

An open letter to President Salva Kiir: Dear President, Can you Press “KONG KÖC” (HOLD ON) Button?

To preface this letter, let me confess that we, as a country, are at the brink of precipice. This is not because we are less than six months away from the General Elections. It is because the project of dredging the River Naam and the resumption of the Jonglei canal has fixed the Government vs People. And no one can accurately predict what will happen if the project is executed by Egypt.

Your Excellency, the voices on social media, writings, and public lectures, are testimonies that we aren't reading from the same script with the Government. So, whose interventions do we dearly need? It is yours, sir.

And since the First Vice President, the two Vice Presidents, and the Minister for Cabinet Affairs have communicated their position, and are determined, with hammer and sickle, to implement the Cabinet Resolution Number 05/2022, taken during the Cabinet meeting on 13th of May 2022, I have no other safe heavens left than running to you. And this is why I pen down this letter to you. Therefore, I beg your diligence to allow me putting forward my points.

Dear President, I humbly take this rare opportunity to pen this open letter with considerable humility not because of my nativity or would-be victim status of the dredging. But, because of my South Sudanese nationality and loyalty for your Government. And therefore, methinks the definition of South Sudan, as a country, is neither only attributed to its geographical location on the map nor a legal framework that safeguards its sovereignty. But, there is more. The SUDD wetland is its stem. And because of this, I am kindly appealing to Your Excellency to recollect and exercise the wisdom of “KONG KÖC (hold on)” aphorism.

Your Excellency, I am neither an expert in this field nor a public policy analyst to make insightful arguments against the dredging. However, I have some Gospel truth for you: don't afford to lose the citizens. The voice of people is a voice of God!

Your Excellency, we are not like Hebrews who were baying at Moses that they wanted to return to Egypt when he was determined to lead them to the Promised Land. No. We are asking the Government to stop building the Tower of Babel. In other words, the dredging of river Naam and resumption of Jonglei canal is another side of the coin of building the Tower of Babel. And this manifested itself in the way the opponents and proponents are at each other's' throats. Hence, with these messy confusions marred with irreconcilable positions and rhetoric, it is safe to conclude that God is foiling the execution of this project. So, as the final arbiter, can you speak the language that we can all able to understand?

Either way, I do not want to sound bitter or do I want to remind you of our political calculus in this country. However, I will be economical with truth if I don't tell you some home truth. Sir, you had lost politicians long time ago. And now, it is upon you to make sure that some controllable actions and decisions of politicians aren't putting you in the bad books of the citizens. Honestly, environment and the Tiger are the only things you have. And therefore, can you jealously protect them?

Your Excellency, I beg your forgiveness if I am irritating and tiring your feelings with narratives which are worth very little for I know you may be busy, fatigued, and very much concerned about the fate of residents of the flooded areas. And indeed, you most likely be thinking about the coming General Elections or eagerly waiting to listen to presentations by experts and scientists than reading this kind of letter. But sir, there is some wisdom contained herein that you ought not to miss or ignore. Bear with me!

Your Excellency, the citizens have no faith lost in you. And despite the Government position being publicly made known by the most senior officials and as the committee is formed to organize the public consultations and preside over other important functions related to this project, the citizens are hopping that you will invoke the fairylike moment in which you reverted the country to ten (10) states, at eleventh hour, and say the final word. Like that seldom moment, I kindly submit to Your Excellency, to order putting on hold the immediate execution of this project and allow the necessary scientific researches and other vital activities to be firstly carried out, and presentations of its scientific recommendations and evidence-based approaches thereof. With that done, you would have reloaded the account of trust in which the citizens had over withdrawn from. And the relationship between the Government and citizens booms. And above all, the project will be clear.

I jogged your memory about the cataclysmic political standstill, over the number of states, to remind you that the bold decisions you make at critical political moments, like now, have direct impacts on the future of the entire citizenry. And therefore, it is essential to say that such decisions are to be made solely for the benefits and greater good of the country and her populace, not for the appeasement or at behest of other country. And this forms my sound bite, and so I wish to underline and repeat to draw your attention.

Your Excellency, when the history of this Nation is going to be written, you will feature in the first, middle and last pages. And among other memorable achievements of yours, I expect you to be remembered as a leader who always makes complex decisions and stops disadvantageous projects for the interest of the country. You had labored so hard for this country and I expect you to be identified only with things that can change lives of South Sudanese people for better, not for worse. And as the political aphorism goes, "there comes a time when the interest of the Nation is more important than the interest

of an Individual", that time is no any other moment. It is the return of the magical 14th of Feb 2020. And it is now!

For the truth of the above stated accounts, I submit to your Excellency, and humbly plead with you, to avoid wasting time in the name of waiting to be advised by the experts and scientists. The dredging of the River Naam and resumption of Jonglei canal project has already failed from the start since the project hadn't been conceived, delineated, quantified and alternatively analyzed so as to inform the decision thereof. And therefore, the cart is already being placed before the horse and that is why the scientists and experts are going to make their presentations and collect data after the project was passed by the cabinet on 13th May 2022, and the equipment already being imported. So, does it need an expert to tell you that the project is upside down? No. You're an expert in this!

Your Excellency, this project is neither an item in the Peace Agreement nor a prerequisite to holding the General Elections, which must require all parties to agree. And as such, I am appealing to your wise leadership to correct the previous wrongs by putting the project on hold.

And as for the affected people, let the scientists and experts, in collaboration with the concerned Ministries, devise practically doable mechanisms of addressing the flooding disaster. Dear President, can you press " KONG KÖC" button?

Your Excellency, do you hear me? I hope and pray you do. Happy the 11th Independence Day to you!

Yours truly,

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