

US-backed South Sudanese regime organizing genocidal crimes, UN report finds

By Thomas Gaist
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The South Sudan civil war, which erupted in December 2013, is assuming an increasingly genocidal character, according to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). In the course of the war, both the US-backed government led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and President Salva Kiir, and SPLA opposition faction led by Vice President Riek Machar, have carried out atrocities against civilians.

On February 7, UN experts officially began registering “warning signs for ethnic cleansing” and “indicators for genocide.” The situation is characterized by “massive insecurity” and “large-scale polarization of communities,” the UN found.

The SPLA regime has organized a “scorched earth” campaign and is carrying out “population engineering” through forced relocation of ethnic minorities. Kiir and other top SPLA officials have directly ordered mass killing and property seizures against civilian communities. SPLA members frequently abuse civilians at military checkpoints and during warrantless searches of residential areas.

Barely six years after its secession from the Sudan, a development hailed by Western bourgeois public opinion as a victory for “democracy” and “the self-determination of nations,” South Sudan is experiencing levels of chaos and social breakdown which bring to mind the worst catastrophes of the 20th century.

Three years of civil war have produced widespread famine and a massive refugee crisis. Some 1.5 million South Sudanese have already become refugees, and 2 million have been displaced internally as a result of the war. Some 700,000 are in refugee camps across the border in Uganda. One million South Sudanese are at risk of starving in the coming year.

The crisis in South Sudan is an advanced manifestation of the unviability and breakdown of the nation-state system across Africa and worldwide. The pressure of

world imperialism against the oppressed countries finds its sharpest expression in the weakest nations.

South Sudan's political structure, controlled by a coalition of generals and aspiring dictators cobbled together with US cash and weapons, ruled for only two years before breaking in two. Between 2012-2013, the Kiir leadership pursued policies aimed at driving the Machar faction out of the government. In an effort to tighten his grip over the South Sudanese government, President Kiir ordered the firing of hundreds of military and political officials and reorganized the top committees of the state so as to entrench his own supporters in power. In December 2013, gunfire broke out during meetings of the SPLM's National Liberation Council amid circumstances that remain unclear. President Kiir seized on the clashes to accuse Machar of planning a coup, and expel him and his supporters from the government.

The state of war between the SPLA factions has since served, to a large extent, as a pretext for the expropriation and murder of ethnic minorities and civilians generally. The UN found that: “Civilians have been deliberately and systematically targeted on the basis of their ethnicity by armed forces and groups, including SPLA and SPLM/A in Opposition, and also by groups aligned with them. Individuals have been targeted for killing, arbitrary arrest and detention, sexual violence, sexual slavery and forced marriage. Communities have been subjected to scorched-earth policies that result in the destruction of their homes and means of livelihood. Many of the attacks have been carried out by SPLA soldiers and the militias affiliated with them. Armed groups attack villages, burn homes, kill and rape.”

“Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in horrific attacks, often targeted on the basis of their ethnicity or perceived allegiances,” the UN found.

For all this savagery, the SPLA is merely a local enforcer of the policies and economic interests of the

American ruling class. The men organizing the killing from Juba were placed in power as part of a geopolitical operation aimed at opening Sudan's oil resources to exploitation by American firms. Washington has sought for decades to exploit long-standing conflicts between the Sudan's northern and southern elites as a means of projecting power against the central Sudanese government in Khartoum, whose ties to China and the Soviet Union threatened to block American companies from accessing Sudan's oil fields.

Founded in 1983, the SPLA became a favored proxy army of US imperialism, developing close ties with the US political elite and rising, during the 2005-2011 transition process, to assume control of the newly-formed South Sudanese state. The signature black cowboy hat of President Salva Kiir, without which he never appears in public, was a gift from none other than US President George W. Bush, given to Kiir at the White House in July 2006.

While in power, the Kiir and the SPLA have employed ethno-nationalism as an ideological cover for its self-serving collaboration with imperialism. Advertising themselves as leaders of a "liberation" movement, the SPLA's cadres could be more accurately described as networks of US-backed warlords. They view the South Sudanese state as nothing more than a means of expanding their property and privileges. Despite being expelled from the Juba government, Machar's opposition forces continue to manage significant business interests and maintain ties to foreign government and corporations. Machar's militias remain armed and continue to occupy territory and move about the country largely at will. In a telling detail reported by the *Sentry*, the families of Kiir and Machar, who pose as mortal enemies in public view, live just miles apart in luxurious mansions near Nairobi.

New Kiirs and Machars are being cultivated by American imperialism in countless countries. The historic processes that pushed the United States to support the break-up of the Sudan are active on every continent. They are essentially the same tendencies of development that have defined world politics for 100 years: the domination of finance capital and the economic rivalry between the major nations produces an endless chain of regional wars, military dictators and ethnic slaughters.

The removal of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from the geopolitical landscape has, since 1991, cleared the way for 25 years of relentless economic and military warfare against the former colonial countries. A quarter century of unobstructed capitalist world-rule has

produced nothing less than the liquidation of entire sections of world society. Tens of millions are living as homeless refugees, with no social or political rights, as a consequence of the wars and counterrevolutionary economic policies of the world's capitalist governments.

Last Friday, UN humanitarian leader Stephen O'Brien described the international humanitarian situation as "worse than any time since 1945." Spreading famine and disease are threatening the lives of 20 million people living in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria, O'Brien said.

More South Sudans are being prepared. In every part of the world, the economic and political objectives of the US ruling elite demand not peaceful development and the raising of living standards, but ever greater levels of destruction and robbery. During the epoch of imperialism, as Leon Trotsky wrote, the capitalist organization of world economy becomes its opposite, that is, "barbarous disorganization and chaos." In lines that could easily have been written yesterday, as an explanation of the broader historical process that has led to the catastrophe in South Sudan, Trotsky wrote:

"The future development of world economy on the capitalistic basis means a ceaseless struggle for new and ever new fields of capitalist exploitation, which must be obtained from one and the same source, the earth. The economic rivalry under the banner of militarism is accompanied by robbery and destruction which violate the elementary principles of human economy."

The fate of South Sudan, like that of Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia, shows the future that capitalism and imperialist war have in store for humanity unless stopped by the mobilization of the African and international working class in revolutionary struggle.

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