



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

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April 19, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street., NW  
Washington, DC 20520  
-transmitted via email-

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, I write to support the concerns of my brother bishops in South Sudan and those of the wider Christian community represented in the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) as expressed in their respective Easter messages that I have attached herewith for your convenience.

His Eminence Stephen Cardinal Mulla deplors the widespread suffering in South Sudan caused by the unending violence and the economic collapse. He calls on all political parties to embrace the cause of peace and engage in constructive dialogue to resolve their differences to promote the common good and build a future of peace and prosperity.

The Christian Community united in the SSCC goes further to call on political leaders to implement the clauses of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). They are seen as essential prerequisites for free, fair, and credible elections scheduled for December this year. They urge political party leaders to enter sincere dialogue and offer the auspices and credibility of the SSCC to mediate these talks.

The heads of the member churches of the SSCC call on their international partners to help the people of South Sudan mediate these dialogue sessions. The SSCC leaders have no illusions about how difficult this challenge will be, and they will need skilled and experienced expertise to engage in a meaningful and lasting way. Similar to “Simon of Cyrene” who helped Jesus carry his cross, I know the people of South Sudan can count on the United States Government to help the SSCC carry this cross.

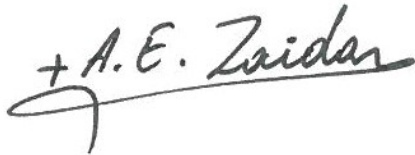
Staff of our Office on International Justice and Peace have met at length with SSCC leaders and with Ambassador Michael Adler and his key staff. SSCC leaders greatly appreciate his outreach and collaboration with them. We are grateful for his sustained and effective support to the SSCC members. I join the heads of Churches and hope you will provide Ambassador Adler the support and resources he needs to assist the SSCC in their efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous South Sudan.

If the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was a promissory note for independence that with intensive American support was paid in full in July 2011, the R-ARCSS is a second

promissory note to realize the aspirations for democracy and peace. I urge you to do everything in your power to assist the formidable role the SSCC can and should play in bringing these promises to pass.

Our Office of International Justice and Peace staff and I stand ready to assist you in this critical pursuit.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ A. E. Zaidan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

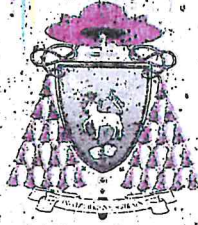
(The Most Reverend) A. Elias Zaidan  
Bishop of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: Ambassador Michael Adler

Catholic Archdiocese of Juba

P.O. Box 32 – Juba

Republic of South Sudan



الكنيسة الكاثوليكية أبرشية جوبا  
صندوق البريد: ٣٢ - جوبا  
جمهورية جنوب السودان

OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

## EASTER MESSAGE: 2024

"Christ Has Truly Risen, and We Will Rise with Him"

Dear Friends in Christ,

### 1. We believe in the Resurrection

On these blessed Easter days, we come together in joy and gratitude to celebrate the cornerstone of our faith: the Resurrection. The angels of the Lord proclaimed, "He is not here; He has risen!" This divine truth not only marks the victory of Jesus Christ over death but also illuminates our path with hope, love, and the promise of renewal. In these times, when the shadows seem to lengthen, and the world appears to be ensnared in challenges, the message of Easter comes as a beacon of light. It reminds us that, through faith, we are never alone or forsaken. Just as Christ has risen, we too are called to rise above our trials, our doubts, and fears. This miraculous event reaffirms our faith that in Christ, there is no end, only eternal life. Let us embrace the spirit of Easter, a season of rebirth and endless possibilities. May it inspire us to live more fully, love more deeply, and serve more selflessly. In the image of Christ, let us extend our hands in kindness, bridge gaps of misunderstanding, and sow seeds of peace wherever we go.

As we reflect on the significance of the Resurrection, let us renew our faith and draw strength from the certainty that we, too, shall rise. In the words of Scripture, "Because He lives, we can face tomorrow." Let this assurance fill our hearts with unshakable faith, unwavering hope, and boundless love. On this glorious day, let's hold close to the promise of eternal life and the profound truth that, in every ending, there is a new beginning. May the joy of Easter fill your home with warmth, your heart with love, and your spirit with the grace and peace of the risen Christ.

### 2. Government and Opposition Leaders

With the Easter season approaching, we humbly implore you to set aside your differences and allow our fellow South Sudanese in the villages to celebrate this holy occasion in peace. It is a time when families come together, when hope is renewed, and

when the spirit of compassion and forgiveness is embraced. Let us prioritize the well-being and safety of our people, granting them the opportunity to observe this sacred holiday without fear or disruption.

Easter holds a special place in the hearts of South Sudanese, as it symbolizes rebirth, redemption, and the triumph of light over darkness. It is a time for reflection, forgiveness, and the strengthening of community bonds. However, the ongoing conflict and tensions have brought immense hardships to our citizens, including those in the remote villages who have been ravaged by violence and displacement. They too deserve the opportunity to celebrate Easter in an environment of peace and security.

We appeal to you to prioritize the welfare of our people over political differences. Let this Easter serve as a catalyst for unity, healing, and a renewed commitment to find lasting solutions to the challenges our nation faces. By setting aside partisan interests and embracing a spirit of reconciliation, we can create an atmosphere where our people can celebrate in joy and safety.

I urge you to engage in peaceful dialogue, seeking common ground and placing the interests of our people at the forefront. Together, we can work towards a sustainable peace that will allow the villagers to celebrate Easter without the fear of violence or displacement. It is an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to the well-being and happiness of our citizens, to show that we value their religious and cultural traditions, and to restore their hope in a brighter future.

Let us remember that we are all South Sudanese, bound by a shared heritage and a common destiny. Regardless of our political affiliations, our greatest responsibility lies in protecting the fundamental rights and dignity of our people. By prioritizing their safety and allowing them to celebrate Easter in peace, we foster a sense of unity, healing, and hope – vital ingredients for rebuilding our nation.

On this Easter season, I implore you to find the courage and wisdom to set aside differences and embrace the path of peace. Let our people in the villages celebrate this holy occasion without fear, knowing that their leaders have listened to their cries and granted

them the gift of peace. I pray may the spirit of Easter guide your decisions, inspiring you to work together for the well-being and prosperity of our nation and its citizens.

### 3. Economic meltdown in the country

My dear brothers and sisters of South Sudan, I write to you today with a heavy heart, aware of the immense challenges you are facing due to the economic meltdown in our beloved nation. The economic crisis has undoubtedly caused great hardship, leaving families struggling to make ends meet, businesses facing uncertainty, and dreams shattered. In these difficult times, it is essential that we come together as a community, supporting one another with compassion and resilience.

The economic meltdown has disrupted the lives of countless individuals, denying them opportunities for livelihood, education, and access to essential services. I want you to know that you are not alone in facing these trials. Our hearts ache for the pain and suffering that this crisis has inflicted on our fellow South Sudanese. We stand in solidarity with you, offering our compassion, prayers, and whatever assistance we can provide.

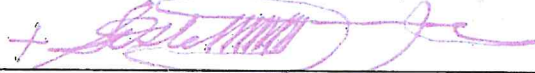
During such trying times, it is crucial that we not lose hope. We must remember that we are a resilient and resourceful people, capable of overcoming even the most formidable challenges. Let us draw strength from our rich cultural heritage, our strong sense of community, and our unwavering faith.

In the face of economic turmoil, let us be compassionate towards one another, extending a helping hand to those in need. Together, we can foster a spirit of unity, sharing whatever resources we have and supporting local initiatives that serve the most vulnerable among us. By working together, we can find creative solutions, develop alternative economic models, and rebuild our communities from the ground up.

At the same time, let us also remember the power of education as a means to break the cycle of poverty. Investing in the education and skills development of our youth will empower them to become agents of change, equipped to rebuild our nation and create a brighter future. Education is a precious asset that cannot be eroded by economic turmoil. It is a beacon of hope that can guide us towards economic recovery and social progress. Finally, let us turn to our faith for solace and strength. In times of distress, our spirituality can

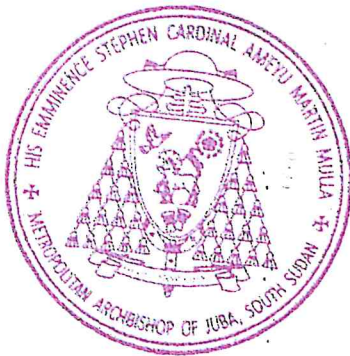
offer comfort, resilience, and a sense of purpose. Let us seek solace in prayer, relying on God's love and guidance to sustain us through the darkest of times. With unwavering faith, we can find hope in the midst of turmoil and trust in God's providence to lead us towards a better tomorrow.

My dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to hold onto hope, remain steadfast in your resilience, and extend love and support to one another. Together, we can weather this storm and rebuild our nation, emerging stronger and more compassionate than ever before. May God bless South Sudan with healing, restoration, and a future filled with prosperity for all. With deep compassion and solidarity, Happy Easter to you and your loved ones. May we live in the light of His love, today and always.



Stephen A.M. Cardinal MULLA

Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba





Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC) EASTER MESSAGE OF HOPE TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH SUDAN**

***"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen" (Luke 24:5).***

My dear People of God,  
Happy Easter of the Resurrection of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

With the words of Jesus, we would like it to be a source of renewed hope for people of God in South Sudan. In today's world, marked by so many conflicts and so much suffering, we understand that many of us feel disheartened. So together with you, we would like to set out from the proclamation that is the basis of our hope and that of all humanity: *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen and alive!"* (Luke 24:5). We repeat this to each of us individually: Christ is Risen and alive, and he loves us with an infinite love. His love for us is unaffected by our failings or our mistakes. He gave his life for us, so in his love for us he does not wait for us to be perfect. Look at his arms outstretched on the cross, and *"let yourself be saved over and over again"*. Let us walk with him as with a friend, welcome him into our life and let him share all the joys and hopes, the problems and struggles of this time in our lives. You will see that the path ahead will become clearer and that our difficulties will be much less burdensome, because he will be carrying them with you. So, pray daily to the Holy Spirit who "draws you ever more deeply into the heart of Christ, so that you can grow in his love, his life and his power".

We have received the Cross of Jesus Christ and have been given the mission of carrying it to the entire people in South Sudan as a sign and reminder that in Jesus alone, crucified and risen, do we find salvation and redemption. To everyone, it says: *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen"* (Luke 24:5). Let us see Jesus in this same way: as alive and overflowing with joy, the victor over death, a friend who loves you and wants to live in you.

Of course, the present situation of the Country is very challenging. The economy and the cost of living tell us that the economic difficulties that our people face have become unbearable. While many of the factors influencing our economy are outside of our control, we should not underestimate the role that political stability could play in attracting investment and increasing economic production in South Sudan.

We are on transition towards a Democratic elected government institution; however, the indicators show that South Sudan parties to the agreement are faced with challenge of adequate preparation for the conduct of a democratic and peaceful elections for ending the political transition for implementing the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Currently, the political parties have divided position on the preparation for the conduct of the scheduled elections for December 2024. The political parties are now in a serious deadlock over the preparation for the conduct of the forthcoming national elections. There are higher chances that the deadlock will drag the country back to armed violence. We know with the understanding that there are key benchmarks to be fulfilled: Obtaining Permanent



Constitution; Unification of the Armed Forces; Population Census and the Repatriation of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and the Refugees; Creating an Open Civic and Political Space; and National funding of the Elections).

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) call on the political leaders for forge out the way forward with positive messaging: a) Political parties hold inclusive political dialogue for reaching out some concrete decisions through consensus for creation of conducive environment for the conduct of the elections in December 2024. b) Time is running out so faster and your silence on the way forward for holding the elections plus your confrontational political statements in the media, all these raise public fear for the elections. c) The country requires peaceful and democratic transition from violence to peace not the political culture of always waging armed deadly violence where the common citizens suffer.

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) call on the parties to accelerate implementation of these steps as a key agenda item in the inter-party dialogue. We also urge the political leadership to reach out to our people in a spirit of unity, calm their fears, and assure the public that they will not let political competition devolve into violent conflict.

The CHURCH through the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) in any contentious negotiation, have the ability of the mediator role to build consensus and trust among the parties, which is a critical factor. Given the Church's moral authority and proximity to the population at the grassroots, we believe that South Sudan Council of Churches and other religious leaders should play a central role in the mediation effort.

To our brothers and sisters in the global and regional ecumenical community, just like the woman who was crying and looking for Jesus, we say that South Sudanese communities are yearning for peace, justice, and equitable development. As the world marks the passion of Christ this Easter, we, as citizens of South Sudan, shall forever remain grateful for your continued journey and pastoral solidarity with us. As Scripture reminds us, in Christ, we form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Romans 12:5). From this, the CHURCH in South Sudan is part of the global body of Christ and, therefore, the suffering of the CHURCH in South Sudan implies the entire global body is not well. Hundreds of people including children, women, the elderly, and those with disabilities continue to live in poverty, situations of insecurity and desperation. As Scripture calls on us to bear one another's burdens in order to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), this Easter brings us the challenge of deepening the power of solidarity, as one body, to work together with those experiencing difficulties and suffering and hence lessen the burden in following the footsteps of Simon of Cyrene who, even though forced, accepted to carry the cross of Christ (**Matthew 27:32**) and hence, begun the process of consolation. a) We come to you to help us carry our crosses of hatred against each other by working with us to create neutral spaces for dialogue; b) We appeal to you, irrespective of the global trends of hostility, to champion the cause of the most vulnerable through advocacy and strategic pronouncement of injustices being committed; and c) We call on you to help us in generating and implementing alternative and best practices that can help in achieving sustainable reconciliation and social cohesion.

The road may be bumpy, frustrating, and disappointing. However, at the Council, as we bring you this Easter pastoral greetings, we reflect on the message of Paul to the Church in Galatia, *"let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* (Galatians 6:9).



Nevertheless, as we look at the cross, we see the ultimate sacrifice of our Lord, who emptied himself and denied all privileges and rights for the sake of the people he loves. May the love of Christ compel us to be of the same mind as Christ himself, who despite being in the very nature of God did not consider being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to cling to, but rather emptied himself, taking the form of a slave ... humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on the cross." (Philippians 2:3-8).

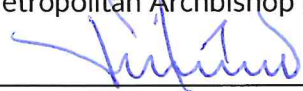
May the grace of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers, and sisters. AMEN!  
Happy Easter!

**SIGNED.**

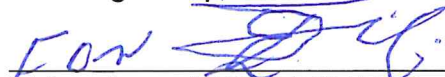
  
**Rt. Rev. Thomas TUT PUOT MUT**  
Moderator, South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC) &  
Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).

  
**H.E. Dr Stephen AMEYU MARTIN Cardinal MULLA**  
Metropolitan Archbishop of JUBA.

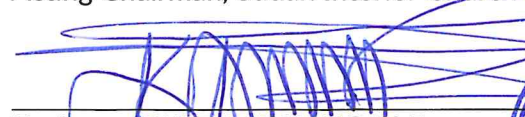
  
**The Most Rev. Dr Justin BADI ARAMA**  
Primate of the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) &  
Metropolitan Archbishop of JUBA Diocese.

  
**Rt. Rev. James MAKUEI CHUOL**  
Moderator of the 34<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCSS).

  
**Bishop James LAGOS ALEXANDER**  
Presiding Bishop, Africa Inland Church (AIC).

  
**Bishop James LADU EMILIANO**  
General Overseer, Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC).

  
**Rt. Rev. Benykeng AJAK PAL**  
Acting Chairman, Sudan Interior Church (SIC)

  
**Fr. James OYET LATANSIO PhD**  
General Secretary, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)  
JUBA - SOUTH SUDAN.

