



**SUDAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT/ARMY
SPLM/SPLA (IO)
CHAIRMAN & COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF**

**SUBJECT: STATEMENT ON THE COMMEMORATION AND CELEBRATION OF JULY
8, AND 9**

On the occasion of the first commemoration of the State House (J1) battle of the 8th of July 2016 that resulted in the collapse of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) and the subsequent collapse of Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU) and on the sixth anniversary of our independence, I would like to make the following statement.

Firstly, the July 8, 2016 State House battle was a blatant attack on the Agreement. President Kiir was determined to carry out his promise not to implement the Agreement which he described as not the Holy Bible nor the Holy Quran when he signed the Agreement on August 26, 2016 in Juba and at the same time attached a list of reservations. President Kiir and his security agencies planned and executed the attack of July 8th in total defiance to the guarantors of the agreement. The UNSC panel of experts established the fact that Kiir and his regime are responsible for the July 8th 2016 events. This belligerent act demonstrates his derive to achieve a military victory and his determination to destroy any chance for a peaceful end to the conflict.

He further declared 28 states – now 32, in violation of the said Agreement and continued to violate the permanent ceasefire. President Kiir continue to describe the Agreement as bad and undeserving of implementation. In addition, following the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU) in April 2016, President Kiir refused to rescind his decision for the establishment of the twenty-eight states despite the world wide condemnation of his action. He also refused to implement the transitional security arrangements, particularly the demilitarization of the capital Juba and other major towns, cantonment of forces,

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continued attacks on SPLA (IO) forces and his rejection of the democratic process of selecting the speaker of the Transitional legislative Assembly(TNLA).

The July 8th was also intended for my physical elimination, but due to the bravery of the SPLA(IO) component of the presidential guards who heroically resisted the well prepared huge forces of President Kiir, my colleague and I survived the assassination attempt. The exceptionally brave and small contingent of the SPLA(IO) in Juba forced a stalemate that saved mine and my colleagues lives. The attempted assassination in the State House was preceded by a number of events targeting members of SPLM/SPLA(IO) including the killings of SPLA(IO) officers, harassment at check-points and attack of vehicles belonging to SPLM/SPLA(IO).

Following the J1 battle President Kiir's forces launched brutal attacks on the SPLA (IO) positions in Jebel on July 10th to July 11th 2016. In an effort to contain the situation and avert a return to a full scale war, I continued to engage with President Kiir on phone pleading with him to call off the attacks and likewise with the foreign emissaries in Juba and the guarantors of the Agreement hoping for an intervention. The SPLM/SPLA(IO) proposed three action points in order to contain the crisis. These points were: (i) a ceasefire; (ii) rapid deployment of a third party force to create a buffer zone; and (iii) withdrawal of the SPLA from the SPLA (IO) locations that the SPLA had occupied in Jebel. Regrettably the crisis was tragically allowed to develop to a full scale war engulfing all corners of South Sudan. Progressive genocide and catastrophic humanitarian situation and famine are consequences of the tragic acts of July 2016.

After having occupied the SPLA(IO) positions in Juba, Kiir accepted to declare ceasefire which he never respected. As we had no other option, we were forced to withdraw from Juba on July 12th 2016, since our proposals for a renewed engagement and the creation of a buffer zone were ignored by the guarantors of the Agreement and also by the regime.

In short, we wish to applaud the courage and commitment of the 1370 SPLM/SPLA (IO) forces and members of the advance team that went to Juba with the sincere desire to implement the Agreement. They understood the risks involved but they were willing to give peace a chance at all cost. Many paid the ultimate price and they will always be remembered as peace soldiers who risked all to ensure peace, liberty, freedom and human dignity which the people of



South Sudan have struggled for, for decades regardless of creed, religion, gender or ethnicity, and was finally crowned with the independence on July 9th 2011. They are our heroes and heroines and will always be.

July 9th 2017 is the sixth anniversary of our independence, despite the fact that our country is in turmoil and the regime is engaging in a genocidal war causing untold human suffering, forced displacement both internally (over two million) and to the neighboring (more than two million) we mark this day with mix emotions of joy and of sadness. Of sadness because of the regime made tragic suffering imposed on our people due to the failed leadership of President Kiir and mismanagement of state affairs. Of joy because we cherish our independence, we bow to protect it and will continue to work hard for the people of South Sudan to achieve peace and justice and to realize their long desire and aspirations for an independent, democratic and prosperous federal republic.

In this light, we take this opportunity to assure the people of South Sudan that the only way forward is for all of us to work for peace. As such, we call upon IGAD, the AU and UN to initiate a political process leading to a mediated peace process that would end this genocidal war. We believe this is the only way for restoring peace in South Sudan.

Long live the struggle of our people against the dictatorship. The people shall win over the genocidal regime. Long live the memory of our heroes.

Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, PhD
Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, SPLM/SPLA(IO)
8 July 2017.

