

**Date:2/3/2023**

## **Joint Open Letter To:**

**The Most Reverend Justin Welby, Pope Francis the Head of the Catholic Church, and the RT Reverend Dr. Lain Greenshields of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland**

**Re: Request for your Holy Church to respond to the Suffering of the IDPs and the South Sudanese Refugees**

Greetings to you and the entire Clergy in the Mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is with profound pleasure to welcome you to our beloved country, and we extend our warmest greetings to you as you continue serving the flocks of the God Almighty.

### **Introduction**

**The Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan Is Genuine, Without NGO's Support is a Disaster**

2023 is a turning back of the clock and the beginning of suffering of the South Sudanese IDPs across the country of South Sudan. Some villages witnessed inter-communal violence. In Kajo-Keji county and Mangala Payam, the nearest administrative district appendix to the capital city of the republic of South Sudan, shows the urgent need for humanitarian support due to man-made disasters.

While in the outlying district like Aweil County in the Northern part of South Sudan our volunteers were able to meddle inside the villages to witness the suffering of Waragany and Rumdier villages. The pictures demonstrated the reality of the urgent need for Humanitarian support, which continued to rise, fuelled by the climate crisis, food insecurity, public health challenges as well as conflict within the administrative level.

**South Sudanese situation** as a result of the recurring conflict in the country, over a million South Sudanese have been pushed out of the country to seek safety globally and in Uganda in particular. Today, Uganda has the highest refugee and asylum seeker numbers in Africa.

**Uganda** has been a haven for the refugees from South Sudan since the 1950s to date, however, there have been 21 years of struggle beginning in 1983 until it was concluded by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Naivasha, which led to the

separation from North Sudan by the referendum in 2011. The Churches had played a bigger role on the lives of refugees in Uganda and Sudan with support of both food and non-food items including scholastic materials to both primary pupils and secondary students.

**The current refugee life is in jeopardy considering the daily mounting challenges which include:**

- 1- **Religious and spiritual sessions.** We believe and trust in the power of the Church of Christ upheld in the 1983 Sudan civil war. The Christian community were followed with a number of Priests, Presbyters and Pastors from South Sudan with pathways of both material and spiritual support which had strengthened the refugee community by then. Henceforth the current IDPs and refugee community are left like chicks with whom the mother is dead. Although there are some churches established, there are too many challenges in regards to resource mobilization.
- 2- **Conflict with the host communities** due to sharing of natural resources, the refugee community finds it challenging to construct shelters and firewood as the host community resists natural resource sharing of construction poles, firewood and grass.
- 3- **Land scarcity**, although most of the South Sudanese practiced subsistence agriculture to produce food, now they have limited access to acquire land for production from the host community surrounding them. The possibility and availability of the land will be theirs, but it is difficult for the refugees to acquire because it is hired and there is hardship of getting money given with other domestic demands.
- 4- **Inadequate sanitary materials** for women and schoolgirls as a result of financial constraints coupled with closure of schools due to COVID 19, many girls got pregnant and bore children, while many married couples have broken up leaving children to grow without adequate family support or as orphans.
- 5- **The settlement camp conditions are unbearable.** Most of the households are very poor and once they get some money, they have to choose between dressing and feeding their families. Most families prioritize feeding for life sustainability. Even if the parents and older youth have the energy to do work, there is limited work for casual labourers.
- 6- **Health and maternity services**, although some of the health service providers (NGOs) are trying their best to help, there is still a big gap towards their model of engagement and the drugs. The patients are limited to coartem (anti-malarial), Paracetamol (pain reliever), Amoxicillin (antibiotic) and

Metro (antibiotic for venereal diseases) which may not help treat other diseases. In addition, there is a challenge from having few ambulances.

- 7- **Elderly people, people with disability and people with complicated sicknesses:** in every month the refugee community registers three to four death cases of their elders, people with disabilities and those with complications passing on. This is caused mainly by poor feeding (dietary), poor health services and the general situation without clear future projection for their return to their ancestral land.
- 8- **Scholarship and vocational:** many scholarships are available for refugees, but it is very difficult for the refugees' students to access them due to the responsible department self-interest, second to that many refugees' youth have dropped out of school and are unproductive due to lack of opportunities to enrol into vocational courses that will enable them to earn a living.
- 9- **Portal water:** there is water scarcity within the refugee settlements, which requires women to wake up early in the morning when it is still dark to look for water. Some of those women walk a distance of 1.8 km to find water within the settlement for their family.
- 10- **Inadequate food for the refugee population** due to the reduction of the food ration by 40% whereby an individual consumes 8.82 kgs of grains per month and 3.6 kgs of beans per month; the daily consumption is just 0.29 grams of grains and 0.12 grams of beans without any supplementary.

**Your Most Reverend, allow us to list recommendations to address the above mentioned challenges affecting us.**

- a) We are hereby recommending that, through your good leadership for the sake of the Christians within the refugee settlements, appoint for us some presbyters from the Diocese of Yei and Juba to help restructure the system of the church, as well to advocate for an inter-religious council that will regulate the religious denominations within the refugee settlements to create a more conducive environment for the entire Christian community.
- b) Support the IDPs and refugee community with supplementary food supply or any other modality to rescue the refugees from returning home which is not yet safe for living. This appeal came as a result of our brothers and sisters who decided to go home due to unavailability of opportunities for livelihoods, and they end up losing their lives on the way or after settlement back home.
- c) Through the presences of well-set church leadership in the settlement, this will create a pathway for dialogue between the refugees and host community religious members which will be used for transforming both communities

and it will create a room for peaceful coexistence and modes of natural resource sharing.

- d) We are requesting the church to support livelihood activities on economic empowerment, skills development and agriculture-based activities which will enable the refugees to earn a living and become more self-reliant than depending on the monthly food aid and reduced ration for better life sustainability.
- e) We are requesting you to support the women with sanitary kits, or if possible, introduce local production of sanitary pads to support the women from their circles to enable them to join social gatherings and engagement into social activities freely.
- f) We also recommend the church to support the health centres with supply of drugs and other services, if possible, with standby ambulance.
- g) We suggest special consideration for sustainable aid to people with special needs such as the elderly, PWD and persons with complicated sicknesses.
- h) If the church may lobby for the refugee students for scholarship will be paramount in furthering their success. Scholarships may be shared but most refugees are not considered, and due to the war situation, most of the scholarships come with age limits which hinder students from other age brackets to qualify.
- i) Some youth drop out of school due to some challenges and with few economic opportunities; they get married with no idea of income generation while others join bad peer groups. We therefore recommend establishment of a vocational institute within the settlement for the refugee youth to attain training in big numbers with hired qualified staff.
- j) All the settlements have portable water challenges; thus, we also request that the church addresses the water challenges will add more value to the refugee women who work hard just to bring water to the community.

It is our strong wish and belief that, with your consideration and support of the above collective challenges, the lost hope of the Christians will be restored. This appeal is not only for you alone, rather any other Samaritan who may wish to support the IDPs and refugees in any form is most welcome.

God bless you and in God we trust.

**Sincerely,**

- Voice of the Christians from the Anglican Diocese of Juba and Diocese of Yei at the Refugees Settlements in Uganda,

- Coalition of South Sudan National Nongovernment Organization in Uganda and Diaspora

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