

**COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR PROGRESS ORGANIZATION**

**CEPO**

**Juba 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**Political Crisis**

**The citizens asked;**

**“Is South Sudan Politics and Politicians for Stabilization or Destabilization” ?**

## **Introduction**

This report reflect opinions of citizens collected in Juba about the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 incident which the Government termed as **“Attempted Military Coup”** by internal opposition within SPLM as the Ruling Party in South Sudan. This report intends to reveal citizens’ opinion on the violent armed conflict that occurred that started in the capital and escalates to other states. The citizens’ views were collected in order to influence the conflicting parties to resolve their political difference in a peaceful manner. Therefore, whatever is reflected in this report represents the voices of the citizens of South Sudan, particularly in Juba and it pays attention to the following key questions;

1. What does this political crisis mean in your opinion?
2. After the incident, what are your hopes and fears?
3. What is the disease of South Sudan Politics?
4. What is the relationship between the current political crisis and the National General Elections 2015? (Candidacy and elections security)
5. What implications are the current political crisis on the National Reconciliation, Peace and Healing process?
6. CEPO discussions on the citizens’ opinions

These are the leading questions used to collect the citizens’ views in Juba and should not be understood by anybody as politically motivated views since they were collected from the citizens without focus on any specific ethnic group. The methodology of collecting the views was inclusive enough and it balances the ethnic representation of the various ethnic groups of South Sudan within Juba City.

## **Rationale of the report**

It is of great concern to know whether the political crisis that resulted into military confrontation among the ruling party is ethnically motivated and whether it is a coup attempt or not. Different views were given by the conflicting parties as they define the issue; President Kiir termed it as “an attempted Coup and failed” while his opponents under the leadership of the former Vice President rejected the allegations. For understanding of the situation, CEPO collected citizens’ views on the situation as an approach of establishing the reality about the political crisis so as to reflect the citizens’ feelings on the situation and what they suggested as long-term solution for resolving the political difference.

## **Methodology and sample size**

The citizens were asked open questions to allow them give deep and elaborate expression. The methods used were Intensive Individual interview (face to face) and Focus Group Discussions. The two methods were applied equally to verify the information. The sample size was 1200 persons from various ethnic groups of South Sudan within Juba City Blocks. The data collection took five days.

**Purposes:**

To understand the citizens' reaction on the political crisis that ended up in military confrontation in Juba city.

**What did this political crisis meant to you?**

Majority of the citizens said this incident depicts that South Sudanese politicians have frictions among themselves over political power and needs to be resolved comprehensively through peace deal they termed as "*Second Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2<sup>nd</sup> CPA)*". They stressed that, this political crisis is serious and should not be undermined but rather be tackled holistically. The citizens in residential areas of Mia Saba (107), Gudele bordering Mia Saba, the area surrounding the Military barracks (Islak) Bilpam, LoLogo and Kor William (William's River) described the incident as *South Sudanese Foolish Moment*. "We are disappointed if the ultimate aim of the 21 years of struggle for freedom and independence is to lead us into this situation where we are killed because of mere competition over political power. A group of discontented women asked why SPLM as a ruling party failed by not resolving their difference non-violently? The citizens attributed the incident to Emmanuel Kembe's Song "*Kulu Zol Azu kun Beny*" (Everyone wants to become a Chief and Boss) and they said it correct within the SPLM.

The citizens expressed deep worry that politics in South Sudan is a real dirty game that makes the leaders not to care about the lives of the citizens. The citizens are left to wonder as to why the president and former Vice president did not to resolve their political disputes through dialogue than resorting to use of force causing a lot of deaths in South Sudan. Some members of the SPLA disclosed that, much of the problem is the misuse of army for safeguarding political interest. They said majority of the top army leaders build militias within the national military machinery and this militias are much affiliated to their leaders' opinion than protecting the nation from individuals that may rebel against the government of the day.

**What trigger this situation and why now?**

The citizens said failure of SPLM leaders to resolve their internal party power struggle triggered the violent situation. The struggle for political power within SPLM is Hugh and is ever disturbing because some key SPLM figures want to become the next president of the republic. The citizen said the way SPLM conduct its political business is much influenced by military strengthen each member has rather than being a political institution. Each influential figure of the party has click of friends within the party. This has made the party instrument and mechanism non functional. The citizens described the general factors that trigger the situation as absence of internal democracy within the SPLM. The citizens responding to the question "why the fighting turns quickly into ethnic fighting"? The citizens said it is so because the military officers within the presidential guards pay a lot of their allegiance to competing individuals that is former Vice President Riek and president Kiir than the institution they are working for. The individuals in the presidential guards who are influential are the ones who turned the frictions into ethnic direction. The citizens said they were aware that some in the presidential guards start calling their fellow tribe mates in the various security institutions to start

protecting their fellows in the town and deal out with their ethnic opponents. The citizens pointed the blame figure of turning the fighting ethnic to some individual in the presidential guards and fuelled by some individuals in the other security institutions. While for why now? The citizens said it is the SPLM national liberation council meeting since the meeting challenged the SPLM leadership level of understanding what democracy is all about.

### **After this political crisis, what are your hopes and fears?**

The citizens expressed less hopes since the conflicting parties have not started dialogue to resolve their difference through peaceful means and the situation will remind risky and dangerous since the fighting has taken ethnic direction so faster in Upper Nile region. However, their hopes are centered on the following:

1. The coming of IGAD is an indicator that, the crisis will be resolved
2. The expression of interest between the president and his opponents is an opportunity of defusing the fighting.
3. The strong message for peace and mitigation of the fighting from religious leaders is encouraging.

While with the fears, the citizens are anxious about the negative developments that are taking place in the other state. Specifically, the situation of Unity state where the defected SPLA are involved in forming interim government. This is an indicator of that some SPLA high ranks that are interested in holding political positions in the government will defect and join the anti-government forces if this attitude is within many military commanders, then the hopes for quick mitigation of the current political crisis is low. The citizens centered their fears on the following;

1. Downplaying the growth of the crisis into ethnic political crisis may take people by surprised to see that political ethnic war starts
2. Laving pre-conditions prior the dialogue may lead the situation to take military approach faster than non-violent approach.
3. The ethnic dynamic of the fighting require serious reconciliation which may not be possible if it is not properly approached
4. Ethnic revenge will take place in large scale across the country since it is already happening.
5. The government resistance for the situation taking ethnic domination may give chance for others to conduct ethnic killings.

### **What human rights violations have you witnessed?**

The citizens in the following residential areas of Mia Saba (107), Bilpam, Lologo, Gudele block 7, 8, 9 and Kor Romula revealed that, they have witnessed intentional killing of persons specifically from Nuer tribe in the morning of the second day. They have also seen cases of Nuer revenging by killing Dinkas. The citizens described the killers as armed individuals in military uniform, some in police uniform and others in civilian dresses. Majority of the killers are not officers with ranks (stars). They are mere soldiers. A Dinka woman disclosed that, most of the killers are doing this on assumption of

dealing with an ethnic group that they suspected is behind the unrest and same applies to the other side.

Some Nuer youth said, they were informed over telephone that, Dinka in military uniform have declared war against Nuer and they tried to find out whether the phone caller is telling the real information. Soon some Young military officers from Dinka reached them and told them to run because some individuals from Dinka are killing Nuer in the area. The Dinka Military officers gave them protection from Mia Saba (107) to UNMISS compound in Tongping. According to the Nuer Youth, the military should not be blamed for being ethnically motivated for killing Nuer but it is some specific Dinka individuals in the military and security institutions who instigated the killing of the Nuer as a signal of supporting President Kiir or demonstrating to the Nuer that, they are strong and powerful to the level that they can teach Nuer unforgettable lesson. The Nuer youth concluded by referring to the act as a foolish idea that is intended to divide the country but they will not win since those are individuals but not tribe.

Group of citizens said the ethnic trend of the fighting came in when a rumor spread that Dinkas were disarming the Nuer in all the security institutions so as to render them vulnerable to the level that they cannot support Riek Militarily. Responding to the question, how many persons have they seen being killed? The citizens said in while some were approached individually in their houses by the killers and most of the killings occurred in the morning of the second day.

Group of women said in the morning of the second day December 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, there were women who were raped by armed men in military and police uniforms and some in civilians dress. The victims were mainly young girls and foreign women from Uganda and Kenya. This incident mostly happened in Mia Saba (107), around Bilpam, Lologo areas. A woman who claimed to have been raped by two persons armed in civilian dress in Mia Saba in the morning of the second day at 6am said the men broke into her room and asked her whether she is a South Sudan or foreigner, she replied that she is a foreigner. They further went asking whether there are Nuer houses close to her, when she said no, Immediately one of armed men pointed a gun at her and said if she cries, she will be killed, because the armed men wants to have sex with her and immediately they started raping her. She has no option of crying and both men slept with her. According to her, that morning they were a lot of women crying calling for help as they were raped, but they got no help as the situation was tense with a lot of gun shots.

### **Cases that down play ethnicity on the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2013**

1. In Mia Saba (107), a Nuer man who works with the Agriculture Bank was saved by Dinka SPLA officers from the hands of the criminals.
2. In Gudele, Nuer family of six members was saved by two Dinka SPLA soldiers from the hands of five armed criminals
3. In Mia Saba Dinka SPLA accompanied Nuer students of University of Juba to UNMISS compound to take refuge.

4. In Lologo Nuer and Dinak youth from University of Juba took refuge in a House of Bari tribe man for two nights and both had a peaceful stay.

### **What is the disease of South Sudan Politics?**

Majority of the citizens described the disease of South Sudan's politics as allegiance of the citizens to their fellow tribe politicians more than the political party philosophy or nation. This ideology is fuelled by the politicians who use their tribe as a seal that protect them from any political confrontation or paving way of winning political seat in the government. Secondly, the engagement of active military top officers in the national politics has made it hard to separate politics from military. The third factor is, there are a lot of individuals who are political seat aspirants and they always uses military approach to buy the political seat, some persons are often comprised with and are taken to the military as active officers.

### **What is the relationship between the current political-military crisis with the National General Elections 2015?**

The citizens said this incident instill fear in them as 2015 General elections period draws closer since the crisis is among the possible contesting candidates. They further said this incident of military fighting in Juba maybe repeated during the National General Elections if the elections security is not taken into account seriously.

Group of Youth said, the elections security is under threat if the candidates are same who are active top military leaders because most of them have their own armed group individuals who are mainly family members. Majority of the citizens said there are indicators where politicians use their communities as seal and force of winning political position. The citizens cited constituencies that have strong opponents who are militarily active to challenge themselves.

The citizens in Mia Saba, Logogo and close to former Sudan military barracks said they have seen distribution of AK 47 to civilians by some individuals who are either in military uniform or civilian dresses driving cars without number plate mostly within the area in ethnic line and some civilian were seen in collecting guns of killed soldiers within the residential areas faced by the military fighting.

### **What implication does this political-military crisis have on the National Reconciliation, peace and Healing Process?**

The citizens said this crisis is worsening the national reconciliation, peace and healing process because same political leaders that are suppose to spearhead the process have political leadership crisis among themselves. Their political leadership frictions have blocked the process and till they reconciles among themselves the citizens will not move any single step on reconciliation, peace and healing process. Majority of the citizens have called upon the political leaders to take this crisis as an opportunity of driving for reality and true reconciliation, peace and healing process that are not

politicized at all. The citizens said if the political leaders failed to reconcile this time, it will be hard for the elections to take place peacefully or non-violently. The possibility of some guilty minded individuals using this current situation during the elections is high.

### **What is the road map for peace and stability?**

The citizens insisted that, the groups belonging to President Kiir and the former Vice president should have a dialogue among themselves as members of the ruling party on the issues that created the current situation. They should also organize another dialogue that will bring all the political parties in the country. The citizens said, the approach need to be inclusive enough but the root causes of the current political crisis originated from the ruling party so the ruling party conflicting members have to resolve their internal party issues first before they turn it as national issue. The citizens have come out with the following steps:

1. **Step 1:** Conflicting parties have to agree on ceasefire and unconditional political dialogue among the SPLM members.
2. **Step 2:** Political dialogues have to be divided into two folds as follow; first fold: President Kiir dialoguing with Riek face to face and second fold: National political dialogue involving the other national political parties.
3. **Step 3:** President Kiir and former Vice president should resolve SPLM internal disputes or disagreements through mediation of IGAD
4. **Step 4:**Conflicting parties agreeing to hold their fellows who committed human rights violations accountable and face the competent court of law for justices.
5. **Step 5:** Conflicting parties should agree on separation of military from politics before the national elections. Politicians should not be active military commanders. Let military be in barracks and politicians be in political parties or government political posts. No more active military saving as politicians in the parliament or any other political post apart from the Minister for ministries of defense and interior.
6. **Step 6:** President Kiir and Former Vice president Reconciliation should be conducted
7. **Step 7:** Conflicting parties agreeing on conducive environment for facilitation of the national general elections 2015 timely and peaceful
8. **Step 8:** Facilitation of the national general elections, 2015
9. **Step 9:** Facilitation of the national reconciliation, peace and healing process including the national constitution review

The citizens said the regional bodies of IGAD and AU including the members of international community must not make any mistake of pushing for political dialogue that will lead to creation of another political process similar to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. What is now central is the democratization of the ruling party SPLM mechanisms and instruments. This should be resolved by the party's third national convention. The current political crisis nationwide can be resolved through national peaceful and non-violent democratic electoral process not through designing new political

process. The democratization of governance and leadership in South Sudan must be resolved through working for a democratic national Constitution which is under process since last year. The only issue needed here is making the national constitution a public-driven process rather than believing the constitution review is the absolute responsibility of lawyers' professional which we citizens have already experienced.

### **CEPO discussions on the citizens' opinions**

This crisis is a total political friction over leadership of both the ruling party and the government. CEPO has called upon the political leadership of the ruling party to respect democratic principles for several times. Democracy is expensive to work for as it requires patience, tolerance and compromise. It is the absence of patience, tolerance and compromise that has made us face the current turmoil in South Sudan. Access to political power is hard where democracy is understood as only to be listened to excluding being heard in any political process. It is very clear that, in the ruling party, some individuals only want to be listened to and not giving space for others to be heard.

Therefore, it is high time for the conflicting parties within the ruling party to exercise maturity in making democracy work in the internal functions of the party. It is of the citizens' concerns that whatever is taking place within the ruling party has direct implication on the government and the nation because the SPLM is the ruling party of the government of the day. Hence, the citizens have a duty and obligation of speaking to the SPLM and its leadership should listen to them and put their concerns into actions.

Further, time has come for the government of the day to separate military from politics and build a national army that is free of ethnic dominance. Now we have seen the impact of some active military leaders who have political aspirations messing with the country's political issues which requires patience, tolerance and compromise. The military of the country should be far from what the politicians are doing. Politics is a game that requires political ideologies that do not reflect the reality of the matter. Here if the military are politicized, then the military using the gun for buying political is possible especially in the context of a society that is militarized as South Sudan.

In conclusion, for resolving the current political tension, it is essential for the ruling party to sit down and dialogue among themselves so as to resolve their internal party democracy challenges after agreeing to reach a ceasefire. Secondly, the perpetrators of human rights violations from both conflicting parties should be held accountable. Thirdly, the political leaders should agree for national constitution review and national general elections to take place timely as an approach of making the government and governance of the country democratic.

CEPO knows that, it is hard to identify the perpetrators of Human Rights and it urges the government of South Sudan to mandate the South Sudan Human Rights Commission to carry out investigation of the cases and give some recommendations.



The chamber of public grievances should open its doors to receive public grievances so as to collect data for designing reconciliation and identification of persons that became vulnerable due to the fighting and if possible give assistance to such victims.

Peace and reconciliation commission should move faster in resolving the tension that has amounted in to the violent conflict

As compliment for political democratic process, CEPO urge the conflicting parties to operationalize the political party registration so as to pave way for the 2015 General elections.

The citizens also call for the release of the detainees as a step for the SPLM members dialogue

### **Conclusion**

All south Sudanese nationals must turn away from trading on this current political friction over leadership on ethnic lines for personal gains. The current political crisis took ethnic dimensions because of some South Sudanese pay allegiance to ethnicity more than the nation and citizenship. Ethnicity pays no benefit for diversity and diversity in a nation is regarded as strength for every aspect that the nation wants to pursue. Therefore let us use our national diversity for building one nation of different united ethnic groups. Time has come for us to think of peaceful co-existence than dividing ourselves along ethnic lines. Additionally, we have to understand that working for democracy is expensive and it requires tolerance, patience and compromise. Being human, always we are more proud of winning than losing. But in nation building, we have to use losing as an opportunity of strategizing for better winning. Let us reconcile and build better future for South Sudan.