



## The Crisis in Abyei

The first five months of 2011 saw the worst fighting in Abyei since the civil war. After clashes in February and March between Missiriya militias backed by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Abyei police forces aligned with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), SAF began a full-scale military assault on Abyei on 20 May. As of 1 June 2011, Abyei is occupied by the Sudanese army, Missiriya militia are looting the town, and the political future of the area is uncertain. The crisis in Abyei remains the most intractable of the post-referendum issues facing the country.

At issue is whether Abyei should join South Sudan or remain in the northern state of South Kordofan. While the Ngok Dinka, the residents of Abyei, want to join the South, the Missiriya, transhumant cattle herders who annually graze in the region, are bitterly opposed to this possibility.<sup>1</sup> At stake is the Diffra oil field in the north of the territory, Missiriya grazing land, and the livelihood and future of the Ngok Dinka. The latter two issues, however, are increasingly obscured as Abyei has become a political football in broader post-referendum discussions between the North and the South.

Abyei did not hold a scheduled referendum on its future in January, due to continuing disagreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP) over who should be eligible to vote. Following clashes in January, Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) composed of SAF and SPLA troops were deployed in Abyei to improve security in the area. In many ways they worsened it. In the coming months Missiriya militia forces attacked SPLA-aligned police forces and civilians, leaving over 150 dead, as the situation deteriorated further. Following an altercation involving a JIU on 19 May, SAF launched a full-scale aerial and ground assault on Abyei. Once the town was occupied, SAF-aligned Missiriya militia forces burned down approximately one-third of the standing structures. Between 40-80,000 people were displaced. There are almost no civilians left in Abyei.

There are ongoing negotiations in Addis Ababa between the SPLM and the NCP. A variety of proposals have been suggested to resolve the present impasse, including an Ethiopian peacekeeping force in the territory and a rotating administration (proposed by Khartoum; rejected by the SPLA). However, even if a short-term solution to the SAF occupation of Abyei can be found that enables the return of the population, there is considerable distance between the political positions of the two parties and no agreement on the long-term future of Abyei.

### Background to the crisis

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which brought an end to Sudan's second civil war, promised Abyei a referendum to decide whether the territory will remain in South Kordofan (where it had been placed in 1905 by the Anglo-Egyptian colonial regime) or rejoin the southern states.<sup>2</sup> The referendum was to be held simultaneously with the vote on southern self-determination.<sup>3</sup> The CPA also mandated the creation of the Abyei Boundaries Committee (ABC), to be composed of international experts, as well as members of the SPLM and NCP, which was to demarcate the borders of the territory.<sup>4</sup>



The referendum was derailed over a disagreement about who should be eligible to vote. The CPA explicitly granted voting rights to the Ngok Dinka—widely expected to vote to join the South—and 'other Sudanese residing in the area'. The NCP insisted that the Missiriya should be counted as residents, while the SPLM held that because they are seasonal migrants (moving through Abyei between November and April before returning to areas north of Abyei for rainy season grazing), the Missiriya should not be allowed to vote. The SPLM feared the NCP would move Missiriya into the area in an attempt to secure a vote to stay in the North.

It is now extremely unlikely that the referendum will be held. Following South Sudan's vote for secession in January, negotiations over the future of Abyei took place as part of a larger bundle of post-referendum issues discussed by a North–South committee. The SAF occupation of the territory has brought these discussions to a halt. Current talks in Addis Ababa focus on resolving the security situation in Abyei, not a political solution.

The current occupation, and prior talks, have moved negotiations about Abyei's future away from the measures set out in the CPA. The negotiations that began in 2010 have merged two previously distinct issues—the referendum and the borders of the territory. The CPA mandates that the borders of Abyei should be established following the lines of the ABC report, *and* that there should be a referendum.

When the ABC report was finished in 2005, the NCP immediately rejected its findings, which left major oilfields within the territory of Abyei. Following heavy clashes in Abyei in May 2008, and in view of the continuing political impasse over the ABC report, the SPLM and NCP took the case to international arbitration. Despite having agreed to abide by the judgement of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, which demarcated the area of Abyei, the NCP rejected its ruling. As of June 2011, only four of the planned twenty-six beacons indicating the PCA demarcated-area of Abyei have been erected, and they are all in the south of the territory. Threats from Missiriya militias forced the end of demarcation.

In 2010, the borders of the territory and the referendum were negotiated together as part of a more general solution to the Abyei crisis. From September to December, as it became increasingly apparent that Abyei's referendum would not go ahead, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) put together a raft of new suggestions they hoped would break the deadlock, one of which was giving the Missiriya joint citizenship, as well as an administration in the northern part of Abyei.

Another AUHIP suggestion, backed by the NCP, would see Abyei divided into two, with the northern half—and the Diffra oil field—remaining in the North, and the southern half, and its majority Dinka population, being transferred to South Sudan by presidential decree. Scott Gration, the former US special envoy to Sudan, supported this proposal, and placed huge pressure on the SPLM to compromise. The SPLM refused to do so, seeing it as the *de jure* formalization of an occupation carried out during the second civil war, when Missiriya militias razed Ngok Dinka settlements in the north of Abyei, forcing civilians to flee. Instead, the SPLM insisted that the PCA

ruling should be final and binding, and that a referendum be held along the lines indicated in the CPA.

In the months leading up to the referendum on Southern self-determination, the political impasse over Abyei's political future greatly increased tensions on the ground.

### **The pre-referendum period**

As the South's independence vote approached, around 40,000 Ngok Dinka returned to Abyei from the North, fearing retaliation if South Sudan voted for secession. Many returnees reported being shot at by Missiriya militias as their buses went through territory north of Abyei, in addition to incidents of rape and harassment. In the run-up to the referendum, the general feeling among the Ngok Dinka was extreme discontent.

Fearing that their wishes would be ignored, the Ngok Dinka began preparing to unilaterally rejoin the South. Each of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms held community discussions ahead of the referendum; all of them decided to join the South. Both the SPLM and the NCP took steps to make sure this did not happen. The SPLM, worried about the effect such a unilateral declaration would have on the Southern referendum, pressured the Abyei Administration not to publicly announce the decision of the Ngok Dinka community, and Sudanese president Omar al Bashir, speaking on television, threatened war in the event of a unilateral attempt to join the South.

### **The first clashes and paper agreements**

On 7 January, Missiriya militias using heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) attacked police positions<sup>5</sup> just outside Maker, a village 15 km north-west of Abyei town. While the attacks left dozens of people killed, the SPLM, anxious that conflict over Abyei not derail the southern referendum, downplayed their importance. The NCP denied it had any role in the attacks.

Following the clashes, two meetings were organized to address the deteriorating security situation in Abyei. The first, held on 13 January in Kadugli, centred on the concerns of the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya communities, and addressed grazing rights and compensation for deaths caused in 2010.<sup>6</sup> The parties agreed that 400 Sudanese Pounds (SDG) would be paid in compensation for each cow, and forty cows for each person. They also agreed in principle on the Missiriya grazing paths: while they could follow the traditional eastern and western routes,<sup>7</sup> moving through the centre of Abyei would be prohibited in order to minimize tensions with recent returnees.<sup>8</sup>

Following the initial agreement, one follow-up meeting occurred on 22 February, at which compensation was offered for half of the deaths that occurred in 2010. The Missiriya who attended the meeting, however, refused to discuss grazing rights, and cancelled subsequent meetings.<sup>9</sup> Negotiations were definitively broken off on 27 February, when Missiriya militias attacked the village of Todac.

Even if the clashes had not interrupted the negotiations, the 13 January agreement would have been unlikely to effectively secure safe passage for the Missiriya through

the territory. Only five of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefs<sup>10</sup> were in attendance, and in Abyei there was widespread disquiet about the agreement. Some preferred not to negotiate while under attack, and others complained that the agreed compensation rates were too low. Most substantively, civil society leaders said that the agreement abrogated the Juba Conference. At the Abyei Ngok Dinka Consultative Conference in Juba (15 and 16 November 2010) it was agreed that the Missiriya should not be allowed to enter Abyei unless they agreed to the PCA-determined borders of Abyei.

The failure of the 13 January agreement underlines the difficulty of achieving a grazing agreement without a political settlement. Clashes in March meant that 2011 was the first year in living memory in which the Missiriya did not graze their cattle at the river Kiir, which runs south of Abyei town. While decent rainfall in South Kordofan during 2010 meant that Missiriya cattle herds were not seriously affected, there is now an almost total breakdown in community relations. As the annual migration to Abyei has now ended, the current SAF occupation of Abyei does not benefit Missiriya herders. The next migration will not begin until November 2011, so there is a window of opportunity to resolve the political situation independently of any need for the communities to negotiate future grazing agreements.

A second deal was also brokered and signed by the Northern and Southern ministers of the interior and representatives of the SPLA and SAF in Kadugli on 17 January. The accord addressed security arrangements in Abyei. The parties to the deal agreed to guarantee the security of returnees on their journey home by opening two routes through Abyei previously blocked by Missiriya militias in the run-up to the referendum. The escorts were to be provided by SAF north of the 1956 border, while the SPLA was to take over once the convoys entered South Sudan. Neither of these routes has yet been unblocked. Convoys must take a long detour through Unity state.

In order to prevent further outbreaks of violence, the Kadugli meeting sought to restore some semblance of security to the region. The NCP held the Juba Police<sup>11</sup> responsible for the violence in January, and the SPLA agreed to withdraw them to Abyei town, to be replaced by two new JIU battalions. The precise location of the JIUs was subject to considerable disagreement. Their deployment, moreover, caused more security problems than it solved.

Tensions caused by the rumoured presence of members of the 31<sup>st</sup> SAF battalion in Abyei finally boiled over on 12 February. A soldier from the SAF contingent of the JIU stationed just north of Abyei town attempted to enter the town market with a weapon and was refused entry by the police. The disgruntled soldier fired his gun in the air as he walked away, leading to widespread panic, and hundreds of people fleeing, fearing a repeat of 2008.<sup>12</sup> In the upheaval, northern merchants' shops were looted, one merchant was shot dead, and two were beaten to death. The new JIUs not only caused further tension, they failed to prevent the violence that followed.

### **A month of violence**

February and March 2011 saw 154 people dying in clashes in the middle of the territory; at least two villages were razed, and several others partially burned down.<sup>13</sup>



The clashes began on 27 February, as heavily armed Missiriya militias attacked police positions in the village of Todac, 15 km north of Abyei town. The attacks continued over the next week, as police positions at Todac and Maker were overrun. The Missiriya militias that attacked—estimated by the Abyei Administration at 700 strong—were armed with 12.7 mm machine guns, 60 mm mortars, RPGs, and small arms. There is evidence of SAF backing for the militias. United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) sources confirm that helicopters were used to ferry out the wounded following the 2 March attack on Maker, and civilian witnesses reported seeing militia fighters in SAF uniforms, as well as in the uniform of the Central Reserve Police, the combat-trained force that in recent years has been massively expanded in Kordofan.

Officially, SAF and the NCP deny any involvement in the attacks. However, international experts have pointed out the strong similarity between the wave of attacks in February–March and militia attacks during the second civil war that depopulated the north of Abyei, and consolidated Northern control of the oil fields. The militia attacks that occurred in the first three months of 2011, under this interpretation, would be a way of increasing NCP control of the north of Abyei, and strengthening the NCP negotiating position by carrying out a *de facto* occupation; as of 3 March 2011, there were almost no Ngok Dinka civilians north of Abyei town.<sup>14</sup>

Following the attacks of 27 February–3 March, there were a series of security meetings, interspersed with militia attacks. On 4 March, a high-level meeting between NCP and SPLM officials officially resulted in a renewed commitment to the January security arrangements. The following day, Missiriya militias burned down the village of Tajalei. A militia raid on Dungop, 10 km north-east of Abyei town on 21 March killed five civilians, and further underlined the tenuous nature of the agreements.

Even if both sides were sincere about leaving the JIUs as the only armed force—aside from UNMIS—in Abyei, the security arrangements would have been unlikely to guarantee security. During the attacks on Todac, the JIU was just 500 meters from the attackers, and did not intervene. The JIUs barracked separately, obeyed different command structures, and had differing interpretations of their mandate. Both sides feared a repeat of 2008, when JIU units in Abyei town split and began to fight amongst themselves. Far from preventing future conflict, the presence of the JIUs in Abyei risked exacerbating any clashes that would occur there; the 17 January security agreements were unable to provide a resolution to the security situation in Abyei.

March, April, and May saw a growing disconnect between official statements and the situation on the ground. The SPLM and NCP held repeated meetings at which they reaffirmed their commitment to remove all their troops from the area aside from those in the JIUs.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, there was extensive troop build-up in and around Abyei as both sides prepared for future conflict.

Satellite imagery produced by the Satellite Sentinel Project<sup>16</sup> showed what appeared to be T-55 tanks deployed by SAF to Muglad, just north of Abyei, and military encampments within the territory of Abyei, near Goli and Alal, that were consonant with Missiriya militia positions. The NCP also accused the SPLM of building up their



forces just outside Abyei. While concrete details on the build-up of SPLM forces are not known, Farhan Haq, the deputy spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, speaking on 14 March, said that ‘UNMIS has verified that both sides have reinforced their positions within the Abyei Area, including the confirmed presence of SAF and SPLA troops not affiliated with the Abyei Joint Integrated Units.’<sup>17</sup>

**The occupation of Abyei**

Events on 1 May proved to be a dress rehearsal for clashes later in the month. SAF forces, which according to the NCP were delivering an authorized weapons shipment to a JIU, were halted between Longar and Goli, above Abyei town, by SPLA-aligned Abyei police forces; 14 died in the fighting that erupted. According to Deng Arop Kuol, the Chief Administrator of Abyei, the SAF forces that tried to enter Abyei were composed of more than 200 troops and six ‘technicals’.<sup>18</sup> He also claimed that there were unauthorized SAF troops near Goli, which was consistent with the reports of the Satellite Sentinel Project.

As the situation continued to deteriorate on the ground, it appeared increasingly likely that the JIUs would trigger further conflict in the area. At the same time, the political rhetoric on both sides was strident. On 6 May, the SPLM released the draft transitional constitution for South Sudan, which included Abyei within the nascent state's boundaries, while the NCP continued to insist that Abyei was part of the North, and referred to the 1956 boundary between North and South, rather than the PCA-mandated borders of Abyei.

The rest of the month continued the pattern of official commitments to demilitarization and increased militarization on the ground. Missiriya militias attacked an UNMIS patrol on 11 May just outside Goli, leaving four Zambian peacekeepers injured, and there were Missiriya militia attacks on Abyei police positions.

The situation came to a head on 19 May. What exactly happened is still under dispute. What is clear is that while UNMIS was escorting 200 soldiers from the SAF contingent of a JIU to its deployment position, it came under attack close to Dokura, about 10 km north of Abyei town. Initial shots from SPLA-aligned forces sparked an altercation. UNMIS first claimed that two SAF soldiers were wounded, and one member of UNMIS. The NCP immediately claimed that 22 SAF soldiers were killed in the attack and blamed the SPLA, while an initial UNMIS statement said that the attack was criminal but did not name the offending party. Later statements by the NCP greatly inflated the number of casualties, with Kamal Ismail Saeed, Sudan's ambassador to Kenya, claiming on 24 May that 197 Northern troops were killed or missing as a result of the attack; a claim that the UN said was exaggerated.

The events of 19 May do not seem to have begun with a pre-meditated attack on SAF forces, but with a case of an errant soldier sparking a clash between both sides. It is extremely unlikely that the SPLA would want to inflame an already tense situation by attacking SAF while they are being escorted by UNMIS. Further investigation into the events of 19 May have proven difficult due to the attacks that followed.

SAF responded to the clash by saying that it reserved the right to respond ‘in the right time and place.’ The clash of 19 May was the justification that SAF needed to launch an attack that was clearly pre-meditated.

The next day SAF launched a full-scale assault on Abyei. The attacks began with the bombing of Banton Bridge, just south of Abyei town, which cut the SPLA supply line. Villages in the middle of the territory were then bombed by Antonov transport planes (outfitted as bombers), heavy artillery, and possibly Nanchang A-5 ground attack aircraft, as SAF forced advanced into Abyei, with lighter forces, armed with small arms and deployed on motorbikes, wearing both army uniforms and civilian clothes, followed by infantry units and T-55 battle tanks. It was an approximately battalion-sized force that invaded Abyei. The attack continued on Saturday 21 May as the Abyei police force, and the SPLA contingents of the JIUs, were quickly over-run. By 10:30 that night, UNMIS reported seeing 15 SAF tanks in Abyei town. While most civilians fled on 20 May, after the bombing began, the Abyei Administration estimates that 116 civilians were killed in the assault on Abyei town. It is not known how many soldiers and policemen lost their lives in the attack.

On 21 May, as the assault was underway, President Bashir issued decrees dissolving the Abyei administrative council, and firing the administration. According to the Abyei Road Map, these decisions should be taken in consultation with Vice-President Salva Kiir, who was not consulted. There is no legal validity to the decrees Bashir issued; they were designed to delegitimize the political administration at the same time as SAF were establishing control over the territory. On 30 May, SAF announced that Brigadier Ezz Al-Deen Osman would administer Abyei until a new administration was appointed, confirming the NCP rejection of the authority of the Abyei Administration.

In the days following the occupation of Abyei town, the Ngok Dinka fled south past Agok, to villages like Turalei, outside Abyei. The UN estimates that there are some 60,000 people displaced as a result of the SAF occupation, with local officials placing the number even higher. As the rainy season begins, all the displaced are in urgent need of food, shelter, and medical supplies.

Meanwhile, as SAF forces moved to occupy Abyei up to the river Kiir, militia forces moved into Abyei town, beginning a three-day looting and burning spree through Abyei town. UNMIS reports claimed that the looters used pickup trucks to move through town. UNMIS warehouses were also looted, and 800 tons of World Food Program supplies taken: enough to feed 50,000 people for three months. Satellite imagery produced by the Satellite Sentinel Project later confirmed that approximately one-third of Abyei town has been entirely burned down. While the looters don't appear to be SAF soldiers, the occupying forces have not prevented the looting, and eyewitness reports from the assault indicate that militia fighters fought alongside SAF, suggesting that just as SAF helped the Missiriya militias in the February and March attacks, so the militias helped SAF during the 20–21 May occupation of Abyei.

Amin Hassan Omar, a minister of state for presidential affairs, later told Al Jazeera that ‘There is no intention to reignite any war... We have just had a very limited operation for a very limited military purpose which was accomplished 100 per cent.’ The NCP claim that the assault on Abyei was a reaction to attacks on SAF troops and SPLA incursions into the territory. ‘As soon as we are quite sure that there's no vacuum left behind that will enable the SPLA to once again deploy in Abyei, we'll withdraw,’ Omar told Al Jazeera.

Despite the NCP claim that the assault on Abyei was a reaction to the clashes of 19 May, it looks to have been planned in advance, as suggested by the sustained troop build-up in Southern Kordofan in the first four months of the year. From January onward there is a continuity between the militia attacks of January, February, and March, which depopulated Abyei above Abyei town, and the assault of 20–21 May, which consolidated NCP control of the entire territory.

### **What happens next?**

Despite the military escalation of the last month, the SAF assault on Abyei appears unlikely to be the first move towards a resumption of all-out war between the North and the South. While the SPLM immediately condemned the assault as an act of war, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, minister of information in the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) clarified that the South would not respond militarily. The SPLM are focused on the formal declaration of independence on 9 July, and fear that if they respond militarily it would give the NCP sufficient reason to claim the SPLM had abrogated the CPA, and thus not recognize the new state. The SPLM are also facing multiple internal challenges, and while many members are committed to Abyei's inclusion in South Sudan, other parts of the SPLM are less attached.<sup>19</sup>

It is also unlikely that the NCP planned the occupation of Abyei as the first move in a return to all-out war that would see them lose precious oil revenue at a time they face multiple internal challenges. Instead, like the SAF-backed militia raids of the first months of 2011, the occupation is likely to be a move that strengthens the NCP's hand at the bargaining table. The occupation allows the NCP to demonstrate to the Missiriya, an important constituency for them, that they will not give Abyei to South Sudan, and to increase their support within the North. In view of a possible future referendum, the occupation also allows the NCP to change the demographic facts on the ground and fill Abyei with Missiriya while ensuring the Ngok Dinka population is reduced.<sup>20</sup> The scorched earth tactics employed in Abyei are consistent with such a strategy of demographic warfare; a tactic, moreover, employed by the NIF/NCP<sup>21</sup> during the second civil war, in both Abyei and Darfur.

Most importantly for the NCP, the occupation of Abyei now shifts the basis of future negotiations, which no longer begins with NCP non-implementation of the PCA and the CPA, but with a discussion about the conditions under which an end to the occupation would be acceptable to the NCP. Immediately following the occupation, the NCP was bullish. ‘Abyei is Northern Sudanese land,’ Bashir said in Khartoum on 24 May, ‘We will not withdraw from it.’





This is partly rhetoric designed for the home constituency; however, it reflects a genuine determination on the part of the NCP to tie the removal of SAF forces to a political settlement acceptable to the Missiriya and themselves. If this is the case, then it is likely that the SAF occupation of Abyei will continue for some time, as there are no mutually acceptable solutions to the Abyei crisis.

On 31 May, the African Union announced that both sides had agreed to a demilitarized zone across the entire border, enforced by troops from both armies. There are few details of the plan as of yet, and it remains hard to see how such a zone would be enforceable. In any event, Rabie A. Atti, a spokesman for the NCP, told the *New York Times* that this would not imply that SAF withdraw from Abyei.

One of the present suggestions put on the table by AUHIP was already discussed before the occupation, and involves an Ethiopian peacekeeping force occupying Abyei until a political settlement is organized.<sup>22</sup> However, the NCP is non-committal, and it remains to be seen whether an Ethiopian force would be adequate to prevent further violence.

The suggestion that an UNMIS force take the place of SAF is unlikely to be embraced. On 31 May, the Sudanese government reiterated that it wants UNMIS to leave Sudan by the end of its current mission on 9 July. Given that the NCP considers Abyei part of Sudan, it would be highly unlikely to concede to a further UNMIS presence. Furthermore, following its failure to act during the first four months of this year to protect the civilians of Abyei, UNMIS is entirely discredited in the eyes of the Ngok Dinka, even though it now has a Chapter VII mandate, and an additional battalion of Indian peacekeepers in Abyei.

The SPLM cannot agree to a political settlement that would split Abyei in two, or lead to Abyei staying in the North. The NCP continues to emphasize a political settlement to the crisis before ending the SAF occupation. In these circumstances, it is likely that the occupation will continue for some time to come.

Updated 2 June 2011

<sup>1</sup> The Missiriya are organized into two main sub-groups, the Humr and the Zuruq. It is the Humr who are centrally concerned with Abyei, and they annually pass through the territory.  
<sup>2</sup> In 1905, the Ngok Dinka were transferred to Kordofan province from what was then the southern province of Bahr el Ghazal. There have been numerous changes to the boundaries and composition of these areas over the years. As of 2011, if Abyei was to join a newly independent South Sudan, it would join Warrap state, while if it were to remain in Sudan, it would be a part of Southern Kordofan state.  
<sup>3</sup> The CPA mandated that in the interim period, Abyei was to have a local Executive Council, appointed by the Presidency (composed of President Omar al Bashir, and the Vice-President Salva Kiir) pending local elections in Abyei that never took place. In 2008, following the razing of Abyei town, the Abyei Roadmap, signed by both the NCP and SPLM, and designed to address the deteriorating security situation, changed the structure of the local administration. It holds that the Presidency shall mutually agree on the Abyei Administration. There is no mention of local elections.  
<sup>4</sup> Given the gulf between the positions of the NCP and SPLM, the international experts who composed one-third of the ABC made the deciding determination of the borders of the territory.  
<sup>5</sup> Under the terms of the Abyei Roadmap, the only armed forces allowed in Abyei are the JIUs,



composed of SPLA and SAF units, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), and the Abyei police, which is supposed to be moved into Abyei following the agreement of the Presidency. The NCP has long claimed that the SPLA has moved troops into Abyei under the pretence of being police units.

<sup>6</sup> In attendance were a number of Ngok chiefs, the commissioners of several districts in Abyei, commissioners from Western Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, and Warrap states (places the Missiriya traditionally pass through), as well as several Missiriya chiefs, and figures from the administration of South Kordofan.

<sup>7</sup> The traditional eastern route runs through Nama and Dumboloya to Unity state, while the western route goes from Mugadama, through Mayram, to Northern Bahr el Ghazal state.

<sup>8</sup> Subsequent meetings were supposed to work out the exact routes. The Missiriya also agreed to limit the number of weapons they carried when grazing: three rifles for fewer than 1,500 cattle, and five rifles for everything above that.

<sup>9</sup> The final cancellation occurred on 25 February, two days before renewed clashes broke out. Following the aborted meeting, the Missiriya herders, who had already advanced up to the Nyamora river, which cuts through the centre of Abyei, pulled their cattle back to positions further north, leading the Ngok Dinka to claim that they must have known about the attacks in advance.

<sup>10</sup> The chiefs of the Abyior, Manyuar, Mareng, Anyiel, and Alei, were all in attendance, as well as Kuol Deng Kuol, the Paramount Chief, and several area commissioners.

<sup>11</sup> The so-called 'Juba Police' were deployed to Abyei following the violence in 2008. Officially, this was a force of 300 men, designed to supplement the Abyei police and ensure security in the area. The NCP has long claimed that these forces are SPLA soldiers in police uniforms. One of the key conditions of the Kadugli agreements was that they withdraw to Abyei town. It was the Juba Police that inflicted heavy losses on the Missiriya militias during the January attacks.

<sup>12</sup> During the clashes of 2008, the 31<sup>st</sup> battalion of SAF (Southern Kordofan) was widely held responsible for the destruction of the town. One of the JIU battalions to be deployed to Abyei was principally composed of soldiers from Wau. However, many of the SAF troops stationed there refused to go to Abyei, and so the JIU's numbers were augmented by soldiers from the 31<sup>st</sup>, leading to widespread panic in Abyei among the Ngok Dinka population.

<sup>13</sup> The villages of Todac, Tajalei, Maker, and Wungok, were burned, the first two totally razed. The villages of Dungop and Noong were also attacked.

<sup>14</sup> The only exception being civilians assisting the Abyei police units that redeployed above Abyei town following the attacks at the beginning of March 2011.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, there were meetings on both 13 April and 9 May 2011, during which the SPLM and NCP committed to pulling all their troops out of Abyei.

<sup>16</sup> See <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full\\_Report\\_845.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_845.pdf)>.

<sup>17</sup> See <[http://www.un.org/News/press/docs/2011/1103\\_20110303\\_hilites\\_arch\\_view.asp?HighID=1839](http://www.un.org/News/press/docs/2011/1103_20110303_hilites_arch_view.asp?HighID=1839)>.

<sup>18</sup> A technical is an improvised military vehicle; in Abyei, technicals are normally pick-up trucks or land cruisers fitted with a 12.7mm machine gun.

<sup>19</sup> The issue is so controversial that during the second SPLM Congress in 2008, the meeting had to be suspended so discussions could take place behind closed doors.

<sup>20</sup> Even if a security arrangement is put in place that allows the return of the Ngok Dinka population, some will stay away following the violence. Many have nothing left to come back to, and the onset of the rainy season means it is extremely difficult to build new settlements.

<sup>21</sup> The National Islamic Front (NIF) seized power in a coup in 1989, and changed its name to the National Congress Party in 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Luka Biong, GoSS Minister of Presidential Affairs, told *Al Sahafa* that the NCP and SPLM had agreed to an Ethiopian battalion replacing the Zambian UNMIS battalion under Chapter VII on the 18 May, just two days before the invasion.