

## THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

*Republic of South Sudan*



The People's Democratic Movement (PDM) Calls on Women of South Sudan to Take a Bold Stand For The Realisation Of Change & Reforms In The Country

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

8<sup>th</sup> March 2017

To mark the 2017 International Women's Day, the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) takes the opportunity to congratulate the women and girls of South Sudan for the resilience and courage they have shown, despite suffering one of the most horrendous human rights violations worldwide. We are dismayed by the plight of women in South Sudan and unequivocally condemn the ongoing crimes against humanity. The Peoples' Democratic Movement (PDM) thus:

- Note with despair that the government of Salva Kiir has consciously made it their policy to deny the rights of women during the 16 years of his regime. Under the overdue tenure of President Salva Kiir, the rate of literacy among women and girls has barely changed at 16%, while the rate of maternal mortality (the annual number of female deaths) has remained at 2,054 per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in the world. An alarming 25% of children under five die before their fifth birthday.
- Express deep concern that women have consistently been denied protection and justice when it comes to issues of domestic and sexual violence including rape, the lack of child support, underage marriages, unfair divorce settlements and property inheritance rights, to mention a few, that have plunged women into abject poverty.
- Regret that the public service rules are barely defined or enforced on issues of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, equal pay and employment benefits, meeting the 25% quota for women at all levels of government employment, or dealing with complaints of unlawful dismissals. Worse still, when challenged about the fact that none of the current State Governors the President unilaterally appointed in December 2015 are women, President Salva unjustifiably defended his actions, citing that only conflict-affected States nominated women gubernatorial candidates, and added "...But we don't want our governor to be kidnapped, and that is why we don't bring women." Although he asked the governors to appoint women as their deputy, he sarcastically remarked "... But if you don't get women, you can be excused for now." attracting laughter from the crowd<sup>1</sup>. Well, as it is now the case, every inch of the country is now a conflict-affected area.
- Unreservedly condemn the use of women as a tool of war by Salva Kiir's government, as evidenced by the findings of the UN that government soldiers were allowed to rape

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<sup>1</sup><http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57538>

women as a means of payment, while other UN reports record the use of rape to inflict pain on targeted families and communities! According to UN reports, 217 rape and gang rape cases against women and girls were reported in Juba between 8th and 25th July 2016 alone<sup>2</sup>. And 1,300 against women and girls in Unity State from April to September 2015. UN Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein was quoted as saying ...although this is one of the most horrendous human rights situation in the world, it has been more or less off the international radar. It is worth noting that these reports are one-off investigations in selected areas and does not give the real picture of such crimes against humanity committed across the country.

- Equally, condemn the impunity accorded to perpetrators of some of the worst violations of human rights in the world against women and girls. The victims have not only suffered rape and gang-rape but were violated in front of their husbands and children; they witnessed their male family members shot, hanged or slaughtered in their presence; and saw their under-age daughters raped in front of them according to UN reports. Similarly, no one has been brought to justice for the widely reported incident of rape and murder at the Terrain Hotel, or similar abuses of women and girls outside the Protection of Civilians Sites (PoCs) in Juba and Malakal towns, under government control. It is equally concerning that some armed opposition groups had targeted tribes and communities and raped their women. We can only imagine the trauma that the victims and survivors have endured and the after effects they continue to live with!

Not surprisingly, the majority of the 1.65 million refugees and asylum seekers in the neighbouring countries are women and children (88%) as are the 223,994 people in UNMISS POCs<sup>3</sup>. According to UNHCR reports, a further 1.853 million people are displaced within the country. These vulnerable internally displaced are also faced with the recently declared man-made famine where 100,000 people face starvation, another 1 million are at the brink of starvation and over 5.5 million are food insecure. Although the international community are responding, President Salva has instead sought to find ways of financing his economic deficit at the expense of the dying and famine-stricken masses through hiking up the fees for visas and work permits for foreign humanitarian workers at this critical time; a clear indication of his disregard for humanity and the suffering of the people of South Sudanese.

- PDM further note with disappointment that women have largely been excluded from participating in the peace process to address the on-going conflict in South Sudan. It is unfortunate that neither the *United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security* (2011), or the *UNSC resolution 1325* were realised within the IGAD-led negotiation process, despite having three permanent member State to the UNSC, including USA, as members of the Troika Plus. The call by South Sudanese women groups for women's participation at all levels of the talks in Addis were largely ignored by all parties to the talks including the all-men IGAD mediation team and the Troika Plus members. Unfortunately, women groups have realised the fact that unless they are represented by armed groups headed by male leaders, they are unlikely to get a fair hearing in the internationally brokered peace process.

PDM takes the opportunity to define itself categorically as a movement where women have a

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SS/ReportJuba16Jan2017.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/regional.php>

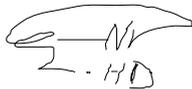
say, women's rights are human rights, and gender equality is central to the change we envision. PDM aims to restore a country where women are respected and play an equal role in all decision-making process, have access to a fair justice system, and are accorded the necessary protection as a right.

PDM will continue to work towards an end to President Salva Kiir's government, and the restoration of an environment safe for women. PDM, therefore, calls on all women of South Sudan and concerned citizens to join us in denouncing this government and calling for President Salva to step down with immediate effect. We also call upon all friends of South Sudan, who want to see an end to the crimes against humanity in South Sudan, to join us in ending the regime of Salva's government. PDM further calls on:

1. The African Union to set up the agreed Hybrid Court as soon as possible, and call on the TROIKA Plus countries and friends of South Sudan, to support the process with funding and experts for a quick set-up. We remind all concerned that justice is paramount to the reconciliation and healing process necessary for a return to stability, once the war is over.
2. All Human Rights organisations working in South Sudan, to join forces and prepare evidence that will ensure the perpetrators of crimes against women are successfully brought to the tribunal. We also call on donors supporting the Human rights organisations to provide funding for the unabated continuation of such a vital process for justice.
3. Friends of South Sudan to provide funding for humanitarian relief and trauma counselling, noting that women and children have witnessed and experienced horrific crimes against humanity and are in need of psychosocial support as part of their wellbeing. PDM further pleads with the UNSC to deploy the 500 protection forces promised since July 2016 to provide adequate protection and end the sexual violence and murder atrocities against unarmed civilians.

PDM reiterates its call for the immediate implementation of the UNSC resolution 1325 and its realisation in all its aspects, as an integral part to an all-inclusive sustainable solution. This includes the appointment of women in all leadership positions, decision-making groups, witnesses, negotiation events and transitional processes, regardless of whether such bodies are foreign or national in their membership structure. We believe it is time the friends of South Sudan demonstrate this gender balance in practice as well.

Dr. Hakim Dario  
PDM Chair



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: For all comments, queries and opinions, please email [press@pdm-rss.org](mailto:press@pdm-rss.org) or visit our website: <https://pdm-rss.net>

- CC: - AU, UNSC, TROIKA, IGAD  
- SS Community and Religious Leaders,  
- Media Houses  
- Amnesty International

- Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia
- Defend Defenders
- Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
- Human Rights Watch
- Humanity United
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Refugee Rights Initiative
- International Service for Human Rights
- National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
- Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network
- South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network

*ABOUT PDM: The People's Democratic Movement (PDM) is a popular grassroots Movement formed by concerned South Sudanese in the country and the Diaspora; in response to the political crisis and fast deteriorating economic, humanitarian and security situation in the Republic of South Sudan. It seeks to offer the way forward amid heightened ethnic polarisation and devastating conflict in the country, encouraged and abated primarily by President Salva Kiir's divisive Government policy, incompetent, oppressive and corrupt leadership.*