**South Sudan update – April 2012**

South Sudan is hitting the international news agenda again, thankfully the conflict is not affecting our Global Partners in the South. If you are interested, please see the various articles and links below...

**Despite Fighting, Mbeki Confident Sudan Talks Will Resume** Peter Heinlein | Addis Ababa | April 17, 2012
Former South African president Thabo Mbeki has expressed confidence that Sudan and South Sudan will return to the negotiating table to get themselves out of what he calls "this state of war." Mbeki's high-level mediation panel is standing by to resume talks that broke off as fighting escalated.

Mbeki says he is sure the African Union mediation panel heads will bring Sudan and South Sudan back together for talks.

A senior Sudanese lawmaker was earlier quoted as saying there was no room for diplomacy following the south's capture of the Heglig oil center. Member of Parliament Rabie Abdelati Obeid said the two countries are effectively at war.

Mbeki Tuesday brushed aside the lawmaker's comments, saying a resumption of negotiations is the only option.  He conceded, however, that border hostilities have escalated to the highest point since the two countries split nine months ago. "It's very very unfortunate that they have got themselves in this state of war.  It's very unfortunate. It doesn't help either country.  There's not a problem between the two countries that cannot be resolved through negotiations," he said.

The African Union expressed grave concern late Tuesday at what it called the "prevailing logic of war."  A press release called for immediate steps to ease tensions, and urged both countries to adopt a non-binding security centerline for the border. A knowledgeable source on border issues says a centerline would place Heglig firmly in the north, although South Sudan claims it is disputed territory.

Mbeki says the key to resuming the talks is for South Sudan to end its occupation of Heglig, something the south's president, Salva Kiir, has said will not happen. "The statement I had originally heard from Khartoum was they were saying they would not engage in those negotiations until South Sudan pulls out of Heglig.  That must happen fast.  And it's only after that they will engage in negotiations," he said.

Mbeki says a solution must be found because neither country, nor the people facing starvation, could afford a protracted all-out war. "They've created a problem for both of themselves, but they've also created a problem for the region and for the continent as a whole, which is why the African Union was very quick to issue a public statement to indicate what the African continent believes needs to be done to end the fighting and to ensure that the two sides come back into a  course of negotiations, which I'm sure will happen," he said.

Before the capture of Heglig, Mbeki's mediation panel had struggled in vain for months to find solutions to several bitter disputes that could not be settled before the south's independence. With lower level talks deadlocked, the panel was hoping to bring together the two presidents, Sudan's Omar al-Bashir and South Sudan's Salva Kiir, for a face-to-face meeting early this month.  But powerful interests in Khartoum strongly opposed the idea, and the plan collapsed as border hostilities escalated.

**UN chief in South Sudan deplores SAF’s bombing of civilians**
April 17, 2012 (JUBA)- The head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on Tuesday expressed disappointment and concerns about Sudan Armed Forces’ (SAF) continued aerial bombardment of areas populated by civilians in Unity and Warrap states.

The top UN representative in the country in a statement released on Tuesday reminded the two parties engaging in hostilities of the Security Council resolution 1996 (2011) that mandates UNMISS to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

"The loss of civilian lives as a result of indiscriminate bombings in Bentiu and Mayom is unacceptable," said Hilde Johnson, UNMISS Special Representative to the Secretary-General.

"It is the responsibility of the parties to hostilities to respect the physical integrity of civilians and their right to live without fear of displacement," she added.

Johnson said over the weekend that UNMISS confirmed several bombings including five bombs that were dropped in Mayom where a UN Mission county support base was hit. As a result of these bombings eight civilians were killed and 22 injured.

"I call on both parties to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law, protect civilians and guarantee the safety of international aid organizations and United Nations personnel and assets," said Johnson.

SAF spokesperson Al-Sawarmi Khalid Sa’ad denied any involvement in bombing outside its borders and insisted that it is focused on trying to retake Heglig region which was taken over by South Sudan’s army last week.

The violence flare-up has raised fears of a return to all-out war. More than two million people died in Sudan’s 1983-2005 civil war, one of the longest in Africa.

**Terror in Sudan - Nuba Mountains** by  Aidan Hartley, 17/04/12

FYI the complete film's up on youtube -- and is easier to watch than the Channel 4 link:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vINh63Aeafg>

You can also watch the whole documentary of Terror in Sudan at:
<http://watchdocumentary.com/watch/terror-in-sudan-video_ad67b2d05.html>

You can also watch it at the Channel 4 website -- which also has other pages to read -- here:
<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/unreported-world/episode-guide/series-2012/episode-1>

There's an article on Huffington Post:
<http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/blackberry/p.html?id=1421327>

... And in The Mail on Sunday's magazine Live:
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-2125043/George-Clooney-arrested-Washington-war-crimes-Sudan-got-you.html?ITO=1490>

Finally another link that may interest you from Aljazeera
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2012/04/2012488184830120.html>

In all, apart from the documentary, since mid-March there has been three significant pieces on Channel 4 TV's national news about the situation in the Nuba Mountains.

Finally, some really good news... The attached story from Yei...Top prize for Aligo at Ljverpool and photo attached is very encouraging. Although it still has to be confirmed, we are hopeful that Bishop Hilary and Mama Joyce will be visiting in September 2012. A joint team from Down and Dromore Diocese and Albany Diocese , USA, is planning on visiting Maridi Diocese in October 2012. Please continue to pray for the fluid situation in South Sudan and for the coming visits.

***David Gough, Partnership Co-ordinator, CMSI***