

**Statement of Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders in Yei
on the current situation in Yei River State.
19th February 2019.**

“Blessed are the Peace Makers,” (Mathew 5: 9).

We Member Churches of South Sudan Council of Churches and the Muslim Religious Leaders met on 19th February 2019 to analyze the political and military environment affecting the citizens of South Sudan living in Yei town and those heavily affected in the rural communities in Yei River State. We have witnessed the sad experiences of looting of properties like of Tabita Yangi in Morsak, 19 head of cattle in Jombu, 32 head of cattle in Yari and 2 head of cattle at Undukori.

While brutal killings and chopping of people like Michael Bidali Justin at Sopiri-Kele Yei County, lay reader Samson Kujo at Yari, Moses Munguchi and Bida Lo-Bullen at 11 Miles in Mugwo County, Dure George in Mudeba, two other men were chopped at Abegi along Lasu road where one died and the other survived after receiving treatment in Yei State Hospital. The three people chopped above were from Otego County, while Denis Lasu was killed in Girim, Mukaya County. Raping of 13 women and girls was reported by reliable sources from November 2018, through February 2019: 7 of them girls under age and 6 of them old women. Subsequently over 8,000 people were displaced into Yei town. The experience of the past like fear, loss of hope, trauma and feelings of insecurity seem to recur.

Security situation, dire humanitarian situation, political unrest and displacement of civilians from areas of Otego, Mugwo, Tore, Mukaya, Kupera, Lujulo, Morobo and Lainya counties are the events of the day. The response to all these is insignificant and due to the situation many displaced children do not have access to education.

People are being forced to flee from their villages and sources of livelihood and this is increasing food insecurity for vulnerable groups like children, women and lactating mothers. The displaced communities suffered the evil of looting their livelihood and other property. Food that could not be transported after looting was burnt off. These are inhuman acts of mistreatment of innocent civilians in the rural areas.

We denounce such barbaric acts of humiliation of civilians and destruction of their properties. We call on those who perpetuate these atrocities to cease with immediate effect. The Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders in Yei raise an alarm on the humanitarian situation of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees from refugee camps and the host communities whose livelihood ceased since July 2016 when the crisis hit Yei town hard and wide.

In their pursuit for lasting peace in the Republic of South Sudan, we the Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders in Yei urgently call for a halt and accountability on the atrocities being committed; we also call upon those entrusted with responsibility of protecting civilian lives to do so.

Our recommendation is based on renewed efforts and commitment on the Revitalized Peace Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) based on the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). We recommend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the Troika Countries: Norway, United Kingdom and the United States of America to encourage dialogue with other armed opposition groups that did not sign the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

We recommend government and armed groups to control their forces. We also recommend the army and civilians to have a good relationship. We stand as Religious Leaders in Yei for Dialogue as means for resolving political differences.

Human life is a precious gift from God and deserves to be cared for by all. The time to act is now! The Church and the Muslim Religious Leaders remain focused on sustainable peace, unity in diversity of the people of South Sudan and advocate for those whose needs are silently ignored.

The resilience and firm stand of the people of Yei together with their hope in God is to promote peace, unity and national stability in the Republic of South Sudan. We have a moral obligation to pray unceasingly for restoration of lasting peace in South Sudan and encourage our partners to stand with us in Yei River State at this time of crisis.

Signed on Tuesday, 19th February 2019, by the Church and Muslim Religious Leaders in Yei:

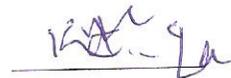
+ Erkolano Lodu Tombe, Catholic Bishop of Yei



+ Hilary Luete Adeba, Bishop of ECSS Diocese of Yei



Sheikh Ali Moga, Secretary General Islamic Council Yei River State



Pastor Stephen Dada, Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCSS)



Pastor Ezra Lasuba, Deputy Overseer, Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC)



Pastor Silvano Iyinya, Africa Inland Church (AIC)

