

Sudan faith leader supports call to forgiveness

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Juba, Southern Sudan, January 24 (ENInews) – The head of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) has backed a statement by the president of southern Sudan that southerners should forgive northerners for the deaths and atrocities of the 21-year civil war.

The Rev. Ramadan Chan Liol, the general secretary of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox church grouping, said the appeal by Salva Kiir Mayardit agreed with one the churches were sending to their followers.

"Our faith is built on forgiveness. If there is no forgiveness, there will be no peace," Chan told ENInews in a telephone interview from Khartoum on 21 January.

Chan, who also leads the Baptist Church in Sudan, urged Christians and followers of traditional religions to stop being bitter with those from the mainly Arab and Islamic north. He said forgiving the past will enable southerners to move ahead and develop their region.

"We must now focus on the many challenges that face us as a new nation. They are quite enormous," Chan said.

In mid-January, with secession by the south expected, Kiir urged southerners to forgive northerners for the deaths of more than two million people. Sudan has seen two civil wars -- one from 1955 to 1972 and the other from 1983 to 2005. The conflicts centered on resources and religion.

"For our deceased brothers and sisters, particularly those who have fallen during the time of the struggle, may God bless them with eternal peace and, like Jesus Christ on the cross, forgive those who have forcibly caused their death," Kiir was quoted in media reports as saying at St. Theresa Roman Catholic Cathedral in Juba.

On 23 January, preliminary results released by the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) confirmed that nearly 99 per cent of the voters chose separation. This means the process towards southern Sudan's independence would be started. It is expected that after the official announcement of the referendum results on 14 February, there will be an interim period of six months during which outstanding issues will be resolved.

The issues include the border demarcation between the south and north, the sharing of oil wealth and other resources, south Sudan's name, currency and the status of Abeyi, a disputed oil region on the border between the two.

At the same time, Chan, whose SCC observed the polling process, has expressed satisfaction at the process and its outcome. "It was free, fair and transparent. We are happy it has been credible and peaceful. We are satisfied," he said.