

South Sudan civil war causing widespread famine

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The 2011 partition of Sudan has proven a fateful moment in the neocolonial Africa policy pursued by American imperialism during the quarter century following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is now clear that the carve-up of Sudan has set the stage for a historic catastrophe.

Less than six years after celebrating its “independence,” the criminal regime installed by Washington in Juba presides over one of the worst humanitarian crises worldwide. South Sudan is joining the long list of countries destroyed as functioning societies by the predatory wars and geopolitical operations of the American government.

South Sudan’s “independence,” proclaimed in July 2011, was orchestrated to assert US interests in relation to the oil wealth of Sudan, whose central government in Khartoum had embraced significant Chinese economic involvement in the oil sector. Via the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Washington escalated its support for the leaders of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), propelling them into the leadership of the South Sudanese state.

The South Sudanese civil war, which began in December 2013, involves a struggle between opposed factions within the SPLM, which are vying for control over the state apparatus and various economic interests. Both sides in the war, SPLM factions led by President Salva Kiir and ex-Vice President Riek Machar, are accused of mass killings of civilians belonging to rival ethnic groups.

South Sudan may soon “be plunged into a genocide on the scale of Rwanda’s in 1994,” a recent report by Reuters noted. Now in its fourth year, the war in South Sudan has drawn in regional militaries including those of Kenya, Uganda, and Egypt. South Sudan is being described as an “African Syria,” in reference to the involvement of a growing list of outside powers in the conflict.

Three full years of war have wreaked havoc on the country’s productive forces and distribution infrastructure, causing widespread famine. Some 100,000 South Sudanese are

presently famine-stricken and another one million are on the verge of starvation. An additional 4.9 million South Sudanese are considered “food insecure,” a figure projected to rise to 5.5 million by July.

Over 1.5 million South Sudanese have become refugees since the civil war began, making South Sudan’s refugee crisis the largest in Africa and third largest globally, behind Syria and Afghanistan according to ReliefWeb.

“The human rights situation in South Sudan is amongst the worst on the continent and the planet. For the past three years, government and opposition forces have been waging an extremely abusive war and repeatedly targeted civilians, in complete impunity,” Jonathan Pedneault of Euronews told Human Rights Watch.

“In many areas across the country, civilians have been forcefully displaced by the armed parties and seen their houses and livelihood destroyed in the fighting,” Pedneault noted. “Millions are facing a dire humanitarian situation, rising inflation and ruthless armed actors keen on attacking them and their livelihoods.”

The civil war has severely disrupted production and distribution of basic goods. Food prices in South Sudan have risen by more than 800 percent since the civil war began, according to Amsterdam News.

“The extreme level of violence has had a severe impact on people’s ability to meet basic needs such as safe drinking water, food supplies, shelter and healthcare,” Doctors Without Borders representative Nicolas Peissel reported in a recent statement.

The South Sudan war is a case study in the criminal role of the leaders of Africa’s “legitimate,” bourgeois governments, who function as little more than mafia dons and bagmen for imperialism.

A layer of top officials within the South Sudanese government

and military have rapidly enriched themselves under the transition regime framework created by the US-backed 2005 CPA treaty. Kiir family members and SPLA generals have accumulated major holdings in South Sudan's oil sector, purchased expensive real-estate abroad, and developed close relations with foreign oil interests.

President Kiir's family lives a luxurious lifestyle outside of South Sudan, enjoying a mansion in a wealthy Nairobi suburb and vacations in Europe. The family of Kiir's top general, Gregory Vasili, owns interests in the oil, construction, finance, aviation, weapons and mining sectors. Between 2012-2016, South Sudanese Generals Reuben and Jok Riak received millions in cash via payments to personal bank accounts held by Kenya Commercial Bank.

Members of "rebel" leader Riek Machar's family enjoy similar privileges, living between mansions in Addis Ababa and Nairobi and traveling internationally. Machar's family has continued to amass wealth despite being forced from state power by the Kiir clique. In December 2009, Machar's nephew, Bading Machar, seized control of private security firm KK Security, by invading the company's headquarters in Juba, and taking an employee hostage to authorize spending from the firm's checking account.

The security company, alternately known as Konkel Security, has since served as the corporate vehicle of the Machar family's dealings with foreign capital, as it has prosecuted its factional war against the Kiir clique.

Such are the forces empowered by American imperialism in its effort to assert US control over the oil wealth of the Sudan.

More fundamentally the civil war in South Sudan is an acute expression of the crisis and breakdown of the global capitalist system. Incapable of meeting the basic social needs of the masses, unable to maintain security within their own territories, and fully aligned with the interests of the American and European ruling classes, Africa's capitalist elites pursue a policy of abject collaboration with foreign interests, while using repression and terror against their own populations.

While recognizing the complicity of African nationalism, it must be emphasized that the lion's share of responsibility for the crimes being committed against the people of South Sudan lies with the American and European ruling elites, which have once again shown their readiness to destroy entire societies in pursuit of geopolitical and economic interests.

The war is drawing in foreign military forces and pouring fuel on the growing regional power struggle between Iranian and Saudi-led alliances, which have increasingly sought to expand

their military and strategic "depth" into the Horn of Africa. There is speculation the Saudi and other Gulf monarchies plan to use their military presence in the Horn to sponsor an insurgency against the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime in Addis Ababa.

The US-backed Egyptian military dictatorship was accused this week of sending weapons and ammunition to South Sudanese forces loyal to President Kiir, and of bombing opposition fighters near Kaka. Ugandan officials have called for military intervention by the major powers in South Sudan, in the name of stemming the massive tide of South Sudanese refugees, as many as 700,000, who have flooded across the border into Uganda since the war began.

Amid resignations of top South Sudanese military commanders, President Kiir made deals with Egypt and Ethiopia last month, and issued pledges of loyalty to the newly-installed Trump administration.

"Our government has taken and will continue to take all necessary steps to work very closely with the Trump administration to achieve mutual interests. We believe that a strong bilateral cooperation between South Sudan and the U.S will end all the destabilizing hands of external actors in our affairs," Kiir said.

The South Sudanese President held security talks with Ethiopian leaders in Addis Ababa Thursday, and on Friday, Kiir signed cooperation deals including oil transport highways connecting Gambella, Ethiopia to Palouge in South Sudan and Dima to Boma in Ethiopia. The oil routes will service US and Swiss financed refineries in the Upper Nile. The Kiir regime is planning to double oil production by 2018.



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