

Tuesday, 9 October 2012

Ref: Do Not Cede Our Land to Khartoum

Petition Letter to H.E. 1st Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayardit
President of the Republic of South Sudan

CC: South Sudan National Legislative Assembly
CC: Africa Union High Level Implementation Panel
CC: United Nations Security Council
CC: SPLM Party
CC: NBGS
CC: South Sudan Negotiating Team

Dear Mr. President:

Aweil Community, both at home and in the Diaspora, has received the 27 September Security Agreement on the 14- mile area with an indisputable displeasure and outrage. To our surprise, we have found out that the land that has never been a disputed area has now been made a disputed one. We are afraid—with your administration approving the *2011 AUHIP Proposed Map* on such Security Arrangements—Khartoum is now in a celebratory mode, for it knows very well that it will soon lay unqualified claim to this piece of land and the negotiating team under your leadership will find it an uphill task to deviate from the agreement you witnessed should the final border be drawn.

It is always a common norm that those who will be potentially affected by any policy and decision should be involved and engaged by government officials in discussions, negotiations, and decision-making processes. Irrefutably, Aweil Community has knowledgeable and well-informed elders and veteran politicians who should have been involved and consulted to provide a valuable information and citizenry wisdom with regards to the 14 mile area. Yet, your leadership continues to ignore this vital avenue.

We are also deeply concerned that any agreement that deprives us of our well-established ancestral and traditional connection to this land directly threatens the main pillars of peace and stability between Aweil Community and the Baggara Community. We are profoundly alarmed by the agreement that has made a land that has never been a disputed land a contentious land. Mr. President, this situation has prompted us to communicate our well-founded concerns and viewpoints to your administration with hope that they will be given a deserved consideration.

Mr. President, having been in this land for decades (if not centuries), Aweil Community cannot and will never accept this deal because we know better that this piece of land under the heated discussion has never been and will never be a part of Sudan or Darfur, for that matter. This is because the entire NBGS is inseparable from the designated 14 mile area. Historically and customarily, Aweil and the Baggara Communities know that arrangements have been made long time ago in the 19th Century between the Dinka Malual and the Baggara nomads to allow the

latter passage for the Kiir River waters and pastures. It did not mean then and it does not mean now that the land is disputed nor claimed by the Baggara people.

In the past, Aweil Community had only given access to the Baggara Community to bring their animals to the Kiir River waters and pastures for their survival. Gov. Malong and Aweil Community elders in their own efforts have had some traditional discussions and talks on how the Baggara Community would be allowed to bring their animals to the Kiir River. This hospitality has never been intended to make this particular area a disputed land. Rather, Aweil Community's hospitality has been intended to make the Baggara Community survive during the dry seasons. Aweil Community has never asked the Baggara Community to pay her for grazing privileges. [Dr. Dhieu Mathok Diing Wol](#) wrote a great article "*The African Union Map and 14 Miles South River Kiir*" on 23 August 2012, detailing who the true owners of the area are: NBGS.

In all these discussions, our outrage should be understandable. Our grievances are many, but this petition will exclusively focus on the 14 mile issue. While we are not here to condemn you or your administration, we have decided to bring our long-ignored outcry against the 14 mile agreement to your attention. Quite frankly, Aweil Community feels an appalling history of neglect and marginalization under your administration.

Aweil People military contributions in the course of the painful liberation struggle and unwavering political support for your leadership which had finally contributed to the attainment of South Sudan Independence has never been given a due attention. This implies that Aweil Community political support and military contributions have been taken for granted. To be clear on the 14 mile issue, the Addis Ababa negotiations on the borders began on a wrong footing because Aweil Community's legitimate viewpoints and concerns were not considered by the negotiators. Now, it is very clear that the 14 mile agreement will have direct negative impacts on Aweil Community survival if implemented.

For this reason, Aweil Diaspora Community has decided to write this message to strongly confirm our unyielding and firm support for Gov. Malong and Aweil politicians' rejection of the 14 mile agreement by outlining the following grievances and concerns. We honestly hope that your administration will seriously take our legitimate concerns into consideration:

- (1) While the discussions about the Safe Border Demilitarized Zone (SBDZ) were on-going in Addis Ababa, no one consulted the residents of the area in question yet it was reported that Sudan Government consulted Misseriya people on issue of this magnitude. Tell us, how would you feel when people discuss your affairs without involving you in the decision making process? No matter how knowledgeable Mr. Pagan Amum and the team of South Sudan negotiators were, excluding the voice of the concerned people is unjustified;
- (2) Aweil People also read an alarming tendency into this decision: from the time of negotiating the CPA to the post-secession issues, Aweil Community has been sidelined in the truest sense of the word in any meaningful discussions, yet we are among the border states and all these decisions immensely affect us;

- (3) Loyalty is a two-way street, remember. We have been loyal to the leadership of the SPLA/M due to the just cause of our liberation from day one; we will continue to be. Nonetheless, despite having paid so much (in blood and treasure) for the liberation of South Sudan, Aweil Community is now being asked to give up her territorial integrity to seal agreements off with Khartoum. Such is a double jeopardy or sellout of Aweil land for unknown that we cannot afford, buy into or entertain any longer. In other words, we have not fled away from this 14 mile area during the war and should not desert it now under the term of the agreement you signed. We would rather join wherever our land goes;
- (4) Since Aweil Community rejected the 14 mile agreement, your administration has never publicly come out to tell the entire Aweil Community how this issue should be handled. Although Gov. Malong and other state high-profile politicians have openly come out in the condemnation of the Aweil Community's exclusion in the negotiations, the presidency has not responded. Yet, particular individuals under your leadership continue to denote the 14 mile area as an international border; this has not only angered the greater Aweil Community but it also reflects the bullying the stakeholders in your government harbored against NBGS. Thus, your manifest silence makes us feel that River Kiir was intentionally made a disputed area by your administration;
- (5) Mr. President, Aweil Community knows very well that you are 100% aware that the part of the Kiir River that is currently targeted by the recent agreements in Addis Ababa has never been and will never be a disputed land. Aweil Community has been tremendously alarmed and shocked by the statements that some of your administration officials have recently said regarding this land. First, the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Paul Mayom Akech, has publicly stated that Kiir River is a "no-man's land." Second, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Michael Makuei Lueth, has openly stated that Kiir River is an "international border." Third, the Minister of Information, Dr. Marial Benjamin, has also publicly mentioned that a "special select" committee will be formed to educate citizens who are criticizing the Addis Ababa agreements. In spite of all these condescending comments from your officials, the presidency is shockingly tight-lipped about it all. These kinds of comments from high-ranking politicians, your silence over Aweil Community outcry against the Kiir River relinquishment and the exclusion in the negotiations imply that the 14 mile area was intentionally planned to be a demilitarized border zone (DMZ); and finally,
- (6) Aweil Community was astonished to hear that part of her land was included in the negotiations of the contentious areas between South Sudan and Sudan. Mr. President, to the best of our knowledge, when the CPA terms were negotiated in Naivasha, Kenya, the 14 mile land was not included as a disputed area. The only contentious areas that were discussed by Dr. John Garang and Mr. Taha were Abyei, Blue Nile, and Nuba Mountain. Now, what made the Kiir River a disputed land under your administration?

We are aware that the package of agreements, including this issue, was passed by the Council of Ministers and that it awaits parliamentary approval on soon. Mindful of the situation at the moment, Mr. President, you can avert this crisis by not requiring the parliament to rectify it but instead returning to the negotiations with Khartoum and have this issue taken off the table. And when you do go back to Addis Abba to the drawing board, we demand that you make sure that at

least a son or daughter of Mading Aweil is included in the negotiations. After all, the AU or UNSC knows perfectly well that 14-mile area was never part of the outstanding issues left off during the CPA signing. You can talk them out of it, and in the process, still come off triumphant.

However, if it so happens that our concerns and peaceful protests are ignored such that this agreement is shoved down through our throat, then the following scenarios cannot be ruled:

- (1) That our unquestionable support to the party will waver upon ratification of the agreement by the national assembly;
- (2) Aweil citizens, as a protest, may consider blocking the Baggara from accessing Kiir River this season;
- (3) Many Aweil citizens who fought the war were prompted to join the SPLA/M because of the Baggara encroachment on their land. If the SPLM is not a party that protects our land, we will reconsider our participation upon the withdrawal of our military from Mile 14 area; and lastly,
- (4) We will not be in a position to blame any of our citizens who maybe in readiness to interfere if all our demands go unheeded.

In sum, Mr. President, Aweil Community supports all other 8 post-secession agreements from oil production resumption to trade normalization to Abyei Referendum. The only area where we are not supporting you and are requesting for immediate reversal is the 14 mile area. Our border with Sudan lies 36 miles North of Kiir River. Even heaven knows that 14 mile area belongs to us and any attempt to talk us out of it will fail. Because we have it within power to control our destiny, not Khartoum, we thus hope that you will do the right thing.

Sincerely Yours,

Signed by

Mr. Lino Machir Akok,
Chairman of Federation of Aweil Communities in Canada (F.A.C.C.)
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Mr.Santino Atak Chimir Deng,
Chairman of Aweil Community in United States of America (ACAUSA)
Dallas, Taxes, USA

Mr. Martin Garang Aher,
Chairman of Mading Aweil Community in Australia (MAC)
Perth, Western Australia

Mr. Anyuon Deng Kuol, Secretary General
Helsinki, Finland, Europe

On Behalf of Aweil Community in Diaspora