



SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC)

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER 2022

THIRD EDITION

FOREWORD



Hello!

Welcome to our latest newsletter, the third for this year, all of which we hope to have helped to keep you updated on our latest news and provide you with vital information.

WHERE ARE WE IN IMPLEMENTING THE R-ARCSS?

At the inception of the R-ARCSS in 2018, the assumption was that by the end of the transitional period, there would be peace in South Sudan. We hoped that the permanent constitution would have been developed, all armed forces unified, IDPs settled, refugees returned home, and elections conducted, ushering the country to embracing good governance. It is 2022 today, and we have hardly achieved the goals of the 2018 peace agreement. As the pre-extended transitional period has been further extended to February 2025, there is a blend of thoughts and feelings. Will our political leaders put the country on the right path? Will the agreement be fully implemented? The economy is on the brink of collapse, violent conflicts continue in different parts of the country, and an alarming humanitarian crisis because of floods and other impacts of climate change. There is need for urgency in responding to the needs of the people as the situation in the country has become catastrophic.

This is the time for our political leaders to redeem themselves and exhibit strong leadership and the political will to end the pain and unrest of the people of South Sudan. The graduation of the first batch of the Necessary Unified Forces is a good sign and indicator on the implementation of security arrangements, however, this leaves many stones unturned.

As South Sudanese, we have only been consoled by hope and faith; hope that we will one day have lasting peace and faith that God will lead us to our desired destination.



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“FACILITATING PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN”

PARIENG COMMUNITY PEACE CONSULTATIVE DIALOGUE.

Almost two years following the signing of the peace agreement by the warring parties, peace in Ruweng Administrative Area (RAA) remains elusive, despite attempts by the government, the international community, the Church, and other national institutions to address the protracted violence, i.e., cattle raiding, inter-tribal conflict and revenge killing, brutal road ambushes, land, and border disputes, etc.

To analyze the escalation of interethnic conflicts among the Ruweng communities and between the IDPs and the host communities of Ruweng Administrative areas, the South Sudan Council of Churches, with funding support from Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), facilitated a three-day consultation meeting in Paring. Aimed at identifying the drivers of conflict and how the Church and government can support the grassroots peace-building peace on the ground, deliberations on the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation for a sustainable peace were as well discussed during the meeting.

The Community Peace Consultative meeting included 75 participants selected from the local government officials, community leaders, women leaders, Youth representatives, traditional leaders, and inter-church committee (ICCs) with a representative from the Ministry of Peacebuilding, Deputy Chief Administrators of RAA, and senior dignitaries from RAA. Some government officials acknowledged and called for collective peace-building efforts and peaceful coexistence among the host communities and IDPs. Furthermore, the government hinted at the importance of road networks across RAA for easy connection and to support internal peace initiatives within and among Ruweng Administrative Area.

On the other hand, the traditional chiefs and the ICCs appealed to the area government to grant access to humanitarian agencies to deliver community services.



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THE APUK, AGUOK FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATION MEETING.

The Apuk and Aguok communities in Gogrial, Warrap, State of South Sudan have conflicted for the last 18 years. The tension that sparked in 2004 was believed to have been intensified by Political rivalry between prominent leaders from Apuk, and Aguok, culminating in violent clashes that led to the loss of many lives and cattle from both communities. To address the conflict, the government divided Gogrial County in 2005, into Gogrial East and Gogrial West, for the Apuk and the Aguok, respectively. Unfortunately, the division of Gogrial did not solve the problem. Many issues kept cropping up as the two communities continued to clash. The conflict has since taken many forms, evolving, erupting at different levels, and encompassing national and local actors, resulting in cattle raids, revenge attacks, and clashes over grazing land, fishing zones, and borders.

Early in 2018, the South Sudan Council of Churches, in partnership with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), conducted a series of peace consultations and dialogues that have since contributed to relative peace and stability between the Apuk and Aguok communities. Since early 2020, there has been no conflict reported between the two communities.

Despite the peaceful co-existence between the two communities following the conclusion of the peace process by the Church and its partners, Reports indicate that light arms weapons collected during a disarmament exercise are illegally getting back to the hands of certain communities by some politicians - ing peace and reconciliation. art during the peace talk negotiations in 2018.

The follow-up process targeted traditional leaders and community elders, including Inter-Church Committee, Women, Youth, Church leaders, and the local authorities who took part during the peace talk negotiations in 2018.

The meeting aimed at monitoring the level of implementation of the resolutions agreed upon by Apuk and Aguok during their peace conference held in 2018-2019 and specifically to assess the level of co-existence and relationship between the two communities and identify the achievements, challenges, obstacles, and the way forward for peace – find out the communities current context and level of understanding among the youth in their society – diffuse future conflict between the tribes of Gogrial



The participants posed for a group photo with SSCC team during the Apuk-Aguok peace follow-up consultation-Kwajok ,Warrap State, South Sudan



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SOLIDARITY FOLLOW UP VISIT TO YAMBIO.

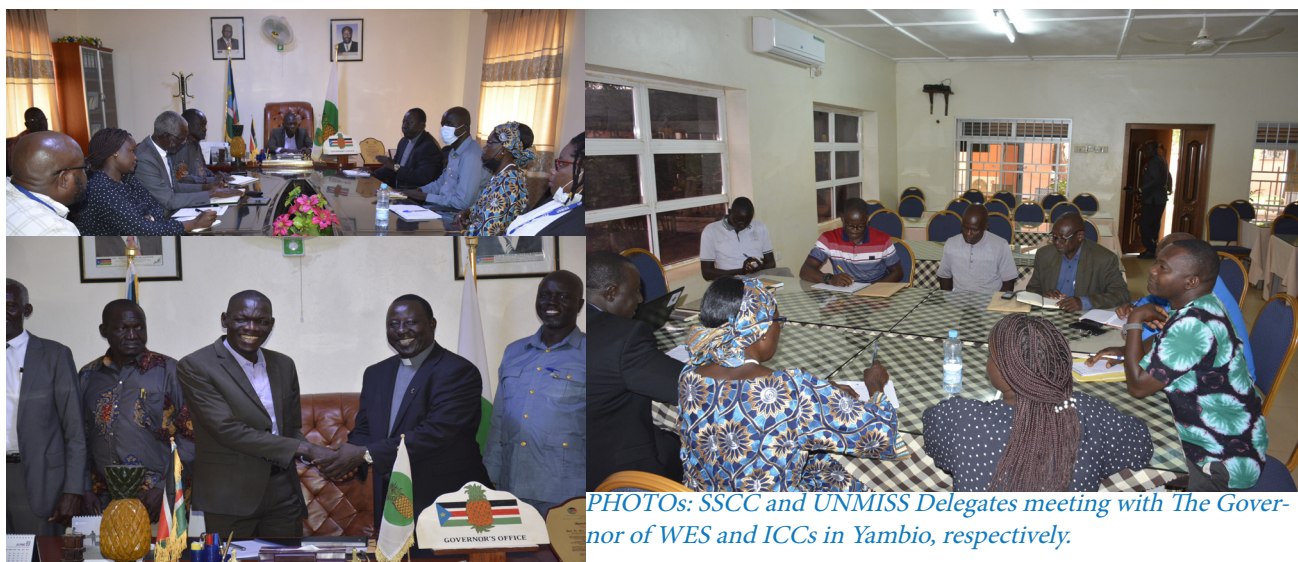
The SSCC mediation team with five (5) delegates from Juba led by Rev. Fr. Martin Ochaya conducted a three (3) Days mediation mission in Yambio from 13th to July 2022. The mission was a follow up to the the one-week solidarity visit conducted last year by the South Sudan Council of Churches in quest for peace in the greater Western Equatoria Regions. Read More <https://sscchurches.org/>

In reference to the solidarity visit that aims to restore peace in Tambura and among the communities (Azande and Balanda) and beyond through peaceful resolution of the Tambura Crisis. This follow up mission focus was to hold engagement meeting with the targeted stakeholders such as Senior State government officials and the interfaith members for the Tambura Peace Process buy-in and the affirmation of the Church facilitation/mediation mandate.

Despite the calmness in the situation in the ground, people pf Tambura still asked for an urgent need for dialogue and reconciliation process to build their trust and relationships since the critical issue on trust building between the people and the government at all levels remained unresolved since 2020.

During this process, the SSCC mediation Team and UNMISS held a crucial and unique exchange and information sharing meeting shaping the engagements with the State Government and Senior Government officials including the interfaith Communities.

This process led to the SSCC mediation Team getting commitment and support of the State Government on the SSCC designed processes and ensure their participation in the political leadership retreat, with the Church affirming its facilitation/mediation mandate to undertake the Tambura Church-led peace process for the peace resolution --and the stakeholders blessing the Church's roadmap on the resolution of the Tambura Crisis.



PHOTOS: SSCC and UNMISS Delegates meeting with The Governor of WES and ICCs in Yambio, respectively.

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YOUTH EXCHANGE VISITS WAU



Left to Right: Youth of faith pose for a group photo after a fruitful discussion with Bahr El Ghazal, Minister of Peace Building Hon. Monica and Church leaders, respectively.

In partnership with Fin Church Aid, the South Sudan Council of Churches organized a youth exchange visit in Wau. During the International Youth Day in 2021, the youth of faith and Youth peace Ambassadors spotted tribalism as the main factor hindering their contributions to the promotion of peace in South Sudan; hence they initiated a regional exchange visit among themselves.

The regional youth exchange visits are mainly aimed at supporting the role of the Youth of faith to gain knowledge and skills on best practices for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Bahr el Ghazal. It as well focuses on sharing their experiences and learning among Youth.

As an opportunity for intergenerational dialogues on leadership with leaders, the five selected Youth of faith met with different stakeholders who contributed to the current holding peace in Wau. The Youth met with Women and Youth of faith from Bahr El Ghazal, Church leaders, and Government officials – Minister of Peace Building Hon. Monica and Hon. Sarah Cleto Rial, Governor of Western Bahr El Ghazal State, to learn about the involvement of these stakeholders in peacebuilding and the mechanism used to attain peace in Western Bahr El Ghazal State and get ideas on how both institutions can involve young people in peacebuilding processes in Western Bahr El Ghazal State.

In the event of sharing the se achievements, SSCC and FIN Church Aid conducted a joint radio talk show for the Youth of faith both from Juba and in Wau to elaborate on lessons learned during the visit - shared their views on Independence Day and experiences in the journey of peacebuilding with the audience/listeners.

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TRAINING ON PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELING OF VICTIMS/SURVIVORS OF SGBV.

Due to continuous communal conflict across South Sudan, the situation of women regarding gender justice keeps aggravating. For a long time, there has been no gender justice in the workplace, schools, public, or healthcare for women being raped, killed, beaten, mistreated, and abandoned by their husbands or caregivers in South Sudan. With the ongoing conflict, sexual and gender-based violence has caused more harm to women and some men.

Hence in this regard and in partnership with the KAIROS, the South Sudan Council of Churches conducted a three-day training on psychosocial counseling and referrals of victims/survivors of Sexual Gender Based Violence.

The training targeted 30 individuals from the three more significant regions of Equatoria, Upper Nile, and Bahr El Ghazal. The 30 participants selected from the communities included

- social and community workers,
- inter-church committees,
- women's links,
- peace committees, and
- other networks that can recommend and give guidance to SGBV survivors and victims.

The main objective of the training is to ensure that participants gain the necessary knowledge on psychosocial and counseling of SGBV survivors/victims, benefit the communities and ensure that participants come up with a work plan that will be used in their different communities.

In addition, participants were taken through the toll-free line 2222, More.



PHOTO:

Participants posing for group photo at breaktime during the training



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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY.

Since its endorsement by the General Assembly in 1999, 12 August has been celebrated annually as International Youth Day to highlight the importance of youth participation in Current Affairs.

Aligning it with the theme for 2022, “Intergenerational Solidarity – Creating a World for All Ages,” the South Sudan Council of Churches commemorated International Youth Day through a roundtable panel discussion from different inspirational life-changing leaders, i.e., among them included youth representatives from different field of life, Church leaders and Gender representatives.

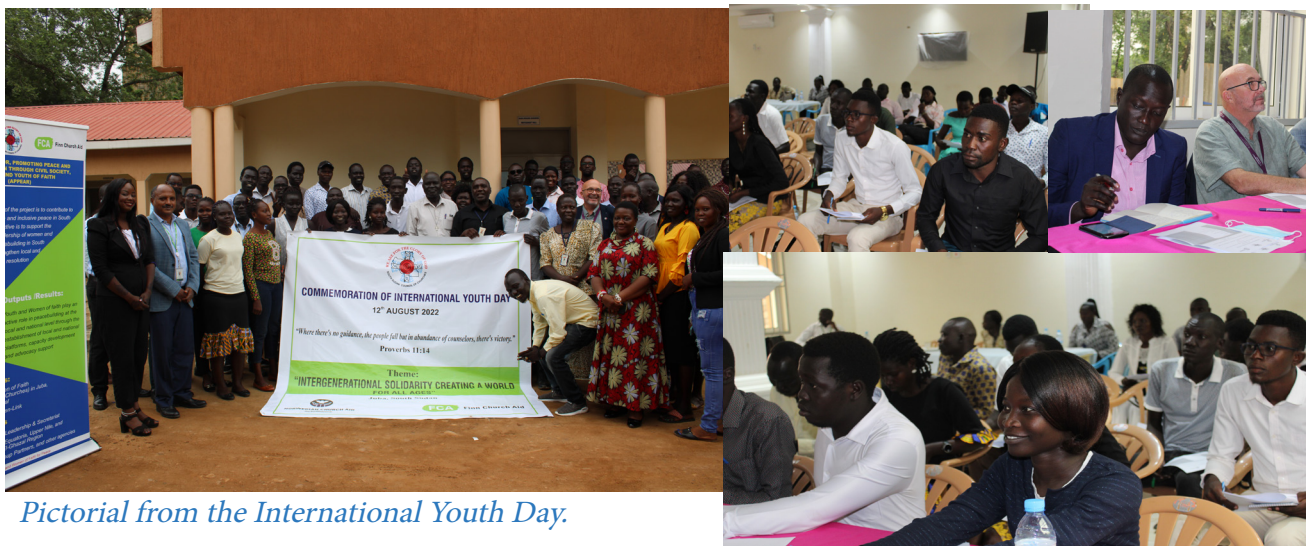
This year’s main objective was to enable participants to interact with each other and learn best practices on how to fight hate speeches in the communities and involvement of youth in decision and policy-making and leadership in general – increase the level of networking between themselves and older persons in pursuit of closing the intergenerational gap.

Quotes.

“Youth of faith have no difference from any other youth nowadays. For us to make a difference, we need to be different. Let’s behave like believers.” Rev. Canon Emmanuel Nattania on Bridging the intergenerational gap in South Sudan.

“In the past, youth go for social gatherings with unarmful weapons, unlike today.” Youth are being used as weapons to harm. Fr. James Oyet GS SSCC on his opening remark.

“Let the International Youth Day motivate us to do better things for the future of South Sudan. We, as elders, have done our part. South Sudan comes from you and believes in you.” He added.



Pictorial from the International Youth Day.

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CONFLICT SENSITIVITY, TRAUMA HEALING, AND RESILIENCE BUILDING TRAINING.

In partnership with the Fin Church Aid (FCA), the South Sudan Council of Church is implementing Phase II of the APPEAR project for 2022-2023. The project addresses challenges impeding the participation of Women and Youth of Faith in decision-making in implementing the SSCC's Action Plan for Peace (APP). As the project seeks to address the challenges and bridge the gaps by engaging women and youth of faith in promoting a peaceful co-existence, the SSCC partnered with FCA to conduct a two-day conflict sensitivity, trauma healing, and resilience training in Wau, Malakal, and Juba with a day of Action Plan Documentation.

The trauma healing and resilience-building training for women and youth of faith tackled key areas surrounding trauma, looking at the types and causes of trauma, its impact on parts of the human body, why we don't just get over the trauma, unhealed trauma, and cycles of violence, etc. These help participants to gain knowledge and skills, practical tools to help deal with daily trauma in their lives and workplaces to adapt to more healing coping mechanisms in times of crisis as the component of a healing journey allows participants to acknowledge the importance of truth, mercy, justice, and peace which pave ways for forgiveness and reconciliation.

During the Wau, Malakal and Juba training participants from the Inter-Church Committee, Youth, Peace Ambassadors, and Women Link representatives were able to share their life stories/experiences learned from each other, interaction, and the friendships built from within.

Q U O T E S

"I had been in Malakal POC since 2013 crises broke out, and the entire condition of this POC is not favorable to us. But as a member of the women of faith peace committee in the Malakal regional office, this trauma healing and conflict sensitivity in Peacebuilding has added a lot of knowledge and skills, particularly the four ways to respond to conflict accommodation, avoiding, counter violence, and active nonviolence in which I will apply them to help handle my issues and other issues in the POC site and our group as peace ambassadors."



ICCs, Women, and Youth of faith during the training in Juba.



ICCs, Women, and Youth of faith doing a group exercise in Malakal.

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GREATER TAMBURA POLITICAL LEADERS RETREAT AND TRUST BUILDING IN JUBA.

With the theme “Come let us reason together” (Isaiah), the South Sudan Council of Churches convened a political leaders retreat for healing and trust building for the greater Tambura Political Leaders from Tuesday 23rd to Thursday 25th August 2022 in Juba.

The healing and trust-building retreat that brought together twenty-four (24) delegates from both State MPs representing the greater Tambura areas, and National Ministers, the Governor, and Deputy Governor, State Government officials is to heal and build initial trust among the political leaders to work together in preventing and ending the cycle of revenge killings between the two communities of Azande and Balanda in greater Tambura.

With support from SWISS, the retreat reflected on various issues reported, such as the unresolved historical conflicts, issues of land disputes, and leadership that worsened more in May – June 2021. The conflict impacted huge losses in both lives and resources of all those villages with the most disadvantaged groups, children, women, and the aged/sick in greater Tambura.

In a communique, the political leaders promised to work together to bring a wave of durable peace to the people of Tambura and conduct a joint peace conference in Tambura before the end of this year to address ways and means to live in peace and harmony.

While appreciating the SSCC for the retreat, the leaders noted with sadness that the violent communal conflict, which affected the social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among the communities leading to the worsening security situation, breakdown of law and order, suffering and distress of the people, senseless loss of lives and wealth, displacement of the people, and the dire humanitarian situation.



Pictorial: Delegates from State MPs, National Ministers, the Governor, Deputy Governor, State Government officials, and church leaders during the retreat in the SWISS Tukul in Juba.

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 11TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Under the THEME “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches took place in Karlsruhe, Germany, from the 31st August 2022 to 08th September 2022. The WCC assembly is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches that confess to the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill their common calling to the glory of the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

United by faith, people came from all regions of the world, from 352 member churches and ecumenical partners of the WCC. In partnership with KAIROS, the South Sudan Council of Churches was represented by the General Secretary Fr. James OYET LATANSIO and the Women desk coordinator Jackcilia SALATHIEL.

The assembly dealt with topics of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its consequence, the climate emergency, manifestations of racism worldwide, structural economic inequality, gender discrimination, and other forms of injustice.

In an engagement workshop organized by KAIROS Canada on challenges facing women in peacebuilding and lessons learned. The Women Desk Coordinator presented work done by the SSCC, especially on Women, Peace, and Security UNSCR 1325, where SSCC continues to build the capacity of women on various human rights instruments and national laws, the peace negotiation done by the women link in Addis Ababa in 2018, the work of the National Women Forum in peacebuilding to mention but few.



Left: General Secretary Fr. James OYET during a panel discussion.

Top: During lunch breaks, Jackcilia Women Desk Coordinator interacts with church leaders.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly declared the third Tuesday of September as International Day of Peace. Two decades after establishing this day of observance, in 2011, the Assembly moved the date to be observed annually on September 21.

The day's purpose was, and remains, to strengthen the ideals of Peace worldwide. The world celebrated the day with the THEME "End racism. Build peace," but the South Sudan Council of Churches joined South Sudan in celebrating the day with the THEME "End Ethnic Discrimination; Build Peace in Diversity."

SSCC's primary objective of celebrating the day this year is to take stock of the past and emerging matters of ethnicity, relapse prevention mechanisms for peacebuilding, and conflict resolution to establish new approaches in an inclusive, diverse means. To understand in-depth the steps taken towards inclusive and diverse peacebuilding and conflict resolution through grassroots communities per the South Sudan Council of Churches advocacy strategy and to dive into root causes and drivers of ethnic conflicts among the South Sudan Communities.

Eighty participants from different sectors graced the International Day of Peace celebrations at ECS guest house, i.e., church, youth peace ambassadors, women peace committee, women link, partners, and church leader Rev. Canon Emmanuel Nattania.

While addressing the Youth and Women of faith, Juan Racheal, the Advocacy Coordinator, said the day is a reminder that, regardless of all the challenges and conflicts South Sudanese face, they must solve them in non-violent ways. "Peace is about willingness to the conflict." She added.

Meanwhile, Rev. Canon Emmanuel Nattania lamented that having a tribe is not a crime since all these are God's creations and making. He said that God had put us where we belong, and instead of quarreling over issues that are so minor, South Sudanese should look for ways that can bring them together as children of God.



Pictorial from the International Day of Peace.

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مجلس كنائس جنوب
المكتب الرئيسي
ص - ب ٢٠٩ جوبا جنوب السودان

Monday 29th August 2022

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) Statement on the International Day of the Disappeared.

"I am like an owl in the desert, like a little owl in a far off wilderness. I lie awake, lonely as a solitary bird on the roof." (Psalm 102: 6-7).

Every year, worldwide, the *International Day of the Disappeared* is marked on 30 August. It is an occasion to raise awareness of the issue of disappearances, to remember missing people and express solidarity with their families.

Behind every missing person, there are countless more people suffering from the anguish and uncertainty of not knowing the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. Along with the terrible pain that only grows as years go by without answers, they often face numerous psycho-social, administrative, legal, and economic difficulties. The Red Cross in South Sudan has reported more than 5500 cases of missing persons. However, this figure is far from representing reality, as most cases of disappearances are not registered and documented.

Between 2020 and 2021, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the SSRC assessed the needs of families of missing persons in South Sudan through 181 interviews and focus group discussions. The need to know what happened to their loved ones was the main priority highlighted by families, followed by mental health struggles and economic problems.

Families of missing persons shared that their religious beliefs are the most helpful way of coping with their pain. Most commonly, families go to their church or call its members to their homes to pray and experience solidarity and support. They reported receiving emotional relief and maintaining a sense of hope through these interactions. Almost all families considered these rituals and practices helpful. More than two-thirds of families shared that collective prayers would be the most helpful type of event.

On the *International Day of the Disappeared*, the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) calls, appeals and requests all Churches and faith communities across South Sudan to include some of the following messages during religious services held on August 28, or issue a statement in support of families of missing persons.

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) recognizes that:

1. In South Sudan, disappearances affect individuals, families, communities, and society. Decades of armed conflict, violence, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, lack of dignified management of the dead, seasonal natural disasters, and

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migration lead to persons becoming missing. The exact scope of the issue of disappearances remains unknown, yet painfully large.

2. The never-ending uncertainty, expectancy, and pain of families of missing persons pervade every aspect of their lives. Not knowing what happened to their loved ones and being unable to give them a dignified burial remains an open wound, leaving little possibility for families and communities to recover and move on.
3. Religious faiths are guides for families to cope with their suffering related to the disappearance of their loved ones. Religion plays an integral role in supporting families of missing persons to cope with suffering and despair.

Therefore, the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) urges:

1. The Government to help clarify the fate of missing persons through possible means. Until the families have an answer, they wait for their loved ones, and their suffering will go on. Time does not heal; answers do.
2. The Government to recognize the plight of families of missing persons in South Sudan and provide them with care and assistance, legal and economic support, health and educational services, and sustainable and dignified livelihood opportunities. To this end, comprehensive legislation for missing persons and their families must be adopted.
3. The Government and all communities to make all efforts to prevent anyone from going missing. Peace and security contribute to preventing disappearances and finding answers to the fate of missing persons.
4. All churches and God-fearing people to stand in solidarity with and address families of missing persons and their suffering in their masses and prayers, as many families of missing persons find relief in their religion.
5. All Churches and Church Leaders to raise awareness of the rights and needs of families of missing persons and former missing persons and prevent any stigmatization they face.
6. Church leaders to care for the children of missing persons, to assist them with social inclusion, access to education, and relief for their suffering. Children shall not be left alone to cope with the pain of their missing parents.
7. The communities, societies, and institutions of South Sudan must acknowledge the suffering of families of missing persons and stand by them. Families of missing persons must know that they are not alone, and their loved ones are not forgotten. Families should not be stigmatized.
8. Church leaders to establish an association for families of the disappeared to
9. All stakeholders, such as the youth, civil society organizations, humanitarian organizations including the Red Cross, and community leaders to assist families of missing persons with their economic, legal, and administrative problems, mental health-related needs, their plight for recognition, and create awareness of their suffering.

O God Bless South Sudan!