

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article9038>



South Sudan

# Peace under threat in South Sudan

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP605 - June 2025 -

Publication date: Tuesday 10 June 2025

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**There is a significant risk that South Sudan could once again plunge into widespread conflict, on top of a major financial crisis.**

After separating from Sudan to become an independent state in 2011, South Sudan has experienced a succession of conflicts. The most deadly was the civil war of 2013, which caused the deaths of 400,000 people and the displacement of four million refugees.

A peace agreement was signed in 2018 between President Salva Kiir of the Dinka community and his Vice-President Riek Machar of the Nuer community.

## The end of the peace agreement

This peace agreement provided for the unification of the various militias into a national army, the holding of presidential elections and collegiality in the governance of the country. None of these commitments has been honoured. Conflicts between the presidency and the vice-presidency have continued to escalate, culminating in the bloody episode in Upper Nile State.

Last month the White Army, a Nuer militia, invaded the Nasir military base, fearing that the military garrison present would be replaced by members of communities hostile to them. The presidency responded by sending the air force to bomb the town, causing many civilian casualties. Violence spread across the country between the forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) supporting President Kiir and the SPLM-IO (In Opposition) led by Machar. Machar and several of his companions were arrested, accused of masterminding the attack on Nasir.

## A multifaceted crisis

The two leaders are cultivating the conflict between the Dinka and Nuer, who are essentially pastoralists and often compete for access to water and grazing land. The Dinka feel they are the guardians of the country's independence because of their struggle, unlike the Nuer, who have at times forged alliances with Sudanese forces. For Kiir and Machar, the main issue remains the struggle for power and the capture of the state's wealth.

Salva Kiir has developed a clientelist policy largely financed by oil production. When the war broke out in Sudan, the oil pipeline carrying the black gold was destroyed, drying up the country's main source of revenue and leading to a political crisis within the presidential camp. This crisis has been exacerbated by the president's failing health, which is encouraging speculation about his succession, even though Salva Kiir has chosen Benjamin Bol Mel, a businessman, as his financial adviser.

Although the SPLM IO has weakened, this does not rule out the resumption of widespread conflict in the country, where numerous militias have been created, with a risk of connection with another conflict, the one tearing Sudan apart.

This situation is exacerbating multidimensional poverty. In 2024, 92.6% of the population was deprived of education, access to basic services and decent housing, compared with 84% in 2023. With the risk of war, this deterioration can only get worse.

29 May 2025

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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