

South Sudan enters fragile ceasefire

Dennis Coday | May. 10, 2014 NCR Today

The peace agreement signed late on Friday between the government of South Sudan and a rebel group was like a miracle, according to a Catholic bishop who was part of the mediating team that helped forge the deal.

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar signed a ceasefire agreement that could end a bloody five month conflict that has left thousands dead and more than one million homeless.

The Catholic bishops of South Sudan interrupted a weeklong conference meeting Thursday so that Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro of Juba and Bishop emeritus Paride Taban could fly to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where peace negotiations were taking place and where Kiir and Machar had met face to face for the first time since January.

The talks in Addis Ababa show that peace can't be won by the barrel of a gun, but only from love, Taban told journalists at the Juba airport on his return this morning, according to a report from [the Catholic Radio Network](#) [1], a news service that covers South Sudan.

The deal calls for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to all populations affected by the conflict, Catholic Radio Network reported. The agreement also calls for formation of a transitional government of national unity and eventually new elections.

The government and rebel leaders agreed to work with other political parties, civil society groups and faith-based leaders to ensure the ceasefire holds and national reconciliation progress.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who visited South Sudan last week as part of an African mission, welcomed the agreement saying it "could mark a breakthrough for the future of South Sudan. The hard journey on a long road begins now and the work must continue." The BBC reported that Kerry played an instrumental role in bringing together the two sides.

Earlier on Friday a [U.N. report had made clear how bloody the conflict has been](#) [2].

The report released by U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay describes atrocities "on a massive scale," including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. The atrocities included [the bombing of a hospital](#) [3].

The report "underscores the extreme urgency of bringing the conflict to an end," Pillay said. It also points to the fragility of the ceasefire. The two sides signed a peace deal in Addis Ababa in January but it was never implemented.

Smail Chergui, the African Union's peace and security commissioner, told the Agence France-Presse that while the agreement was welcomed, "even with the signing, given the current crisis, the restoration of peace in South Sudan will not be easy".

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[1] <http://catholicradionetwork.org/>

[2] <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/media.aspx?IsMediaPage=true>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/video-warplane-bombs-sudan-hospital-nuba-mountains>