

Martin Luther King III Appeals for Non-violent Resolution to the South Sudan Crisis

On April 25, 2014, Mr. Martin Luther King III joined with the United Nations, the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the European Union, governments and other international organizations, including the National Democratic Institute (NDI), to call for an immediate end to the conflict in South Sudan. King appealed to all political leaders, civil society organizations, community and religious leaders and the people of South Sudan, to actively seek and support a non-violent resolution to the present crisis. His message supports those in South Sudan, particularly the South Sudan Council of Churches and the South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (SSuNDE), who are advocating for an inclusive and sustainable peace.

See the full transcript below.

“Hello, I’m Martin Luther King III, the eldest son of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mrs. Coretta Scott King.

I am joining with the United Nations, the African Union, IGAD, the European Union, governments and other international organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and most importantly, the South Sudan Council of Churches, to call for an immediate end to the senseless violence, destruction of property and displacement of innocent people in Africa’s newest country.

This conflict in South Sudan has been raging now for over four months. It has resulted in thousands of people having to take refuge in United Nations compounds; well over 10,000 people being killed, some through summary executions; and over one million people displaced. Thousands are without food, water or proper sanitation and have little access to health care and other basic services. If something isn’t done soon, the South Sudanese peoples will face the worst famine in Africa since the 1980s. This humanitarian catastrophe can be avoided if the political will exists.

This conflict has shown the world the worst of Africa through targeted ethnic killings, the use of rape as a weapon of war, and the brutalization of innocent civilians in hospitals, churches, mosques and at UN protected sites. I call on the signing parties to honor the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, without further violation, and for them to immediately allow humanitarian aid workers full access to care for those who are suffering as a result of the conflict-- especially women, children and the elderly.

I also encourage all non-partisan civic groups, such as the South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (SSuNDE), to redouble their efforts to engage citizens in the democratic process and to hold all political leaders accountable.

Now is the time for the leaders and peoples of South Sudan to show the world the best of Africa! Everyone must recognize that an armed resolution to this crisis is not possible, and if pursued, such an effort will only lead to more deaths, more destruction and more suffering. Therefore, I am respectfully appealing to all political leaders, civil society organizations, community and religious leaders and the peoples of South Sudan, to actively seek and support a non-violent resolution to the present crisis.

The whole world is watching South Sudan today. We must give peace and nonviolence a chance. But we must also begin to look beyond the day when a peaceful resolution to the crisis has been achieved. As my father once said, real peace is not merely the absence of war, but the presence of justice. Those responsible for crimes against humanity must be held accountable.

The only path to a stable, democratic and prosperous South Sudan is through an inclusive national dialogue that honors the human rights of all South Sudanese people. Peaceful dialogue and political accommodation should begin now across all 10 states so that ethnic, religious and other divisions; long standing grievances, and new wounds can be healed as tolerance and an embrace of diversity become the way forward.

The challenges are real, but they can be overcome. I believe, as my father did, that the time is always ripe to do right. I pray that God will touch those who are making war and bring some comfort to those who are suffering only because of who they are. Love must have the last word. I am confident that peace will ultimately prevail and lead the peoples of South Sudan to the democratic and prosperous Promised Land that they have struggled for over the years and rightly deserve.”