

A letter from the men and women of the North to the men and women of the South

“On your Democratic Right to Self Determination”

January 1st, 2011

Dear sisters

Dear brothers

This is a critical and historic moment for Sudan. The decades' old project of building the national identity of the Sudanese people is now facing the possibility of the re-construction of the country, including its geography. After a long history of suffering finally the people of South Sudan are in the process of achieving their self determination. We, the signatories below, Northern Sudanese citizens, appreciate and support the people of South Sudan as you prepare to exercise your democratic right of self determination.

Dear Brothers and sisters of South Sudan,

We had hoped that the interim six years of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) would heal the wound of the real injustices that have been inflicted upon you throughout our contemporary history, and that we would reach the moment of the referendum at a time when we –all of us in the South and North- were ready for a healthy start for a new and inclusive future. However the six years have passed without achievement and without any real, conscientious effort by the central state to make unity an attractive choice for citizens of the geographical and cultural South. For six years, attempts to kill the spirit and letter of the CPA have continued, leaving the rights contained in the CPA with no protection and no defence, paving the road for efforts to undermine the agreement, to the degree that racist attitudes and conspiracies have publicly and tirelessly continued to kill the CPA.

We, the signatories below, citizens of the broader North Sudan, do value and join hands with you while you are preparing for this historic moment and pledge to protect and defend your democratic right of self determination.

This step was heavily paid for through atrocities, loss of life, discrimination and the waste of generations of potential by successive regimes since independence. These regimes, in particular the regime of the National Congress Party during the last twenty years, have provoked and continue to provoke, civil conflicts. They have tried to manipulate the country's ethnic and cultural diversity and turn it from an advantage and asset into a curse, mainly for the purpose of sustaining their own existence in government. As a result, the current Sudanese national state has failed to represent the people of South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, Far North, Darfur—and the people of the country as a whole—by implanting division and hatred and promoting a negative culture of racial discrimination, injustice and inequality between the citizens of the country and between the men and women of Sudan.

We, the signatories below, Northerners from all walks of life, are fully aware of the vital importance of self determination for the people of South Sudan as expressed in the CPA and the referendum vote which will take place on January 9, 2011. At the same time, the people of Southern and Northern Sudan have shared, and will continue to share, strong ties of a common history, the many generations of inter-marriages and shared ethnicity, family relations, common culture and attitudes, religious diversity, livelihoods, and impact they have had on each other's lives. We believe that the bonds between the people of South Sudan and the people of the

broader North still hold strong beneath all the rivalry and aggression demonstrated through the years by the blind military and political power of the North, which led to such pain and destruction in the South. These ties must be revealed, celebrated, empowered and tended by the people of the North and the South. We believe that the Sudanese people, regardless of whether the people of the South choose secession or unity, are destined to seek solidarity and support from each other in both the long and the short term.

We, the signatories of this letter, strongly call upon both current governments in the North and the South not to compromise the safety, security and rights of Southern and Northern Sudanese citizens residing in the North or in the South and along the putative borders, whatever the outcome of the referendum. Southern and Northern populations in both parts should be allowed to hold dual citizenship in case of secession. Their ease of movement, residence, labour and property ownership, in addition to freedom of religion and conscience, should be guaranteed and receive support from the two entities. Acts of aggression against the people of Sudan on grounds simply of place of residence, religion and ethnicity will lead to escalation of conflict and further unrest. We, in the South and the North, must be vigilant against any such occurrence.

At this historic moment, we would like to salute those who believe in and champion the vision of a New Sudan: those Sudanese citizens from across all the Sudanese peoples who worked together shoulder to shoulder, enlightening and empowering against all forms of marginalization. We, the signatories below would like to salute those of us, from North and South, who contributed to the struggle tirelessly teaching all of us lessons on looking and acting beyond race, tribe, religion, gender, class and culture.

Dear brothers and sisters of South Sudan

We urge you to take this historic momentum of self determination as an opportunity to learn from the devastating mistakes made by Northern governments. We hope, in the event of your choosing independence, that you will also choose democracy over repression, embrace diversity over division, defend human rights and justice over abuses, empower transparency and accountability over corruption and nepotism, and promote equality between men and women over discrimination. As we have learned through our long shared history, if our leaders had chosen to follow a different path of equality, justice and democracy the country could have avoided decades of bloodshed and devastation.

As the signatories below, we Northerners are looking forward to the conduct of a peaceful referendum and accepting its results whatever its outcome. The peaceful exercise of the democratic right of self determination is an important lesson for us as Northern Sudanese as we are called to continue the struggle for liberation towards peace, justice and democracy in the broader North. The peaceful completion of the South Sudan self determination process is a critical transformational moment therefore not just in the history of the people of Southern Sudan but also for the people of the different regions of the Sudan.

Finally, we draw the attention of all concerned stakeholders, both Sudanese and friends of Sudan, to the importance of investing in the re- creation of the relationship between the people of the North and the South. There must be a commitment to work with communities and civil society to promote peaceful coexistence on the terms and the principles of equality and respect, to empower the voices of the civilians of the North and the South to be freely expressed through their civil society and community institutions, and to give them genuine roles in the process of ensuring the sustainability of peace and security for all the people of Sudan.

Signatories:

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