

SUBJECT: This is the latest from Sudan; we need to reach them!

SUDANESE MILITARY MOBILIZES: Bishop Asks, "Will 2011 Bring Peace?"

AL-UBAYYID, Sudan, OCT. 22, 2009 (Zenit.org):

The bishop of Al-Ubayyid is warning that war may soon be returning to his country. He observes the mobilizing of military forces facing an upcoming national referendum.

Bishop Macram Gassis stated this to "Aid to the Church in Need", the agency reported today.

The prelate warned that "just one single shot" is needed "to explode and we will go back to the bush" where many people were forced to live under rough conditions for some 21 years during the country's civil war.

He reported that both the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army, a rebel movement, and the military in Khartoum, the nation's capital, are arming themselves.

The bishop asserted: "To see arms being amassed, to see military preparations being made ... is this an indication of a peaceful mind? "It indicates that something is in the air." He expressed concern over the coming 2010 election and the 2011 referendum on independence for Southern Sudan. For one thing, the prelate noted, the census conducted for the registration of voters and the division of power between the regions was not conducted properly.

"How can you say we have a fair assessment when I haven't seen the census being done?" he asked. "So if this hasn't been carried out professionally and faithfully, how are we going to carry out the referendum?"

Bishop Gassis, who serves in a diocese in the Nuba Mountains, stated that it is a complicated decision in his region which is partially occupied by the State military, after being evacuated by the government forces from Khartoum.

He stated that, in his region, the idea of secession is popular, and in Nuba people say, "We don't want anything to do with the North." However, he added, "It's going to be hard because the oil is going to play an important role."

The prelate explained that people from the south claim that the Khartoum authorities are not giving them a "fair share" of the oil. He reiterated, "It isn't going to be easy if the South want secession."

He expressed concerned about how the society's most vulnerable will be affected by what is coming. "I don't know how our people will face another armed struggle. It is always the elderly, women and children who suffer," the bishop stated.

He explained that he himself had experienced three aerial raids during the civil war: "It is terrible to be at the mercy of the planes flying above you --- the only thing to do is lie down as flat as a pancake and hope that the bomb does not hit you --- you're completely helpless."

"We thank God for the fact that aerial bombing has stopped --- but at the back of our minds is the question, will 2011 bring a peaceful solution for the people of Sudan?" Bishop Gassis affirmed.

The Bishop continued: "We are in the hands of God. We ask God to save us from breaking down and going back to the gun --- the gun will not solve the problem." "We do not know what the solution will be, but we keep on praying, we are in His hands, we are His children."

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