

Government of South Sudan

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

PRESS STATEMENT

Postponement of the 5th National Population Census by the Government of South Sudan Council of Ministers JUBA APRIL 12th, 2008

JUBA – Today I am going to make a statement on the Fifth National Census, which is supposed to start on 15 April. Since yesterday, the Council of Ministers of the Government of Southern Sudan has been deliberating on the issue, and this afternoon has come out with a resolution, which I will read to you. It is that resolution I am conveying to the press, and informing the people of Southern Sudan about the decision taken by their government on the issue of Census.

The Council, in its deliberation, critically analyzed the circumstances pertaining to the exercise of the Census. To carry out this Census, the Government has its own objectives, and among them, one is a provision in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that there should be national Census throughout the country, so it is an objective and it is an obligation to be met. What are the objectives for carrying out the Census? Among them is to know the size of the population of Sudan. The last Census was in 1993 and that one was not comprehensive because most parts of the South were not accessed by the Census, because those areas were at war or under insecurity problems. Therefore, we want to know, with this relative peace, what is the size of the population of the Sudan, in general, and then the population of Southern Sudan in particular; and the populations of the states and counties.

So, what do we use the results of Census for? We have to use the results for very important purposes. One is to demarcate political constituencies that would form the basis for contesting elections. Therefore, it is a big political decision. And it is a fair way of distributing constituencies, because the number of constituencies for the Southern Sudan will be determined by the population of Southern Sudan in the first place, and the number of constituencies within the Southern Sudan will also be determined by the size of the population of each and every state, including the counties, so that there is fair distribution, and objective distribution of political representation.

Second, the Census will give the Government the opportunity to plan for socio-economic services, because when we want to give schools, hospitals, water and electricity, sanitation and so forth, we need to know the sizes of those populations. Given the meager resources we have, we will always be bound to set our priorities. So if there is an area that has a population of 1,000, and there is another area that has a population of 10,000, and you are supposed to give one school or one hospital to those areas, will you go in and give that service to that small population of 1000, or you will go to the area where there is 10,000? So that you will be better off by serving the greatest number of people instead of the lowest.

Therefore, it is crucial to have Census so that we map out our development programs in an equitable and efficient manner. We wanted the Census to be comprehensive and inclusive. That is to say, it has all the areas of Southern Sudan, of the Sudan, should be given equal opportunity to conduct this exercise. If it becomes partial, then we will not be able to say we have conducted a comprehensive and a fair Census, like what happened in '93.

Given these reasons, and examining the situation very critically, the Council has decided, and I will read you the resolution, decided to defer the Census in Southern Sudan. Deferring it from 15 April, to be carried out sometime during the year. We did not give a specific date, because we want to make sure that the Commission is the technical body that will be able to give an exact date of carrying it out, given the technical aspects that are going to be worked out. So let me read you the text of the resolution, and thereafter I will give you the justification why we took this resolution or this decision:

Council of Ministers, Government of Southern Sudan, Juba, Resolution # 95, 2008

Subject: Deferment of Conduct of the Fifth Population and Housing Census in Southern Sudan

After deliberating on the submission made by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs with his memo number [[unheard], dated 2nd April 2008, on the cited subject, the Council of Ministers, in its regular meeting number 11, 2008, held on Friday 11th April 2008, following a lengthy and critical analysis of the pertinent factors for the success of the Fifth National Population Census in Southern Sudan, resolved that the objectives of the Census would not be achieved under the prevailing circumstances and that it was imperative to defer the conduct of the Fifth National Census in Southern Sudan to a later date sometime during the year. The Southern Sudan Center for Census Statistics and Evaluation, Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministry of SPLA Affairs, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Local Government Board, Southern Sudan States and all other relevant public institutions shall take the necessary measures to implement this resolution.

Therefore, this is the decision taken yesterday and confirmed today by the Government of Southern Sudan. Now many people will ask, "What are the justifications of this decision?" The Council also noted this and came up with some pertinent reasons why it would not be possible, or it would not be successful, to achieve the objectives we talked about before.

One: that we have over two million IDPs residing in Northern Sudan. Moreover, these people are finding it difficult to come back home, or to come to the South, because of some reasons. One of them is that their coming to the South is interrupted on the way, or uh, some uh, people who may not think that the Census is a good exercise, are obstructing their coming to the South. Therefore, there are problems en route to Southern Sudan, which send them back again or which make it possible for them to come to the South [unheard]. The resources for repatriating them to the South have not been forthcoming and therefore the repatriation and resettlement in the South became difficult.

Number two: So because of this two million plus, if we were to carry out the Census then they would go to vote or to be counted in the North and they would form part of the Northern population and not part of the Southern population, and in fact, they are Southerners. So what does this mean? It means that the population of Southern Sudan would be less by that number. In addition, it does not stop from there. For this Census, as I said earlier, we want to know the size of our population: it is connected with the power sharing and wealth sharing. After the Census, and the results are out, if our population drops from the one-third that it is assumed to be, and which is the basis for sharing power now, if it reduces to one-quarter or less, then automatically we have to amend the CPA and we have to go according to the actual size we have. So some of the current political positions we are holding in the government of national unity would be slashed back by that percentage. Therefore, it is not just a matter of saying, "why don't we count them in the north and that's all." No. It has also

political connotations.

Number Two [sic]: You remember there was this issue of ethnicity and religion. I think the two parties, National Congress and SPLM, have been discussing these issues and at some stage, they agreed that they should be included in the Census questionnaire, but during the process, those two items were dropped from the questionnaire. So we in the Government of Southern Sudan, we feel that they should be included.

What is the justification? One: that as we speak, there is an assertion that Sudan is an Arab-Islamic state. Is that true? If it is not true, how do we counter-check it? It has to be counter-checked by putting in these two items. Then at the end of the Census, if it is carried out objectively, and regularly, and fairly, then this issue will be addressed. You will know who are the majority, the Arab origins, or the African origins. In addition, if it is known that the assertion is not true, then you prove them wrong and Sudan will be an African country rather than an Arab country. There is also the same assumption, in the Northern quarters, that Muslims are the majority in the South, and you cannot prove them wrong by word of mouth, but by an objective measurement, and we thought Census and statistics would be a better objective way of determining the sizes of these religious compositions. We, we know that it is not true, but why should we argue when we can objectively answer the question and put it at rest. Therefore, if religion is included in the forms, then you can know who the majority are: the Christians or the Muslims. It would have been more logical to say that the majority of Southern Sudanese are non-religious, neither Christians nor Muslims. This is understandable. However, that the Muslims are more than the Christians, I think, is a bitter pill to swallow. Therefore, the inclusion of these ones is necessary. That is why the SPLM Interim National Council made a resolution on this thing, that they should be included in the questionnaire or an annex is made. Therefore, that is another reason why, if we carried out the Census now, that would be missing very crucial statistical data and very crucial facts about the composition of our population.

The Third reason is that there has been very slow, inadequate, and untimely flow of resources or funds from the Government of National Unity for the Census in Southern Sudan and especially funds pertaining to the security organs. Now if we do not put the security organs and all the logistics in place before the Census, then you will be running a lot of risk of so many interruptions and those who may decide to interrupt the Census will find it easy to make disturbances and to keep the population away from registering or from being counted.

Number Four: Non-demarcation of North-South border makes it difficult to determine which areas fall in the North or in the South and this situation may lead to duplication of the Census results and/or conflict between North-South enumeration teams in the area. This is also coupled with the presence of military forces in those areas. So this is again, we need to address it.

Number Five: which is more or less related to number four, there has been a tremendous increase in the insecurity situation in some areas along the North-South border. There have been skirmishes, and with that insecurity, it would be very difficult to run a normal exercise on the Census. Moreover, this insecurity situation is instigated and sponsored by some elements who do not want Sudan to be in peace. Therefore, again, it is a disruptive issue and it will not give you the desired results.

Yes we have seen, especially here last month, a good number of rains, have started to fall which is unusual. We do not know whether it is the beginning of the heavy rainy season or not. If it is, then it can also interrupt the exercise. This is maybe you can say, it is one of the weakest, it is not, you can put it at the borderline that it may not happen.

Lastly, when we were considering the exercise of Census, we were also mindful about what is happening elsewhere in Sudan. We feel that the deferment of the Census in the South, or,

if it is accepted, by Khartoum, would help, or would give a better opportunity for the government of national unity to resolve peacefully the war situation in Darfur. Therefore, that Darfur becomes part of the Fifth national Census. As we speak, Darfur will not take part, and eventually this one will constitute a partial Census rather than a comprehensive and inclusive Census for the whole of Sudan.

Therefore, these are some of the reasons why the Government of Southern Sudan felt that it has to give itself time to resolve and work to resolve some of these problems.

- The deferment will give the Government of Southern Sudan [time] to mobilize resources, both human and material, to seriously engage in the repatriation of IDPs, so that when the Census in the South starts, then they are all, or the majority of them will be in the South, so that we solve the issue of over two million that would have been cut off from the population of the South.
- the government of Southern Sudan would also engage with the NCP on the issue of ethnicity and religion. However, should the Census go ahead in the North, then this issue would have no meaning. Maybe for the issue of religion in the South. However, for ethnicity, which will determine the identity of the Sudan, it would have been compromised because the Census in the North would have been done without ethnicity being included in the questionnaire.
- Similarly, as I said before, we will mobilize more resources, which means the Government of Southern Sudan putting more funds to the Census so that it achieves the desired results. Now, by putting it off, there is a cost. However, we compare also the cost and the output. We feel we would be better off paying that cost than carrying out an exercise that does not produce meaningful results. Therefore, we are ready to put in more funds to make sure that this exercise is successful.
- we hope also that during the deferment, that the issue of the boundary, the border issue, should have a resolution, so that we know exactly, where does the South end, and those people within that area could now be freely enumerated and could be counted as part of the Southern population. So this deferment gives us the opportunity also to resolve the issue of the boundary.
- It also gives us the opportunity to critically examine our security arrangements, within the Southern Sudan, and to put more resources, human and material, to make sure that there is security in the South.
- And again also, the deferment would allow Darfur to come in if that is conflict is resolved and they will be allowed to exercise the Census.

So, Ladies and Gentleman, these are some of the [reasons] the Government of the South has taken this big decision, and maybe at a critical time, but they had no choice but to take this decision. And we hope our population will understand why the government took this decision. It is not for fun, but is to address real needs.

And we hope during this period when we will be preparing ourselves, our population, our people, should understand our position as a government and should stand with us, because we are not abolishing the Census, we are just deferring it to give ourselves more time to organize it better than to rush with an exercise that would not produce the desired results.

Thank you.

Government of Southern Sudan

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Juba, April 12th 2008