

CRISIS IN SOUTH KORDOFAN - JULY 2011

A FAST OPTION FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

A: RATIONALE

The crisis in South Kordofan shows the limits of outside influence by the international community.

Outside players are largely excluded from influence, the UN evacuated non-essential personnel from Kadugli when fighting flared in June, visas for foreign aid-agency staff are increasingly hard to obtain, and the UN peacekeeping mission UNMIS is winding down. It would seem that international presence and influence on the ground is waning, at a time when it is needed most.

Where external influence fails, an internal mechanism can be accessed instead: local

peacebuilders. These civil society activists and organisations are already in place throughout the province, and continue to be active despite the crisis, with some notable successes. The Collaborative for Peace in Sudan, a local network of peacebuilding groups, reports the following current examples in South Kordofan: the Native Administration of village chiefs are acting to exclude combatants from their areas; the rival Nuba, Misseryah and Dajou tribes have agreed to maintain a ceasefire between themselves; similar agreements have been made elsewhere in South Kordofan and in Unity state, south of the border.

Until external influence becomes more effective, local peacebuilders are the best channel for

mitigating the crisis at the community level. Local peacebuilders can mitigate the tensions on which such conflicts are based, and aim to prevent their recurrence. Significantly, we are seeing local actors contain some of the worst violence and limit the damage it can inflict. And after an eventual ceasefire, it is local actors who will pick up the pieces, rebuild communities and livelihoods, reconcile parties and ensure that peace becomes sustainable.

International efforts at high-level political negotiations are vital, but only one part of the solution.

It is essential that, in parallel and with equal emphasis, local initiatives can build peace in areas and among groups that the international community cannot reach. To do this, they will need funds and recognition.

B: PROPOSAL

The international community should urgently support and work with local peacebuilding organisations in South Kordofan and elsewhere in Sudan, and build their ability to act autonomously. Specifically:

1. Contact local peacebuilders (for example via Peace Direct and its website Insight on Conflict).
2. Access their first-hand information and analyses on the crisis.
3. Fund their activities on the ground and assist them to weather the storm.
4. Engage with them as agents for change, not as victims.
5. Support them as a priority approach, to complement in-parallel political negotiations.
6. Ensure that when the conflict ends, existing civil society players remain and can respond immediately to opportunities for peace.

C: ACTION POINTS

- Forward this concept paper to relevant recipients in the aid and political sectors, and seek to have them adopt its proposal.
- Contact Peace Direct to assist the campaign: our Chief Executive is Carolyn Hayman OBE on carolyn@peacedirect.org.