

End Impunity against Journalists in South Sudan and honor their work



By Ms. Kuyang Harriet Logo Mulukwot
November 2nd has been proclaimed as the International day to end impunity for crimes against journalists. In a UN resolution at its 68 sitting, member states were urged to implement definite measures in order to counter the present culture of impunity. South Sudan as a member of the United Nations is equally bound to this resolution and is tasked with the obligation to end impunity against journalists. Article 24(2) and (3) of the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan, 2011(TCSS 2011) provides that all levels of government shall guarantee the freedom of the press and other media as shall be regulated by law in a democratic society. The provisions further espouse that every citizen, shall have the right to the freedom of expression, reception and; dissemination of information, publication, and access to the press without prejudice to public order, safety or morals as prescribed by law, while requiring all media to abide by professional ethics. Article 10 of the TCSS 2011 notes that no

derogation from the rights and freedoms enshrined in the bill shall be made, except in a state of emergency. The space of operation for journalists has gotten more restricted and the impunity goes on unabated and has raised concerns. In its 2015 global impunity index, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked South Sudan as the 5th worst place for journalists globally and 2nd worst in Africa after Somalia, where offenders and perpetrators of crimes against journalists go unpunished, while the crimes are barely investigated. The 2015 report notes in detail that,

“Since the civil war broke out in 2013, security agents have harassed the press and raided media outlets to limit coverage of news and activities. According to CPJ research, South Sudan is now the second worst impunity offender in Africa after Somalia.” Stakeholders in South Sudan have committed to documenting several incidents where journalists have been gravely harmed. A documentation covering a period between 1st of January to 30th of August 2016 points to several incidents where journalists have been beaten, arbitrarily arrested, threatened, killed, shot at, kidnapped, tortured or attacked. Some of the incidents documented also covered the denial of the right to access to information, threats to close media houses, summoned for questioning or had their equipment confiscated and at the extreme, journalists have been targeted on an ethnic basis. Those who have survived these ordeals have shared harrowing testimonies.

These testimonies paint a total disregard of the rights of journalists by the state security and right now, the environment has

only gotten worse as the clamp on the work of journalists gets worse each day.

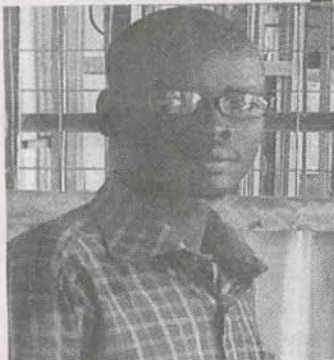
The most glaring concern is the blatant denial of the due process of law to the journalists. It is on record that after undergoing several brutalities at the hands of the state security, the journalists are barely charged with any offences and for some that have been detained; they are hardly accorded the right to contact their attorneys or families and have never been produced before a competent court of law. All cases are handled within the premises of the state security, who often act outside of the requirements of the law. While the journalists have adhered to a strict code of conduct in their reporting and other broadcast activities, the state security has been dealing with journalists with utmost impunity and the highest political leadership barely reprimands the actions of its own state security. All efforts at getting government to act on the impunity against journalists have bred harsh conditions for journalists. The media related legislation has been enacted and these laws seek to enhance the role of journalists in accessing information by strengthening the Media Regulatory Authority in order to ease communications and any other issues surrounding the work of journalists. The positive developments relating to the enactment of the media laws have been thwarted by the sweeping powers that have been accorded to the National Security by the enactment of the National Security Act. Despite several pleas to the National Legislative Assembly to shelve or amend the bill before the President assents to it, nothing was done and instead, the Act was eventually passed by a majority in Parliament and the President of the

Republic happily signed the bill into law. It has become crucial that the Government of the Republic of South Sudan acts upon its responsibility to investigate the crimes against journalists because protecting journalists and guaranteeing a free press is essential for the development of a free society and is key to the enhancement of the rights to freedom of expression and access to information in a democratic state. It is time that the government lives up to the aspirations of all South Sudanese as enshrined in the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan 2011.

As we all commemorate this day and recall the sacrifices made by our gallant journalists across the world and South Sudan in particular, it is important for government and all stakeholders to note that, in order to foster an inclusive sustainable development as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a great need to promote SDG goal 16.10 guaranteeing the public access to information in order to reach the 17 SDGs. The plea that we all make on this day is simple – protect journalists by ending the rampant impunity and to those whose lives have been lost in the struggle of journalism, your memories will live on and will be instrumental in all our campaigns to secure a better future for journalists.

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The power of charity



By Peter Wek Mabiordit,
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Charity is one of the noblest tasks that a man can do in his life. According to different religious beliefs, our life on earth is just a transitory phase of an external journey towards salvation so in this brief period that we are on earth, which we call life, we have to live with purpose. For some people the true meaning of life is the joy of giving. They realize this dream of theirs by engaging in acts of charity. A charitable

person loves his fellow human beings and likes to help them when in distress. He is very sensitive to the feelings of others. The sight of pain or misery troubles him and he tries his level best to alleviate that misery. He is deeply moved at the sight of beggars or victims of natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, poverty etc. A good example of charity was what I saw from my late father. The old man was so touched by the suffering of brethren that he would share the little he had with them including his plate of food and the only gourd of milk. At first I thought that his extreme charity was depriving him of his basic needs and therefore requested him to either stop or at least tell them that he had nothing to share but he insisted that giving was one of the pillars of South Sudanese culture adding that it was an obligation towards God and humanity.

Today the world is in greater need of charity than ever before. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. On one hand, we have billionaire businessmen, sports stars and movie stars while on the other hand we have millions of diseased and starving men, women and children dy-

ing for that one morsel of grain that would keep them alive. In South Sudan most scholars point to factors such as war and corruption as the major causes of poverty marked with per capita income of the lower class less than one dollar a day. If all the rich people and others who are reasonably well-off contribute something in terms of money, food, clothes or even empathy, then the world would definitely be better off. There is no denying the fact that sections from the rich have always contributed towards the uplifting of the poor. Many big corporations, charity trusts and societies make good contributions in areas of poverty-alleviation, food and health. Recently the two richest men on the planet, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and investor Warren Buffet announced the donation of a lion's share of their wealth to charity. They also called upon fellow billionaires all over the world to emulate them. This has had a ripple effect whose benefits are being seen all over the world. But evidently, lot more needs to be done.

This however does not necessarily mean that one has to be a billionaire to show charity. Even simple actions like feeding

poor people in the streets of Juba city for a day or teaching, those acts of charity can bring a change. Every individual can play their part and it would make a difference to another person's life. Also acts of charity should not be trumpeted. It should be done from the heart and not for publicity or other commercial purposes. The best form of charity is the one in which the identity of the donor remains hidden. As God fearing South Sudanese we should emulate good behaviors from our culture and avoid the confusions of dotcom generation whereby a rich person has to be worshipped first in order to extract something from him or her. The more we give for free, the more will be our rewards in heaven as our lord Jesus Christ put it clear in the scriptures through the parable of the rich young man. Let's open our hearts and help the widows and orphans through donation of basic items for they are the future of our country. May God bless South Sudan!

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