

An Open Letter to His Excellency, Salva Kiir, President of South Sudan December 2021

Dear President Kiir,

We represent many different organizations and church groups, many denominations, many American and British Christians who cheered when South Sudan seceded from the Khartoum regime, escaped from forced Arabization and Islamization, and became a nation.

Some of us were there from the early days of the genocidal battle that Khartoum waged against the people of then southern Sudan. *Some of us even know you personally, and we knew Dr. John Garang.* We know about the personal sacrifices that you, John Garang, James Wani Igga, Daniel Awet Akot, Kuol Manyang Juuk, and so many others made. We know how all of you in the Sudan People's Liberation Army defended the people of southern Sudan.

Others of us may not know you personally, Mr. President, but we know the story of South Sudan. We know about the war, the starvation, the persecution, and the slavery. We have beloved South Sudanese friends, sisters and brothers in Christ, in this country. And we have other South Sudanese friends who, after finding refuge in America and gaining an education, made the unselfish decision to return to South Sudan to contribute to the development of the new nation. They are our heroes.

We are particularly impressed by the role of the churches during the war, as the only functioning part of civil society. The names of leaders like Bishop Nathaniel Garang, Bishop Bullen Dolli, Bishop Paride Taban, Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, and many others are legendary to us. We cherish the relationships that we have had with churches and church leaders in South Sudan in the past, and those we have today.

We are thankful to the South Sudanese Church leaders who stand for peace and justice, and who initiated and call now for dialogue between the pro-democracy and civil rights movement the People's Coalition for Civil Action (PCCA) and the government of South Sudan. *We support that initiative and ask you, President Kiir, and your government to honor the role of the Church in mediation.*

We are deeply concerned that some of those godly church leaders, along with other South Sudanese patriots, are being targeted by your government right now.

We all want to see South Sudan flourish and to see the purposes for which God ordained it and raised it up to be fulfilled. And today, we believe that the People's Coalition for Civil Action is following in the footsteps of all of you who desired freedom for South Sudan. This movement, formed on the 10th anniversary of South Sudan's independence to work for peaceful change in the country, is now carrying the torch that John Garang left with you and others of your time.

We remember that when South Sudan became a nation, you chose to have its birthday be in July to model it after the Independence Day of the United States of America. This was a great honor to the United States and a way of South Sudan saying that it wanted to have a nation that was "conceived in

liberty" and where all people of every tribe and tongue would be equal, unlike what you had gone through as part of Sudan.

We realize that over these past ten years there have been many times when the West in general, and the United States in particular, have not understood the complexities and suffering that South Sudan, the people of South Sudan, and particularly those of you who lived through and fought in the trauma of war are still suffering. *We also had not realized or made enough allowances for the ongoing machinations of Khartoum to try to ensure the failure of South Sudan as a nation. And we are sorry for that.*

*You will know, though, that some of us who heard the truth about many of the conflicts that were created since 2013 stood by you and defended you as the legitimate and rightfully elected President. So you see, Mr. President, that **this letter is coming from friends who want to see the best for you and the best for our beloved South Sudan.** The Book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament says, *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.**

You have received many deceitful "kisses" from those who do not seek the peace and prosperity of South Sudan, nor what is good for you. **These are those who advise you in ways that will do great, if not permanent, damage to your country and to you.**

We are extremely distressed about the ways in which your government is taking a wrong road, a road that is taking South Sudan in a different direction from that of democracy. It is leading to tyranny.

We are very concerned about the lack of freedom of the press, the lack of freedom of speech, the lack of freedom of assembly, and the human rights abuses which are being perpetrated against people who are protesting peacefully because they want to see their country thrive.

We are deeply disturbed that rather than respond to the longings of those represented by the People's Coalition for Civil Action, the South Sudan government has taken extreme measures against its leaders by arresting some and threatening to arrest and/or kill others.

We are very disappointed that the government of South Sudan is cracking down on civil society activists, sending many vocal leaders to exile, closing organizations that are critical of the government, and freezing bank accounts of both individuals and organizations.

We ask you, President Kiir, to remember from whence you have come. We ask you to return to your first love -- to use a term from the Book of Revelation. Your first love was what you fought for and were willing to die for. It was to see the birth of a country through the grace of God that would be free and equal for all people. It would be a place where all people have religious freedom, but that would be a country that ascribes proudly to the Judeo-Christian principles and underpinnings that form a Christian nation.

We ask you as fellow Christians, church leaders, and advocates who care so much about South Sudan to search within yourself. Deep down you know that those who advise you in the ways of tyranny and despotism are not your friends. *And they are not friends of South Sudan.*

We ask you to make a way for South Sudan to continue to grow in democracy and freedom and in respect for all people. And we ask you to make a way for those who wish peacefully to express their dissatisfaction to be able to do that without any interference or molestation.

We ask you to free those who are imprisoned unjustly. That is not what South Sudan was created for! That is what countries like China or North Korea or Saudi Arabia do, but not a country that set out under the leadership of you and John Garang and the others to be completely an alternative to that from which you had emerged.

THEREFORE, President Kiir,

We American and British Christians, church leaders, and activists that stand with the people of South Sudan cannot remain silent in the face of these repressive actions. We call immediately for:

- **Full implementation of the recommendations made by the people of South Sudan in response to the National Dialogue that you initiated in December 2016.**
- **Allow all upcoming public rallies to take place with no government, military, or police oppression, intimidation, arrest, or violent crackdown.**
- **Denounce publicly and revoke the arrest warrants on leaders of the People's Coalition for Civil Action (PCCA), for Joseph Akol Makeer, Abraham A. Awolich, Rajab Mohandis, Wani Michael, and Jame David Kolok, and unfreeze their personal bank accounts. Allow these leaders to return to South Sudan and resume their activities without hindrance.**
- **Unfreeze the bank accounts of the Sudd Institute, Organization for Responsive Government (ORG), Okay Africa Foundation, and the Foundation for Democracy and Accountable Governance.**
- **Denounce any intentions by anyone in the South Sudan government to harm or assassinate Joseph Akol Makeer, who has been well known, respected, and beloved by American Christians for some two decades, or to harm any of the other leaders of the PCCA, either civil or Church leaders. These are leaders who have done all that they could to defend and protect you when others were seeking to undermine you and the country. And they deserve your protection now.**
- **Release Kuel Aguer Kuel, a signatory to the PCCA Declaration who has been under detention for more than 90 days without trial and without formal charges.**
- **Release also: Pastor Abraham Chol Maketh, who was arrested for sharing an opinion considered unfavorable to you, President Kiir, and release the Bishop of Yei, as well as Malik Angok, Renk Community Leader and Fadia Ngor, a resident of Renk, who were arrested for organizing a protest.**
- **We call on the SPLM leaders including you, President Salva Kiir and 1st Vice President Dr. Riek Machar; Vice President Dr. James Wani Igga; General Daniel Awet Akot; General Kuol Manyang Juuk; and other senior SPLM leaders to do the right thing and save your country.**
- **Move forward with democratic elections to allow the people of South Sudan to freely and fairly choose their own leadership for the future.**

Failure to take these honorable actions will leave us with the distressing choice to seek to support alternative leadership in the nation.

Please know that you are in our prayers, and that we understand that the road to freedom and democracy is a long and hard road. Dr. John talked about the CPA, the means of achieving independence, *being given on a golden plate*. But independence is only the first step. **The rest of the fight to become a free nation, a strong flourishing nation for all the people and for the coming generations in South Sudan, is not on a golden plate. It is through humility, dependence on God, and long suffering.**

We are with you in this struggle to do the right thing. And even more, we are with all the people of South Sudan.

May God bless South Sudan,

Individuals (In alphabetical order. Organizations listed for identification purposes only.)

David, Lord Alton of Liverpool
Independent Crossbench Life Peer
UK Parliament

Brigadier (Retired) Val Batchelor CBE

Matthew Behum
Ministry Lead, Trinitarian International Solidarity (S.I.T.)
St. Lawrence Martyr Catholic Church, Hanover, MD

The Reverend Nick Braunschneider
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The Baroness Cox
Independent member of the House of Lords
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George C. Cross
Former Vermont Legislator

Rich and Julie Elmore
South Sudan Refugee Advocates

Dr. S. Bryan Hickox
Board Chair
[The Jesus Alliance](#)

Jennifer Huntington
President and Chair
Samuel Huntington Public Service Award

Lois Kanalos
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Colonel Robert L. Maness
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Gerald McDermott
Retired Chair of Anglican Divinity
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Faith J. H. McDonnell
Director of Advocacy
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The Rev. Canon Justin Murff
Canon for International Affairs – Jurisdiction for the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy
Anglicans in Action

George Parker
Founder and Director
[Revealing Light Ministries](#)

Reverend John Pofi
CEO, [John Pofi Foundation](#)
Jos Nigeria.

Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jan Ransom MBE

Bill Saunders, J.D.
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The Honorable
Frank Wolf
Member of Congress 1981-2015, retired

Elizabeth Yore, Esq.
Founder
[Yore Children](#)

Organizations

Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)
Suffering Church Network

Jubilee Campaign USA

Save The Persecuted Christians

Katartismos Global