

## **South Sudan Citizens Hopeful for Peace Despite Previous Violations of Agreements**

*By Silvano Yokwe Alison ( Freelance Journalist in Juba, South Sudan) reporting for Mission 21.*

“We need to forgive each other as this civil war has really caused a lot of damage. Every family has lost a loved one. We need to end this war, we need the kind of unity when we voted for separation,” said Paulino Biar, who comes from Jonglei State at the peace celebration marking the signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, signed in August 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan.

Thousands of people from different walks of life have gathered at Dr. John Garang Mosleum on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2018 to celebrate the peace day in Juba that brought in some leaders and Representatives of the parties to the conflict after two years when the July Conflict 2016 erupted at the Presidential Palace commonly known as J1. Another female citizen called Annet Nancy, aged 25, who came from Morobo County of Yei River State could not hide her excitement, when asked in an interview on how she feels about this peace day this time around Nancy, while raising her South Sudanese flag higher and in a very happy mood says “I am very joyful, this I can’t hold. This is the day we have been fasting for, we have been doing a lot. The day has come. This time around, it is God who has come to South Sudan,” she added.

The atmosphere reminds a lot of people, the day when the Country was declared Independent in July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011.

A number of people came for the celebration to see for themselves whether Dr. Riek Machar Teny will honestly come to Juba. An elderly woman in her late fifties, called Madelina Chol, narrated that she was happy to come to this peace event for the first time and urges the leaders to respect this Peace Agreement this time around. While raising her Bible up with her hands, Chol vowed to continue praying for peace and the leaders so that they can forgive and love themselves once again. We have been suffering a lot, she continued.

On his part, as the leader of the opposition Dr. Riek Machar Teny, said his presence in the Country is a show of goodwill to uphold the Peace Agreement

Dr. Machar urges President Salva Kiir, to release all Political Detainees and lifting of the State of Emergency as a sign of Peace in the Country.

President Kiir, in his closing speech at the Ceremony, have apologized on behalf of the Government for the suffering they caused to the people of South Sudan.

President Kiir further said that his Government is committed to implement the Peace Agreement and urges all the other parties to do the same, like allowing free movement of civilians across the country from one location to another without been attacked along the roads.

The occasion which started in the morning hours and lasted for thirteen hours have been attended by the Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir, who had been instrumental in brokering the Peace Deal, Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, African Union Representatives, Ethiopian Prime Minister, and other Head of States and Dignitaries within the Region.

For now, the hope for Peace is still alive for many South Sudanese but it remains to be seen how far this will go in the next coming months.