

**Day of prayer and fasting for peace in South Sudan and the
Democratic Republic of Congo
23 February 2018**

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, due to political violence, government repression, and inter-ethnic conflicts, currently 4.3 million people are displaced throughout the country, and 13.1 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance throughout this year.

As South Sudan, enters its fifth year of a brutal and fratricidal civil war, of the population of 7.5-10 million people, 2 million people have fled the young nation as refugees, and about 1.9 million people are internally displaced. Two-thirds of the remaining population, 5.1 million people, face severe food insecurity in January to March 2018.

'And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.' *Colossians 3:15*

*'He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;'* *Micah 4:3*

Responsive Prayer

Leader 1: We especially pray for peace and justice for our sisters and brothers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of South Sudan. Accompany your children who are facing hunger, insecurity, abuse, and violence, to situations of peace, justice and well-being.

***All:* Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

Leader 2: We pray for children, girls, women, and men who are vulnerable to experiencing violations to their rights and to facing violence. We beseech your

protection, for their welfare, and that the appropriate interventions might be directed to them. We also pray for peaceful and safe working conditions of humanitarian workers and communities on the frontlines, that their lives are protected and access to humanitarian assistance is secured.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Leader 3: We pray for the churches, wider society and the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of South Sudan, so that they work in a participatory, accountable, transparent, responsive, efficient, equitable and inclusive manner. May they uphold the dignity and integrity of each individual and community and protect their rights and freedom.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Leader 4: We pray for the strengthening of the prophetic voice and the helping hands of the churches across the world. We also pray for the ministry of accompanying individuals and communities with their preferential attention and ministry to the marginalized and the poor, to reflect the love of our saviour Jesus Christ.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Leader 5: We seek forgiveness for our society's part in fuelling the multi-million dollar illicit mining industry of minerals and the trade of small arms and ammunition, which act as the primary drivers of the violence and conflict. May we become advocates of change.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Leader 6: We pray for peace and durable solutions that will end conflict and violence. We pray that communities can live, mobilise their resources, benefit from the fruits of their labour, in their own environment, living without domination and fear.

All: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

The Lord's Prayer (in one's own language)

**All: May we always be hungry for righteousness;
May we overcome injustices that bring about vulnerability!
May we always be thirsty for peace;
May we overcome insecurity, suffering and displacement!
May we always yearn to care for each other and the environment;
May our prayers lead to action and transformation!**

Background information, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

DRC is the second largest country in Africa (2.3 million square kilometres), with 77 million inhabitants and is exceedingly rich in forests, minerals, and precious metals. The DRC has the potential to become one of the wealthiest countries on the African continent if it can overcome its political instability and the unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources, tangled with the web of greed and consumption connected across the globe. DRC still ranks among the poorest countries in the world, at position 176 out of 188 countries, on the most recent Human Development Index calculated by the UN (2016) and nearly 64% of the population lives in poverty.

Following years of economic and political decline, the war of 1998-2002 led to extreme violence, massive displacement and widespread rape in Congo. The conflict caused an estimated 5.4 million deaths. Most of these people perished from disease and malnutrition. Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and particularly rape, has been used as a weapon of war¹. Despite peace agreements, slight economic progress, and improvements to education and health services, the country continues to struggle with persistent crises. Currently, 4.3 million people are displaced throughout the country, and nearly a fifth of the total population, 13.1 million people, will be in need of humanitarian assistance throughout the nation this year.

Political violence and government repression intensified in 2016 as President Joseph Kabila refused to vacate his office beyond his constitutionally mandated two-term limit, delaying the electoral process, allegedly due to an out-dated electoral register. This refusal comes in spite of the calls from the churches, civil society and the UN following an agreement in late 2016 brokered by the Catholic Church for conducting the elections.

In the last year, the country topped the world with the number of newly internally displaced people in a single year, 1.7 million, most of them from the Kasai region (southwestern DRC, adjacent to Angola). The origin of a conflict which has caused considerable misery, in an area the size of Germany, was a disagreement over traditional authority in several villages in Kasai-Central province. This altercation, with political undertones, led to the death of the traditional leader and protracted conflicts with militia attacks and army reprisals.

¹ Nicholas D. Kristof - Rape as a Strategy of War - Op-Ed - NYTimes;
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/15/opinion/15kristof.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

One of the primary drivers of the violence is the predatory nature of all armed groups to the vast mineral resources in the eastern region of North and South Kivu, being fuelled by a multi-million dollar illicit mining industry of minerals such as the tin, tantalum, and tungsten and gold.

In a separate development, more than 22,000 people have fled clashes between herders and farmers from different ethnic groups in Ituri province, north-eastern DRC, bordering Uganda, in the past weeks.

Millions of Congolese continue to deal with violence, disease, malnutrition and other losses to their already meager livelihoods. The World Health Organisation estimates that in less than five years, more than 3 million people will have died - mostly from preventable and treatable diseases.

Christianity is the predominant religion of the country, representing 90% of the population. The church and Christian communities have been accompanying the communities closely, in education, health, and wellbeing and in responding through the various crises through the last two centuries. Increasingly, the churches are also actively engaged in the political processes in the country.

WCC member churches in DRC:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/democratic-republic-of-congo>

Republic of South Sudan

Southern Sudan experienced two protracted civil wars as Sudan prepared to gain independence from joint British and Egyptian rule in 1956. Initially, from 1955 until 1972, when the conflict ended when the Addis Ababa peace agreement accorded the south a measure of autonomy. But, in 1983, when the Sudanese government cancelled the autonomy arrangements, the south, led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its armed wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), again rose in rebellion. At least 1.5 million people are thought to have lost their lives, and more than four million were displaced in the ensuing 22 years of guerrilla warfare. The conflict finally ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, under which the south was granted regional autonomy along with guaranteed representation in a national power-sharing government. The agreement also provided for a referendum in the south on independence in 2011, in which 99% of southern Sudanese voted to secede and become Africa's 54th nation. South Sudan is one of the continent's least-developed countries, in spite of its oil wealth, and it ranks among the poorest countries in the world, at position 181 out of 188 countries, on the most recent Human Development Index calculated by the UN (2016).

The young state plunged into crisis in December 2013 amid a power struggle between the president and his deputy whom he had sacked. Fighting between government troops and rebel factions erupted into a conflict that had killed thousands and prompted more millions of people to flee their homes by the time a tentative internationally-mediated peace agreement was signed in August 2015. Unfortunately, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) has not held up. On the 8th of February 2018, the African Union expressed its 'deep disappointment over the reported violations of Cessation of Hostilities and the perpetuation of war, especially since these flagrant violations were committed shortly after the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access.'²

As South Sudan, enters its fifth year of current conflict, of the population of 7.5-10 million people, 2 million people have fled the young nation as refugees, and about 1.9 million people are internally displaced. Two-thirds of the remaining population, 5.1 million people, continue to face severe food insecurity from January to March 2018³. Children, young men, and women have been among the most affected. Millions of women and girls are exposed to gender-based violence in these crisis-affected areas.

Christians form the overwhelming majority of the nation. The churches have historically played a critical role in building peace in South Sudan. They continue to play an active role in advocating for peace, hosting neutral forums, implementing reconciliation work, promoting food security and in rolling out humanitarian interventions.

WCC member churches in South Sudan:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/south-sudan>

² Communique of the 751st PSC meeting on the status of the Revitalization Process for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict of the Republic of South Sudan
<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-751st-psc-meeting-on-the-status-of-the-revitalization-process-for-the-agreement-on-the-resolution-of-the-conflict-of-the-republic-of-south-sudan>

³ WFP South Sudan, Situation Report #213, 16 February 2018
<https://tinyurl.com/ycg9qvoy>