

South Sudan's Crisis of Leadership and the failed Peace Agreements: A Call for New Beginnings

The 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was hailed as a beacon of hope for a nation ravaged by years of war, disunity, and suffering. Its implementation led to the establishment of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU), a coalition government that promised to steer the country toward lasting peace and prosperity. However, five years later, the people of South Sudan find themselves still waiting for that promise to be fulfilled.

The failure to fully implement the R-ARCSS has not only prolonged the suffering of South Sudanese citizens but also revealed the chronic dysfunction and self-interest within the country's political leadership. While the ruling SPLM party bears significant responsibility, it is important to highlight the equal, if not greater, culpability of the opposition parties that were signatories to the R-ARCSS. These opposition leaders, who returned to Juba under the banner of peace and reform, have focused more on enriching themselves and their families than on representing the South Sudanese people who entrusted them with the mandate to bring change.

The R-ARCSS envisioned a roadmap to reform the political, security, and economic systems of South Sudan. It promised transitional justice, institutional restructuring, and the drafting of a permanent constitution. Yet, the agreement's implementation has been piecemeal, riddled with delays, and marked by the prioritization of personal and political interests over national progress. Leaders on all sides have betrayed the hopes of a nation by reducing the agreement to a mere tool for political survival rather than a platform for transformative governance.

Now, South Sudanese citizens are looking beyond the failed frameworks of the R-ARCSS for solutions. Tumann Peace Initiatives, currently being negotiated under the auspices of the Kenyan government in Nairobi, represents a new hope—a chance for South Sudan to chart a fresh course. However, the same politicians who failed to implement the R-ARCSS are now weaponizing their failure as a roadblock to Tumann Peace Initiatives. They claim adherence to the very agreement they ignored, using it as a shield to maintain their grip on power and block meaningful alternatives.

This cannot be allowed to stand. The South Sudanese people have endured unimaginable suffering—conflict, displacement, hunger, and despair. They deserve more than a political class fixated on its own enrichment and survival. The RTGoNU must recognize its failure and step aside to allow the people to decide their own destiny. South Sudan's future cannot be

determined by a handful of elites whose decisions have consistently undermined the country's stability and progress.

The Tumaini Peace Initiatives offer an opportunity for South Sudan to start afresh, unburdened by the broken promises and entrenched dysfunction of the past. For this initiative to succeed, it must be driven by the will of the people, not the narrow interests of political elites. The Kenyan government's mediation provides a neutral platform, but the success of these efforts depends on whether South Sudanese politicians can put the nation's interests ahead of their own.

The time has come for a bold and decisive shift. The international community, regional partners, and, most importantly, the people of South Sudan must demand accountability from their leaders. The failure of the R-ARCSS should not be a death sentence for the nation; it should be a wake-up call for transformative change.

South Sudan cannot afford another lost decade. Our people have suffered enough. The RTGoNU must acknowledge its shortcomings, step aside, and allow the Tumaini Peace Initiatives to take root. Only then can South Sudan begin to heal and rebuild as a nation that serves the interests of all its citizens, not just a privileged few.

As the festive season unfolds, many South Sudanese are celebrating Christmas and the New Year with little more than hope in their hearts. For too many families, the joy of the holidays is overshadowed by the harsh reality of empty stomachs and unfulfilled promises. They cannot afford even the basic necessities—a kilo of beans is beyond the reach of many—let alone the luxury of true celebration. Yet, while the people endure unimaginable hardship, some of our politicians are shamelessly indulging in extravagant lifestyles, spending thousands of dollars on luxury hotels, high-ticket concerts, mistresses, and lavish parties in neighboring countries and abroad.

This grotesque display of greed and excess by members of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) is an insult to the South Sudanese people. These are the very leaders entrusted with the mandate to restore stability, rebuild the nation, and alleviate the suffering of millions. Instead, they have chosen to betray their people, siphoning off national resources to fund their personal pleasures while ordinary citizens struggle to survive.

This is not just a moral failing—it is a profound failure of leadership. South Sudan is a nation blessed with immense natural resources and resilient people, yet it remains one of the poorest and most conflict-ridden countries

in the world. The blame lies squarely with those in power who have prioritized their own enrichment over the welfare of the nation.

As we reflect on the meaning of the festive season—a time of giving, compassion, and unity—there is an urgent need to redirect our focus to the ongoing Tumaini Peace Initiatives being negotiated in Nairobi. These talks represent the last shred of hope for a nation teetering on the brink of collapse. But hope alone is not enough. It is time for South Sudanese citizens to demand action, accountability, and political will from their leaders.

The RTGoNU must return to Nairobi with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency. Tumaini Peace Initiatives cannot be yet another empty promise. It must be a genuine effort to end the suffering of the South Sudanese people and restore the country to a path of peace and prosperity. This requires political will—a commitment from all sides to put aside their personal and political differences and work together for the greater good.

To my fellow South Sudanese, I urge you: do not remain silent in the face of this betrayal. The time has come for us to unite and put pressure on our leaders to act responsibly. Raise your voices, organize peacefully, and hold those in power accountable. Let them know that the suffering of the people cannot be ignored any longer. Demand that they return to Nairobi on time and with the resolve to finalize the Tumaini Peace Initiatives.

The festive season should be a time of joy and hope, but for too many in South Sudan, it is a stark reminder of the inequalities and injustices that plague our nation. However, we must not lose hope. The resilience of the South Sudanese people has been tested time and time again, and it is that same resilience that will carry us forward.

The politicians may celebrate in luxury today, but the strength of a united and determined people can bring about the change we so desperately need. Let this festive season be a turning point—a moment when the people of South Sudan rise to demand the leadership and accountability they deserve.

It is time to restore hope, not just for this holiday season, but for the future of our nation. Blessed are the resilient South Sudanese people.

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This piece is my opinion as a citizen of South Sudan and not by any means should it be misconstrued as endorsed by SSUF/A or SSOMA leadership

