant threat to them. In addition, the SPLM-IO federal system is premised on economic gain by resource producing countries while weakening the federal government and states with no resources because the system is principally being pegged to oil without considering other national or human resources in the country.

More perturbing to REMNASA is the approaches to the peaceful settlement of the crisis in the country. Throughout the 8 sessions of the peace talks coupled with the Arusha talks, SPLM-IO has exposed itself or it is being driven to concede to believing that the problem in South Sudan is an SPLM problem and so the basis of solving this problem is to go back to the statuesque of pre-December 2013. This means uniting the SPLM and giving back the Vice Presidency to Riek Machar. REMNASA considers this

to be simplistic and it will never solve the South Sudan problem because the Solution to this problem lies only in institutional building and leadership that can reconcile the fractured people of South Sudan. REMNASA believes that as long as the peace facilitators in South Sudan do not consider the root causes of the South Sudan crisis, peace will continue to remain elusive and it appeals to the SPLM-IO to remain resolute on the people's problem. SPLM-IO should not waver because the entire South Sudan nation has come to the realization that the sectarian regime must go and should do so sooner rather than later.

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