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## Why We Support Escalated Financial Pressure and Consequences An Open Letter to the South Sudanese People

From John Prendergast and Brian Adeba  
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To the People of South Sudan,

We at the Enough Project are deeply concerned about the flaws in the signed peace agreement that fall short of addressing the root causes of the conflict in South Sudan in a comprehensive manner that will prevent a return to conflict. We are writing this open letter to explain why – even after a peace deal was signed on September 12 – we continue to advocate for escalating and targeted financial and legal measures against those who are looting South Sudan’s resources as well as those responsible for continuing conflict, mass atrocities, and other human rights abuses, whether in the regime, the armed opposition, or commercial collaborators – domestic or international – of either.

It is common knowledge that corruption is more than endemic in South Sudan. As a result, hospitals, schools, and government departments are starved of the basic necessities that would allow them to function efficiently. The beneficiaries of this corruption live lavish lifestyles within and outside the country. As The Sentry has documented in previous reports, these officials and their collaborators own expensive vehicles and mansions throughout the world. Through third parties and shell companies, they invest their money abroad and not in South Sudan.

Just as troubling, outside facilitators and enablers profit from South Sudan’s misery. Unscrupulous bankers, lawyers, arms dealers, realtors, mining companies, and oil companies are equally complicit in the looting machine that has been constructed in South Sudan. The violent kleptocracy that has emerged in Juba since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement a dozen years ago would not have been possible without international collaborators.

This debilitating corruption is possible because top-level politicians have disabled the institutions that are supposed to hold officials accountable by providing no operational funds, creating conflicting legislation, and appointing cronies to head them. To date, the South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission has yet to prosecute anyone for corruption. To hide the theft and misuse of public money, the government has

barred the Audit Chamber from making its reports public. There are worrying signs that competitive corruption will continue to push the trajectory of development backward.

Worst of all, the capturing and repurposing of these institutions by South Sudan's post-independence leaders created a free-for-all looting spree of the public purse that in turn incentivized a competition for the spoils of state among rival political factions. This competition turned deadly in December 2013. As noted in the African Union inquiry into the conflict in 2015, corruption is a key driver of conflict in South Sudan. Therefore, we believe it was not too much to ask that stringent measures to counter corruption should have been included in the September 12 agreement. Unfortunately, the measures stipulated in this latest peace deal are weak and entrust the same people responsible for the construction of this looting machine with oversight responsibilities of government revenue. Going forward, this is certainly a recipe for disaster.

Violence in South Sudan does not only arise from disputes regarding national politics. Localized conflicts between communities have equally devastating consequences for long-term peace and stability. Such conflicts are common in many locations in South Sudan. In the Greater Bahr El Ghazel region, inter-clan warfare continues unabated, and certain areas are virtual war zones as a result. Conflicts caused by cattle raiding between communities in the Greater Upper Nile and Greater Equatoria continue to threaten peace and stability. Border disputes are increasingly a source of tension between communities. Subsequently, there's an expectation that the peace agreement will address these sub-national conflicts. However, the stipulations on disputed borders in the agreement are inadequate, if not ambiguous. Rather than create confidence in the peace deal, they have heightened suspicion. This mistrust is setting the ground for more violence and needs to be addressed in a manner that creates ownership among local communities.

Given the government's abysmal record on corruption, we are also concerned about the measures on the cantonment of armies in the agreement. Most worrying is the fact that donor support for cantonment, which is very critical to the success of the peace agreement, is non-existent. Donors have expressed reservations about the prevailing lack of transparency and accountability within the government and have thus declined to commit support. Lack of funds for cantonment will derail this agreement. Equally concerning is the fact that the agreement fails to indicate locations for troop cantonment. The recent upsurge in fighting around the Yei area is spurred by the ambition to gain control of areas for the proposed cantonment.

All the factors outlined above point to the fact that this agreement is an elite pact that offers short-term concessions to the parties with the big guns while overlooking the long-term prospects of a peace that is based on the fundamental issues behind this conflict.

Why are we saying this?

In collaboration with present and past colleagues, we have been involved in research and advocacy on South Sudan for many years, dating back to the period when it was part of Sudan. We gave our full support to the long search for peace in the North-South war, and for the referendum that resulted in the birth of South Sudan. In the ongoing war, we have supported efforts for a just and sustainable peace deal that goes beyond short-term deals that benefit elites but fails to address the fundamental causes of conflict. In so doing, we have not taken sides nor do we wish to impose our own idea of what South Sudan's government should look like or who should run it.

Rather, we at the Enough Project are interested in seeing that the resources of South Sudan are used for the benefit of its people and not ending up in shell companies, bank accounts, and real estate in neighboring countries. In that regard, we have advocated for targeted financial pressures on key individuals and entities complicit in the looting of South Sudan's resources.

In sum, we are not supporting regime change, but rather we support **system change** to disincentivize the grand corruption and mass looting of the state.