



June 2, 2011

To: H.E Dr. Jean Ping, Chairman of the African Union,

Your Excellency,

We write to you as a group of six international and African non-governmental organizations concerned about the recent violence in Abyei.

We wish to commend the African Union for the press release of May 23 expressing concern over the conflict in Abyei. The AU has been instrumental in ensuring peace and security for the people of Sudan and South Sudan, notably as a guarantor of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the convener of the AU High Level Implementation Panel, which has played a critical role in the CPA negotiations. The AU's statement comes as a much needed and timely call to the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan to act quickly to resolve the conflict in Abyei.

We urge for both governments to be called to account for the violent actions that have led to the present crisis in Abyei. Attacks allegedly led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and United Nations peacekeepers have resulted in an aggressively disproportionate response from the SAF. This response has included deployment of dozens of tanks into Abyei town and the shelling and bombing of civilian areas, as well as the burning and looting of civilian properties. The attack has exacerbated the existing humanitarian concerns in Abyei, leading to UN estimates of 40,000 civilians displaced,¹ and has generated new and negative anxieties regarding the status of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan.

We ask the AU to enhance its leadership role and urge the two governments to work to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Abyei and tensions in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. The AU should call for the full implementation of the Kadugli Agreement and ask the leaders of the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to take all necessary steps to de-escalate the crisis in Abyei. We are encouraged that the AUHIP has facilitated the signing of a Joint Position Paper on Border Security by both Sudanese parties on May 30. We hope these discussions of a Common Border Zone can be expanded upon to address the status of Abyei, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. We recommend that the Abyei crisis and the situation of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan take priority on the agenda of the impending meeting that the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) will be convening.

We ask the AU to extend full political support to the AUHIP to ensure it can successfully mediate negotiations. The AU should also encourage goodwill between Sudan and South Sudan in these final months of the CPA, by taking the lead in proposing a road map for the resolution of outstanding issues.

Concerned governments and intergovernmental bodies should stand firm in their insistence for peace among all Sudanese people. We welcome the AU's concern about the humanitarian consequences of the

¹ UN Deputy Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, Lise Grande of May 27, 2011.

conflict and ask you to call on the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan to fulfill their protection of civilian obligations and work towards restoring security in Abyei.

A peaceful resolution to the Abyei crisis is essential to ensuring the smooth transition to independence of South Sudan. Moreover, resolving this crisis is essential to attain future stability and security for all Sudanese citizens. The AU has a vital role to ensure the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan take greater responsibility in Abyei as a step towards realizing sustainable peace in Sudan and tenable North-South relations.

Yours sincerely,

Africa Research and Resource Forum (ARRF)
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR)
International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa)
PSI-Africa

Cc'ed to:

H.E. Ramtane Lamamra, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security

H.E. El Ghassim Wane, African Union Director for Peace and Security

H.E. Dr. Andrew Hama Mtetwa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe, June Chairman of the Peace and Security Council

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