

## INTERVIEW

# The Referendum in South Sudan: Is it Peace or Conflict Ahead? An Interview with Ambassador Daniel Rachuonyo Mboya

Jack Shaka

Submitted: February 2011

Accepted: March 2011

Published: May 2011

## Overview

Over the years, Sudan, especially the south, caught the eye of the world with images of war, including children suffering from malnutrition, child soldiers, rape victims, amputees and images of slavery. The situation in Darfur is no better now than it was before. It is grim. The eruption of violence in the Abyei region during the referendum in the south leaves a lot of question marks over the future of the region. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese are abroad as refugees thanks to the conflicts that have dogged the region for decades. Now, an overwhelming majority –almost 99%– have voted for an independent South Sudan. Companies are lobbying for contracts, governments are sending emissaries and the world is watching. Is peace finally being realised in Sudan? Is this what Dr John Garang envisioned for the south? Veteran diplomat, Daniel Rachuonyo Mboya was Kenya's first Ambassador to Sudan and also the first Special Envoy to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Secretariat for the Peace Initiative in Sudan. In this interview he expresses his opinion about the referendum in South Sudan and the future of the volatile region.

## Keywords

referendum, peace, conflict resolution, South Sudan, Sudan

## THE INTERVIEW

**Question:** The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has played a caretaker role in the negotiations between the north and the south. As the first Special Envoy for IGAD and the first Kenyan Envoy for Sudan, are you happy with the outcome of the referendum and do you think it will serve to quell the violence that has rocked Sudan for years?

**Amb. Mboya:** So far, the outcome of the referendum shows a sign of jubilation.

And with the recent announcement of the results, I can only hope the positive results are accepted by both parties.

If such an acceptance takes place, then there will be lasting peace in both the south and the north.

**Question:** Do you believe that the International Criminal Court's (ICC) issue of an arrest warrant for President Bashir on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity made him not sabotage the referendum in order to look 'good' to the international community that has turned its back on him?

**Amb. Mboya:** Indeed, the ICC issue plus regional and international pressure made President Bashir to cooperate before and during the referendum.



**Question:** Most of the Northerners are Arab-Muslim and the Southern majority are mostly Christians. In your opinion, was the referendum also a war, a positioning between Christianity and Islam and, if so, what kind of effect is this going to have?

**Amb. Mboya:** The referendum was a war of many fronts. For example: freedom, slavery, discrimination, injustices, equality, culture, religion, development, marginalisation, self-determination among others. So, the outcome of the referendum has shown part of this but with time, we shall see more effects whether positive or negative.

**Question:** The civil wars between the North and South Sudan have gone on for years. Will the outcome of the referendum make things any different?

**Amb. Mboya:** Absolutely. Things will be different in that the South Sudanese will be in charge of their own destiny. This is something they have not had in a long time. As you know, many fled abroad because of the conflicts that were taking place in Sudan over the years.

**Question:** The referendum was deemed peaceful by international observers but as it went on, there were several deaths in Abyei, the oil rich region sandwiched between the North and the South. What's your analysis on Abyei?

**Amb. Mboya:** Although there were problems in Abyei during the referendum, these were just deliberate acts to cause tension with a view to disrupt the referendum in the south.

The history of Abyei indicates strongly that Abyei is an integral part of south Sudan. The inhabitants are members of Ngok Dinkas. Therefore, the nomads from the north who came to graze their animals in Abyei during drought in the north must not be allowed to confuse history. But rather they should support the outcome of the referendum so that peace is realised. I am also keen to see what will happen during the referendum in Abyei and what criteria will be used to decide who is a resident of Abyei.

## THE CIVIL WARS IN SUDAN

**Question:** Dr. John Garang, the founder of Sudan People's Liberation Movement died before he could see a new South Sudan. Do you agree that this is what he wanted all along? An independent South Sudan?

**Amb. Mboya:** Dr. John Garang had written extensively about the conditions of the people of Sudan generally and those of the south in particular. From his writings,

one tends to believe that he would have wanted to see a situation of lasting peace in Sudan where there is no marginalisation, slavery, discrimination but a situation that offers every Sudanese equal justice, equal economic opportunities, freedom, education, development and a sense of self-reliance to determine their own destiny.

**Question:** You worked in Sudan as the first Kenyan Ambassador to Sudan thereby being one of the longest serving Kenyan envoys to Sudan. What's your opinion on the role the international community has played in fuelling the conflicts in Sudan?

**Amb. Mboya:** I was the Ambassador to Sudan from 1982-1985 and left soon after the people's revolution which toppled President Nimeyi in 1985. A lot of things have happened since my departure from Sudan. So, any activities about which actors in the international community have been fuelling the conflicts, I would not be able to provide adequate information.

**Question:** The second Sudanese Civil War in 1983 began when you were still Kenya's Envoy to Sudan. Just as you left, Colonel Bashir seized Sudan in a coup d'état in 1989 and went on to call himself President. What did you think of this?

**Amb. Mboya:** Colonel Bashir seized power in a coup d'état in 1989 from Sadik Elmadi, an elected civilian. Democracy must be seen to prevail at all times. So, the coup was something unfortunate.

**Question:** Since the civil wars, there are hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees abroad. From Kenya to the USA. A call for them to return 'home' would be justified in your opinion or not?

**Amb. Mboya:** The Sudanese who left Sudan and are now refugees in other countries are very nationalistic and love south Sudan. When conditions that made them leave their country improve, then they will return and settle.

Already there is extensive settlement going on in south Sudan by those returning refugees. If one travels from Nimule to Juba, one can witness extensive settlement. These refugees do not have to be called to return, they are doing it voluntarily.

**Question:** Darfurians have suffered in the hands of the Janjaweed (militia) for many years. From rapes to racial slurs to deaths. Is this going to stop?

**Amb. Mboya:** It will continue until a peaceful solution is found for the people of Darfur.



## DEVELOPING SOUTH SUDAN: WHAT NEXT?

**Question:** How does south Sudan plan to sustain its development agenda and is the international community going to lend a hand?

**Amb. Mboya:** The development of south Sudan will depend on its people and natural resources available. Agriculture would be the main occupation. The international community should provide assistance to south Sudan to enable them to begin development on a solid foundation.

**Question:** There is intense lobbying by big companies for a 'piece' of South Sudan. From road construction companies to banks and many more. Are these companies genuinely interested in the development of South Sudan, the post conflict reconstruction or in profiteering?

**Amb. Mboya:** Not all companies lobbying for construction jobs in south Sudan have profiteering motive. Banks in particular have provided excellent services necessary for economic development. In fact, without banks in south Sudan, the economy would have been paralysed due to the lack of these essential financial services.

**Question:** As a veteran diplomat, what advice can you give President Bashir and First Vice President Silva Kiir? And what advice can you give to the people of the South and the North?

**Amb. Mboya:** So far, both the south and north have handled themselves very well under very delicate circumstances. They should keep it like that. The same goes for President Bashir and Vice President Kiir: they should work hard to maintain peace and stability in the region. The world is watching.

**Question:** One of the core missions of IGAD is 'Promotion and maintenance of peace and security and humanitarian affairs'. Would you consider IGAD successful in its mission?

**Amb. Mboya:** The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has been successful in brokering peace between the Government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement which was signed by the above parties is a deserving credit to IGAD and to Kenya as chair to the IGAD Summit Sub-Committee on peace negotiation.

**Question:** Lastly, do you believe that peace lies ahead for both south and north Sudan or is it conflict?

**Amb. Mboya:** Up until now, I believe it is peace. I can only hope that the remaining issues like the border between north and south, Abyei, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile will be resolved by the same spirit that has prevailed up to now. If this happens then total belief in peace will be a reality.

## BIOGRAPHY

From 1999 to 2001, Ambassador Daniel Rachuonyo Mboya was the Special Envoy to the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Secretariat on Peace in the Sudan, appointed by His Excellency Daniel Arap Moi (former President of Kenya) to lead the mediation process between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

He was Kenya's first ambassador to the Republic of Sudan, from 1982 to 1985, and also the Second Secretary at the Kenyan Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 1973 to 1978 where he had multiple responsibilities covering the Sudan, the Organisation of African Unity and the East African Community. He headed the Asia Division at the Kenyan Ministry of foreign affairs and also spent time in Japan as a Counsellor and Chargé d' Affairs. He has held other high profile Presidential appointments as Permanent Secretary in various government ministries in Kenya. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts from the State University of New York at Geneseo, USA and studied diplomacy at Queen's College, Oxford University, UK. ■



<http://journal-of-conflictology.uoc.edu>

Jack Shaka The Referendum in South Sudan...

## Recommended citation

SHAKA, Jack (2011). "The Referendum in South Sudan: Is it Peace or Conflict Ahead? An Interview with Ambassador Daniel Rachuonyo Mboya" [online interview]. *Journal of Conflictology*. Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Campus for Peace, UOC. [Consulted: dd/mm/yy].

<<http://www.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/journal-of-conflictology/article/view/vol2iss1-shaka/vol2iss1-shaka>>

ISSN 2013-8857



This work is subject to a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivative-Works 3.0 Spain licence. It may be copied, distributed and broadcasted provided that the author and the source (*Journal of Conflictology*) are cited. Commercial use and derivative works are not permitted. The full licence can be consulted at: <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/es/deed.en>>

## About the author of the interview

**Jack Shaka**  
[jackshaka@gmail.com](mailto:jackshaka@gmail.com)

Jack Shaka is the Country Director, in Nairobi, Kenya, for Moving Framez Africa (MFA), a media, peace and development organisation. He is a reporter for Africa News, run by Africa Interactive based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and covers social issues. Jack is author of "The Refugee: An odyssey into the refugee life" and co-author of "Silent No More-Youth Legislative Theatre Process in Kenya".



**CAMPUS  
FOR PEACE**



Universitat Oberta  
de Catalunya  
[www.uoc.edu](http://www.uoc.edu)