



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

---

SDIR • NUMBER 055 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2015**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Scott Reid**



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

•(1310)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)):** Order, please.

Today is February 17, 2015, and this is the 55th meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[English]

We are televised today and we have with us two witnesses. In person, we have Henry Odwar, who is a former member of the National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan. By teleconference from Nebraska, we have Sophia Gai, who is also a former member of the National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan.

I've spoken to the two witnesses, and we've agreed that we will commence with remarks from Mr. Odwar. When he has completed, we will have remarks from Ms. Gai. I encourage both of our witnesses to please keep their remarks within a five-to-seven-minute window in order to allow the longest possible time for questions and answers.

Mr. Odwar, please feel free to begin.

**Hon. Henry Odwar (Former Member of the National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and the committee, for having me here today.

I first came to Canada in 1984 as a landed immigrant, and the destination was Winnipeg, Manitoba. People were so surprised, even shocked, as to why I chose to go to Winnipeg. I did not know why, but a few months later, I knew why. Winnipeg is the coldest city that I have ever been to.

I went to the University of Manitoba to obtain my master's in geophysics and I worked for geophysical companies here in Canada until 2005 when a peace agreement was signed between the then rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Government of Sudan in Khartoum. I was called by the people who wanted me to represent them in Parliament. By then, MPs were appointed as part of the agreement of the CPA. I willingly accepted. I left my job and my family in order to go and contribute. In a sense, in the African context, you contribute back to the village that grew you.

When I went back to South Sudan, I served on the committee of energy and mining and, in 2010, I became the chairman of that committee. I was chairman of that committee until July of last year. As per the rules, somebody had to take over, and I still continued to work with that committee. But as of November 16, 2014, I had to leave South Sudan because I couldn't stomach any more what is taking place in South Sudan today.

I went there with the understanding that there was promise for people who had suffered for so many years and that, through their suffering, they must have learned something in order to make sure that we went forward as a united country full of promise. South Sudan is very rich in the real sense of the word. We are endowed with minerals, with fertile soils, and other natural resources. But since 2005, we have squandered some of the resources that we have earned, especially through oil exploitation. Not a single penny is spent in taking services to the very people who should be served. Most of these resources are squandered through corruption, through government contracts that are never advertised, and you name it. Then the system of governance encourages dictatorship. One would like to stay in chair and govern. That is not delivered. If you question, you become an enemy.

In the parliament that I served, the judiciary has become almost an office or offices in the presidency. Nothing is passed in parliament if the president doesn't say okay. If we pass an appropriation bill for the annual budget, nobody implements it. Budgetary items are spent through sticker notes. Mr. Minister, could you approve this money for such a project?

•(1315)

I think I'm not going to talk much, but rather wait for your questions to explain more of this.

Finally, the peace process in Addis is likely to go nowhere for one single reason: you cannot reach a peace deal without looking into the root causes of the current conflict in South Sudan. This has been made worse by the African Union not releasing the commission report of General Obasanjo. This is the report that would tell the whole world what happened. This is a report that will tell the whole world what conditions the commission has come up with in order to prevent future genocides from happening in South Sudan.

Thank you very much for this time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go now to our second witness.

Ms. Gai, please feel free to begin.

**Hon. Sophia Gai (Former Member of the National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan, As an Individual):**

Thank you very much. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the honourable chairman of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights and honourable members of the subcommittee.

To be very brief, this is my first time in the West. I was born in South Sudan and grew up there during the fragile time when we had the civil war with the north. After the CPA was signed in 2005, I had the opportunity to work in the SPLM party, which was the main ruling party, for nearly four years, until we gained our independence in 2011. I then went with the ticket for presidential nominee to serve our nation in the Parliament.

From that time, 2011, up to last year, I worked as a member of Parliament in a committee for water and irrigation. I also served the women's parliamentary caucus as their secretary-general. With that brief story of who I am, let me add that I came to the U.S. during those difficult times. I managed to come to the U.S. to visit my family, who came here many years back because of the war with the north.

I also escaped death. I have lost, in this current war, very dear people: my two uncles plus the watchman who was guarding our house. I narrowly escaped death. On the night of the 14th, I was smuggled out of the country by some very dear friends in the security unit, who advised that we should get away from Juba because of the insecurity. I have to thank that person, because he came very late at night to remove me from the country. From that time on, December 14, 2013, I did not go back. I heard later on that on the 15th was the killing that robbed our dear ones of their lives.

I will not deal very much with the genesis of the conflict and what happened, because many of you are aware of what happened in regard to the SPLM conflict and the issue that has affected our country, both in the party and in the government. What I want to say is that what happened was not a coup. Nobody planned a coup; it was just a conflict regarding reform. After we gained our independence, business continued as usual, but services were not delivered to our people and we became poor, to the extent that our family survived on less than a dollar a day.

We tried somebody like Dr. Riek and other SPLM leaders. They wanted reform to happen and to start in the party that was in charge of the country. Given that the party has not honoured and fulfilled the dreams and aspirations of the people of South Sudan and has also not honoured continuing with its regulations and reform issues as promised, I would like to say that this issue has erupted in the country.

But before the war that killed thousands of our loved ones, there had been so many things. In 2010, different communities were targeted. Maybe some of you know that gross violations were very prominent then. There was a lot of inter-tribal war and conflict. Somebody like George Athor lost his life, and also his community was targeted; then later the Murle in Jonglei under Yau Yau. Yau Yau fell; he contested and succeeded in election to the legislative assembly of the state, but he was denied that, and more than 4,000 families were affected by that one.

You'll find that the Tiits in Western Bahr el Ghazal were also targeted, and a number of their family were killed by the security forces of the government.

● (1320)

You come to the Upper Nile and the Shilluk communities. They were also targeted because of Dr. Lam Akol, who contested and stood against the president in the 2010 election. Then finally you have the Nuer who were targeted in 2013, in big numbers. The story is there. There were house to house searches. I've lost even my closest people; some actually died at that particular time.

I wanted to say that the war that has happened was not a tribal war. It is not a tribal war. The government wants to do its best. President Salva is good at making it look like it is a tribal war. Yet it is not. You've seen very clearly that there are Dinkas who are with Dr. Riek, including the child of the late Dr. Garang, who is the founding father of our nation. He is a Dinka and he is with Dr. Riek.

You'll find on some social camps that Lueth has three ministers who are serving with him. So the issue is not between the Nuer and the Dinka. Our communities have existed and have lived together ever since we were in South Sudan.

The conflict is about a group that has formed themselves to loot the country, to take every resource of the country at the expense of others. And that's the reality. You will see the decision-making level builds the group.... You will find that there is a Dinka counsel of elders, at the second layer of decision-makers, then the Warrap, the state where the president comes from, and then the last level of decision-making is a security organization that is behind doors. We in the parliament are there, as the Honourable Odwar has just said. We are there. We are toothless. We cannot make anybody accountable. Corruption is permanent. All of you are aware that the government somehow said there were about 75 government officials who had looted the country.

With that, I would like to say that our country has fallen into the wrong hands. People before the liberation said that we would get the services we developed because it's the human right of every human being, wherever you are born. You grow up, you develop your country, you have a better life for your families and your children, and when your time is gone to live, well, you go, knowing in your mind that you have peace in that country and your children will continue.

We have a lot of resources. For the last nine to ten years now we have over \$20 billion U.S. that have been received from the oil money. In regard to that, there are no services. School children are still lining up under trees in the villages. If you go to the clinics, the clinics are not there. No medicine. Medical personnel are not there. Clinics are very far away. The roads are pathetic. The only road that we have was constructed by USAID, the Nimule Road. This is the only tarmac road that we have in South Sudan. And that money was not our money.

We have a lot of concerns, a lot of issues that have affected us, including the corruption and the human rights violations. The human rights violations have gone to that extreme because during those days in Juba, particularly, that's where the world has seen what has happened in South Sudan. Gross violations have been counted. Children have been killed. Women, elderly, disabled, youth. If you are from a particular tribe you are targeted, particularly the Nuer. You will find that the people in the security organization are doing most of those gross violations.

We have very poor foreign policies. Our constitution is still transitional. After nine or ten years, this year, we have not developed a permanent constitution. Our infrastructure is very poor generally and yet we have a lot of money.

With that, I will stop there and give you more opportunity for questions.

Thank you very much.

• (1325)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that.

Colleagues, looking at the clock, I think we will have time for one question from each of you, unless the answers are exceedingly short. I suspect that will be what will happen.

We'll go to Ms. Grewal first.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Odwar, and Ms. Gai. Thank you very much for coming before the committee today. Human rights abuses are horrendous wherever they occur and Canada remains committed to the peace process around the globe and standing up for the human rights of the oppressed. The civil war in Sudan has seen unfortunate atrocities and your testimony has shed light on the situation on the ground.

Mr. Odwar, you stated this past November when you joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army in opposition that foreign troops should withdraw from South Sudan and return to their respective countries to protect their own people instead of the Sudanese. However, as the UN peacekeeping troops leave, up to 4,000 in recent months, violence has grown worse. The BBC, for example, reports the rape of almost 200 women and children last October. Based on this account, do you continue to stand by your previous statement and if so, what is South Sudan doing to protect its people from harm?

• (1330)

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** My reference to the withdrawal of foreign troops was specifically for the Ugandans, for the Rwandese, other than those who are serving in the UN, and for the M23. This is a guerrilla movement that is fighting in eastern Congo against the government in Kinshasa. These people have teamed up to corrupt the government of Salva Kiir.

Initially, Uganda came with the sense that they were invited by Salva Kiir. I think any sovereign nation has the right to do that, but when they now come and take part in fighting with the government troops, I think that is questionable, because they now take part in inflicting pain on innocent South Sudanese.

I also believe that Uganda, especially, is in South Sudan for economic reasons. I know for sure that by February Salim Saleh, the

brother of Museveni, was awarded \$70 million to supply the SPLA with food items. There is an economic interest there. Last year alone, South Sudan had a trade deficit of half a billion dollars in favour of Uganda. In South Sudan today all the food that is consumed in the mega-towns comes from Uganda. That's not a bad thing in itself, but if now this economic interest is taken in order to support the government and inflict more damage in the country, I don't think that's acceptable. So my reference was for these foreign troops to leave us alone.

Thank you.

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** Can I add something?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** We also have Sudan militias that are at the border there of the Greater Upper Nile region. You have the JEM, which is the Justice and Equality Movement, members. You have SPLM-N, north, members. You have members of the Tora Bora. All those militias are those who are very active in the Upper Nile state where they are being funded and they are being supported by the Kiir regime to fight.

This is very clear, it was found, in regard to the war in Bentiu, whereby many of the them said they were in Bentiu for the sake of being traders, to sell their things. While all of the people after the war broke ran to UNMISS camps, they themselves were outside. They were soldiers and they were fighting along with the Kiir government. For that reason, many of them lost their lives. Just to tell you, the allied forces are really damaging, and beside the Ugandans, they have used cluster bombs on our people. This is not something that we were expecting because cluster bombs are banned all over the world, but even the UN will support that there were clusters bombs used in Bor county.

Just to reinforce what Henry was saying, this conflict would have come to an end if there had not been any support from Uganda and the militias in north Sudan. We would have talked and we would have been clear, like in our own homes. You cannot fight in your own home and run to your neighbour to bring somebody who will come to add more fuel in the fight, when the brothers alone are the ones who are fighting inside.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Marston.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Odwar, I want to ask a question regarding the support that Canada supplies.

We've got together with other humanitarian partners and offered shelter kits and non-food items to 500,000 of the more vulnerable people, the returnees, increased access to emergency water, and a number of things such as sanitation and hygiene that are the obvious ones that we're trying to reach out on.

How effective do you see those programs being from the perspective of actually getting aid delivered to the points where it is needed?

•(1335)

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** We are very grateful to Canada on a personal level and at the national level in South Sudan.

I know people who are from Canada, especially with Plan Canada—formerly we had CIDA, which I think is a different name now—who came to build capacity, say for example with the ministry of mining and energy where at the grassroots level they were drilling boreholes.

I know Plan Canada built a community college to give training to young people in order to earn livelihoods. Regarding retinitis, the aid that Canada gives through these NGOs reaches the ground level. But if it is government-to-government aid, I don't know. In the budget of parliament, nothing is shown as this being aid from such a country.

I have my doubts as to the government-to-government kind of assistance, but the government assistance through NGOs definitely reaches the ground.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** You mentioned the removal of other forces from other African countries. If that were to occur, what do you think are the chances of reconciliation in this country?

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** I think it will hasten the government to negotiate in good faith because apparently, it has the backing of Uganda. As of the end of January, 7,000 Ugandans entered near Juba at a place called Nesitu. There are about 16,000 Ugandan troops now in South Sudan.

With that muscle power, Kiir has no incentive to talk peace. If these troops were not there, I think some compromise would be reached because currently the rebels and the former detainees are the ones coming with an agenda for reform and what should be done.

But the government goes through all of this without a piece of paper saying what they are offering because they say they agreed to meet the group and they should come with what they want to see changed. The government stands for the status quo.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have time for one more question.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** I'll pass my time, so my colleague can get a good shot in.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr. Odwar and Ms. Gai, I appreciate your testimony.

If I heard your testimony correctly, Mr. Odwar, you mentioned that many of the southern villages, or maybe all of the villages, were being supplied food from a sole-source contract of \$7 million to Uganda. Yet, of all the great arable land that is in South Sudan, only 4.2% of it is actually farmed.

Why is that? Why is such a large swath of land not being farmed?

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** Not all of South Sudan is not being farmed. The centre of the country is mainly a flat plain, and it's affected by flood waters, but near the borders of Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, these are mainly highlands, with an altitude of maybe 800 metres and above, and this is where most of the farming takes place.

Most of the farming is for subsistence. A family prepares a small plot, enough grain for the family. Government has not come up with the policies to encourage people to farm to create some surplus, to earn money from that surplus, and maybe send kids to school. Most of the farming that is done is for personal use, not for commerce. But Uganda has understood that if you work hard, you will earn some money, and that's why in most towns that is what Uganda is supplying. In the rural areas, many people farm for themselves and they are self-sufficient. But the donor food is going to the conflict areas because they don't have the time to cultivate. Most of the time they are on the move or in detention camps. If you go to Malakal, Juba, and Wau and you find these IDPs—internally displaced persons—they don't even have the luxury of going to till the land outside the camps. I think most of the food and assistance goes to people who have been displaced.

•(1340)

**Mr. David Sweet:** You mentioned the commission report that's being withheld, and you said that long-term peace won't be established without getting to the root causes of the conflict. I'm wondering if you might want to identify, holding the position that you've held and knowing your country as well as you do, what you think some of those root causes are that need to be dealt with by all parties for a sustainable peace.

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** I think the AU was looking in the right direction when they constituted the committee led by General Obasanjo. They have terms of reference to look into the causes of the current conflict. This goes way back, even before the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. After that, when the SPLM came into existence, within that period of 1983 to 2005 when the CPA was concluded, atrocities were committed.

First, the initiators of that guerrilla war were people like Gai Tut and Akwot Atem. These people died in the circumstances of John Garang, and whole villages were wiped out. When Riek Machar mutinied in Nasir, Nuer officers were killed, and then there was a retaliation in which the people of Bor, the Dinka Bor, were almost wiped out. Nothing was done. When Riek and Garang reconciled, there was no looking into what caused those atrocities, in order to move forward. When we concluded the CPA, there was nothing akin to what happened in South Africa when they constituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Everything was swept under the rug. In my own opinion, what happened on December 15, 2013 was not a coup but an attempt to eliminate Riek and his accomplices because of what had happened in the past. The killings that took place from door to door, in my own opinion, were retaliation for what they believed the Nuer did to the Dinkas in Bor.

If this commission of the AU, mandated through all the terms of reference to look into what caused this conflict and into past events, is helped to hide the truth, and if any quasi-peace is reached, the same problems will arise in the future.

There are ethnic tensions. There is dominance by a particular tribe in government. There is corruption that benefits a particular ethnic group. There is military domination by particular ethnic groups. Employment is based on nepotism. And there are so many other grievances: land grabbing, for example, moving cattle onto the land of people who are used to arable farming, atrocities being committed with impunity, police officers being killed. Up to now, nobody has been brought to book, and there are so many others. If these are not looked into deeply and solutions are not arrived at to prevent future problems, then I believe that whatever is going to be agreed on as peace will not work down the road.

• (1345)

**The Chair:** All right.

Thank you.

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** I would like to also add something, as well.

We know that for any system to work there are three pillars of governance: the executive, the judiciary, and the parliament. You will find that the domination, which the Honourable Odwar has just mentioned, is the reality. The domination is basically the greater Bahr el Ghazal leaving the greater Upper Nile and greater Equatorians out. I wanted to specify it so that you are very clear what we are talking about.

For example the president of the Republic of South Sudan is President Salva Kiir, who comes from the Dinka people. You go to the treasury, which is the Bank of South Sudan, and it is held by a Dinka from his tribe and from his state. You go to internal security and the minister is also from his tribe and from his state. You go to immigration and customs, the same. You go to the National Security and all the organized forces are all held by the Dinka, who come from any part of Bahr el Ghazal or from Warrap. You go to the minister of finance and he's a Dinka from Bahr el Ghazal. You go to the minister of mining and energy and he's a Dinka. You go to the chief of the general staff and he's a Dinka. You go to the judiciary and he's a Dinka. All of them are either from his state, the Warrap, or the greater Bahr el Ghazal. Others are left outside with the institutions that are not very strong. That is the thing that brought all these problems.

Coming to the government, the government is weak. In the public service for example the appointment is that of who you know and not what qualifications you have within our government.

In the economic sector there is no transparency. There is no accountability in regard to the national budget. You'll find that security takes the bulk of our national budget, yet the insecurity issues are prominent and people are dying. There is no lack of democracy in the parties and that is what brought the dictatorship. We view Kiir as a dictator because he is not open and he doesn't want a democracy.

You know the history of the SPLM. The SPLM came about as a result of the voluntary service of the South Sudanese who wanted to liberate themselves from the north. There is a need to transform and educate, and make the party conventional so that it is democratic. The formation of other parties also should be encouraged so that multipartisanship is real in South Sudan.

All those things aggravated the root causes of the problem that is happening within South Sudan.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Cotler, please.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** I would like to take up exactly where both comments left off and that is: what role can you foresee for Canada, which has been largely involved in international development assistance and the like? The real issues, as you've pointed out, are issues of corruption and accountability, of impunity, and of tribal dominance. I'm wondering what role might we be able as parliamentarians to assist with in respect to the governance process, the impunity issues, and the tribal dominance.

• (1350)

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** Let me come in.

First of all, the Canadian government has helped, like what Honourable Odwar has just said. I would just add to that you have actually helped us a lot. The role that you can play is through your embassy in Juba. That embassy does not take into account that the other people who are not part of the government are not reached. I want the Canadian government to have a type of ambassador, an ambassador who can be seated where the peace talks are so that you have more views from the other people who are non-government, who are not within the government. With that it will also help you to have a clear vision of all these activities that we are talking about in regard to reforms so that you have different views, including the views of Dr. Riek, where you can meet him personally and he talks to you more.

I want the committee to also do a special visit. The UNMISS camps, the support that you may have been giving the UN in terms of humanitarian assistance, is good but if the committee has the opportunity to travel to Juba, they should go visit the situation, and see what the situation is really like. Then you see the witnesses who are there. If you do not travel to Bentiu or the Upper Nile...but people in Juba, you can access them and see them.

I would also encourage you to do that because the situation in Juba is very pathetic. For one year now the Nuer community children have not gone to school. But if Canada can really stretch its hands to also open ... an opportunity so that at least those who are really suffering.... Even children who are there, some of them have lost their parents. It's unfortunate that some of those children now don't have a future. Many of them are just ending up on the streets of Juba and some of them are cleaning shoes for people because they don't have parents and they don't have food to eat. It's certainly an opportunity again to be open so that at least they are given another opportunity to see life in a different way. They are all traumatized. They have lost their parents. Nobody is taking care of them. Many of those children, you see them in Juba town, in UNMISS camps in the thousands. If there's any settlement opportunity, that would be good. It's not only in Juba, you can also visit the Ethiopian border where the refugees are. You can also visit Uganda where the refugees are so that you have an extensive view of how the war has affected the South Sudanese families, individuals, or other communities.

I want to also suggest that maybe you can support women's participation because you see, for us women, we feel like when war is happening we are not told, and that's why thousands of them died in the massacre because they were not informed. If they knew there would be something like that, some of them would have run away, you see, or protected themselves in a different way, so that at least they would still be alive.

With that we come to the issue of federalism. Canada is one example that is having a government system and that is an area you can actually help us understand, how the federal system works, because that is the call of our people. We want to use it so that people don't concentrate, don't come and immigrate in one area, and a situation like what has happened in Juba repeats itself. But your system will be in South Sudan. You can go, live in your village and yet have access to resources and then you have a livelihood.

These are some of the things that I can recommend, and that you have a visit also to the chairman of the SPLM-in-Opposition to hear more and get more insight. But the most important thing is that you have a special envoy who will sit where the peace talks are taking place, so that you have an extensive view, views that are talked about by different negotiators.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cotler.

We're right at five minutes, the amount of time we have for each person. I apologize for that.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** It's a brief question, maybe somebody else might even want to take it on.

**The Chair:** Yes, the problem is, does it invite a brief answer?

• (1355)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** I hope so. Because it's something that we have not talked about. What is the role of the al-Bashir Sudanese government in all of this? We know about their attacks on the Nuba mount people, etc. I'm just wondering what role they play in all this?

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** Just before I come to that, let me also add to what Sophia has just given. What she talked about is short-term solutions, but for South Sudan to really come to the fold of what is internationally accepted, I think possibly Canada, through the UN and other sources, should pressure the AU to release Obasanjo's report, because that will be the basis of how people will reconcile and move on.

Second, an arms embargo is an incentive for people to talk peace because currently, as long as they receive bullets and bombs, they will want to win. That will just perpetuate the problem. I think using the UN and other institutions, especially the UN, to pressure, to have an arms embargo on both sides will help us come together. Because if people are fighting and then you give them sticks, they think they can get more sticks in order to win.

What is the role of Bashir? I think Bashir is somebody who is probably smiling in an "I told you" kind of way. Currently Bashir is countering what Museveni is doing. Museveni is supporting the government and al-Bashir is on the side of the rebels. If this situation is not resolved, it is going to draw more regional powers into the conflict. Then you are looking at Somalia or I don't know, worse.

If aliens from planet X were to come and see the situation in South Sudan, they would say, "Look at these humans." They are not going to say "Look at these Sudanese" or Africans or anything. I think Canada has a moral obligation, one way or another, with what Sophia has said and what I've said, to help out together with other nations.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hillyer, please.

**Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC):** Sophia, you wanted to emphasize the fact that this was not a tribal war. I would just like you to comment on that. First, why is it so important to distinguish that fact, that it is not a tribal war? Second, why do others try to portray it as such, if it's not a tribal war?

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** I did emphasize that this is not a tribal war because other tribes here were also affected. As I mentioned to you earlier, the sequence started with the Dinka themselves. The Dinka Ngok were targeted, the Murle were targeted, the Shilluk were targeted, the Fartit were targeted, and now the Nuer. You can see the sequence of targeted groups. They are not targeted because they come from that group. They are targeted because somebody in that group has an eye to be the next president. That is the issue that has become very clear.

As I talk to you now, a month ago already, two weeks ago, there has been a movement that is rising in greater Equatoria. They have taken arms against Salva Kiir because of the situation that we are talking about. President Kiir with his group wanted to water down the main issues to look at this conflict as a tribal one so that no others can come in.

For example, if it is truly a tribal war, then none of the world's nations will be part of that because they will see it as people who fight and then resolve their own issues. That's the view that they want to introduce. The issue is not a tribal war. The issue is that President Kiir becomes a dictator, and he doesn't want any reforms to happen in the country—and yet, he is not doing anything to make South Sudan move forward. They have failed in the party and in the government.

The issue of South Sudan is not a tribal war. That's why in both camps you see the Dinkas are in with Riek and the Nuer are also with Salva Kiir. If it were clearly a tribal war, would you want to be with the other person who is fighting your people? Of course not. You would have to stand with your own people. This is what I can say in brief.

• (1400)

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** If I may, I would add that what started on December 15, 2013 was a tribal conflict where the Nuer were massacred in Juba. The Nuer then took retaliatory action to commit atrocities in Bor, Malakal, and Bentiu. This part of the conflict was initially tribal.



Now, a good number of South Sudanese are looking at this as an opportunity to make changes in Juba. Many more tribes are joining in opposition to what is now seen as a tribal government in Juba. If you saw the concentration of wealth, all the billions that we have realized today, and if you went to Juba and saw the dollars being sold in the streets, you would identify it to be only one ethnic group. If you looked at the security sector, most of the important positions are from the same ethnic group. If you looked at the judiciary, where decisions are made in terms of criminal activities, constitutional matters, and so forth, it is one ethnic group.

This is seen by many South Sudanese as not a government that is representative to take the country forward. What initially happened as a tribal conflict has now transformed into a national movement to have changes in Juba.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Gai.

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** I want to clarify something.

What happened in Bor, to be very frank, did not target the Dinka, the civilians. In fact, the civilians managed to escape. What happened is that, of those who died in Bor, the Dinka for example, many of them died in the crossfire. They were not targeted. That's why I insist this war was not a tribal war.

It was the same thing in Bentiu. The Dinkas were never targeted as Dinkas. You'll see that even within Bor itself, when the Lou Nuer came to rescue Dr. Riek, for example, there were Dinkas who were in Bor, and they did not touch them.

In Malakal, what happened is that when the Dinka from Baliat saw that the White Army was moving towards Malakal, they shot them in boats. That's why the revenge came.

Basically, the SPLM-in-Opposition did not target any civilians. If Dinka died—and that's why the number of the Dinkas who were killed in Bor or in Malakal are less, because many of them were not targeted—it was the crossfire. They were fighting with the troops of Kiir and many of them died as a result of crossfire. There was not any intention of killing them. I would say that they just want to water down this conflict to make it look like a tribal war, so that the real issues are not discussed.

But I myself come from the Nuer tribe. I told you in my introduction that I've lost two uncles in my own house. I had the guts to see to it that even if they died, their blood would transform the country.

Any benefit is very hard. I myself cannot hate the Dinkas. I will not hate the Dinkas, but I can hate the president who ordered a separate army to be trained outside the SPLA to target my own community, including me. I could have been dead by now. So it's not the Dinkas. Not all of the Dinkas are bad. It is the system that Mr. Kiir put in place to target the Nuer, to water down the issue. That's what I want to clarify.

Thank you.

• (1405)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Benskin.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Thank you to both Ms. Gai and Mr. Odwar for your presence here.

I had the fortune of visiting South Sudan in January of 2012 with the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association. In fact I believe we were the first Canadian parliamentary delegation to visit the country after its independence and one of the first international delegations.

Over and above being struck by just what wasn't there in Juba—and I don't mean that with any disrespect—I was struck by the hope that emanated from the individuals. We met with representatives of the media, we went out to Wau and met people who were taking advantage of some of the initiatives that were offered to them through CIDA, especially women's organizations out in that area in terms of developing means to support themselves.

We left with many concerns after meeting with many of the parliamentarians, but we hoped it was the beginning of a dialogue and cooperation on a parliamentary level between Canada and South Sudan, so I'm actually quite saddened to hear of what is going on some three years later.

One of the things that you touched on, sir, was that one of the roles Canada can play is in helping shape an understanding of governance in South Sudan, and I would like you to comment on that a little further with this thought in mind. In our introduction, I introduced myself as a member of the official opposition at the time. There were looks of surprise on the parliamentarians' faces in South Sudan, and the discussions that I had after that with them were in terms of “What does that mean, the official opposition? What is your function?” One of the parliamentarians asked me, “Why aren't you dead?” It was really eye-opening.

So in terms of how Canada could help in governance, can you expand on that? Both of you actually can expand on how we might be able to help in that way.

**Hon. Henry Odwar:** Actually, when you came for that visit, I shook your hand. We had that cocktail party at the embassy. We have met before.

Governance in South Sudan is one of those areas that requires total transformation. When the SPLM came from the bush, they continued with the mentality that the commander-in-chief is the first and the last in terms of what should be done. No chance is given to anybody to contribute.

When we took over government, it's always the president. Even when we debate in parliament, are you for the president or not? Are you for us or not? Everything is centred on the presidency. Whatever institutions we have, they don't matter. There is always a directive that comes from above. Parliament has become a rubber stamp. The judiciary cannot make independent judgements without a word from the presidency.

If there is an appropriation that the ministry of finance has to effect, the final say at the writing of the cheque will be at J1, at the office of the president.

I think there are many lessons that South Sudan can learn from Canada, particularly institutional reforms. I remember that very well through an NGO in Canada. They wanted to come and first of all, create an inventory of the ministry of mining and energy. Who are the qualified personnel there? What training do they want? The government could have done this with all the money that they have, but nothing is done. You are my nephew, you take over that portfolio, and life goes on. If you complain, you are not for them.

In parliament, for example, when we vote, it is by show of hands. Secret ballot is a taboo because they will not see who is for us and who is not for us. I remember sitting as the deputy of a vetting committee. There was a nominee of the president, called Telar. The whole country did not want him to be minister of justice. We were intimidated to vote by show of hands, but we stood our ground. We said that we had to vote by secret ballot. It was 105 to 90-something. But when we voted by secret ballot to vet this person, those who opposed rose to 145 to less than 80. There is power in the secret ballot.

What brought the current conflict in the party was that the president refused the election of party members in offices through secret ballot. He wanted the show of hands, so that he could see who was voting for him or not. If you did not vote for him, you would be out of the party, you would be out of a job and in South Sudan, it's government that employs. There is intimidation. That is not the type of governance that we want in that country.

Regarding federalism, many people want to go to their backyards, so that there is competition among states as to how to run governance so that services are taken to the people.

• (1410)

But this is not what they want in Juba. Everything must be centralized. Of all the resources that we have realized upwards of \$20 billion, almost 20% is spent within the central government. You don't know what they spend it on. I think there is a lot that South Sudan can learn from Canada. I believe through direct institution-to-institution assistance, through NGOs.... Through NGOs, they have done a lot of training for people in South Sudan, and if that continues, I think that will be helpful.

I don't know whether Sophia can add to this.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** This will have to be the concluding comment, unfortunately, of the meeting. Please go ahead.

• (1415)

**Hon. Sophia Gai:** Thank you very much.

The honourable member has mentioned the hope that he has seen in the eyes and aspirations of our people during our independence in 2011. To be very frank, the common man is still hopeful. It's just that we have fallen into this tragic war that has robbed us, that was imposed on the people. The aspirations of common people in South Sudan is that they want to see a better South Sudan. That better South Sudan was the reason that we have gained our independence from the north because the northerners, during those years, were not allowing us to have that freedom so that we could rule ourselves, govern ourselves in that aspect.

For that reason, the call for a federal system is the aspiration of many South Sudanese. Why do we do that? Because it was within the SPLM policy of taking town to villages that has been there before war and after independence. People want to live in their own homes. They want to grow, they want to work hard and see with their own eyes the growth of what is really important in their life.

With that, I would say that the Canadian government can help us with the issue of federalism, the effective system of governance. How are the resources being distributed in a federal system? Do you give the national government...? Or does the national government take all the resources and then distribute them back to the state and the constituencies that are there?

I remember what Honourable Odwar just said. I remember one of the honourable members made a motion in 2012 in the parliament. That motion was about the dollar. You see our dollar today is very low. Tomorrow it's very high and it affects the salaries of individuals who are receiving small amounts of money because as the dollar goes high the market also goes high. So that honourable member requested parliament to call the central bank so that the central bank president could come and explain why the dollar has not been stable. You see, it was a big issue. The groups that are supporting the fluctuation because they have individual banks to sell the dollar.... Some of them are selling the dollar on the streets, as Honourable Odwar has just mentioned. They have seen that they will be accountable to that, and you cannot believe it. They went to the house of that honourable member and they were threatening him to withdraw his motion and they were also bribing him. They brought money and told him that if it was about the money, they would give him this money but he would have to withdraw his motion from parliament. And the guy refused. Later on, it is unfortunate that this honourable member's elder brother was killed during the war. He was targeted. Somebody called his number and said they were coming, and then he disappeared. When he ran away he left his brother, and his brother was murdered right there.

Our country needs a lot of institutional reforms. Our country needs supervision. Our country also needs a hand to be lifted from where it is to the international or regional standards. For example, now we are talking about humanitarian assistance. Yet, the national budget has approved \$500 million for an election that the government has scheduled to take place in June, although now we are hearing that they have cancelled the election but have extended the president's term of office. How do you talk about elections and all this money and yet your people are confined in the camps in the capital city, let alone in the camps that are outside? You see that the government has an issue, and a stable country like Canada can actually help South Sudan to come out from there so that at least we have our independence in reality. We see the system of governance that can take our country forward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you to both of our witnesses for coming here today. You have been very helpful and given very fulsome answers.

I have to end this meeting now because we are substantially past our scheduled end time. Thank you both for being here.

Colleagues, we'll see you on Thursday.

This meeting is adjourned.

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>