News



A person stands in a street in the city of Omdurman, Sudan, April 7, 2024, which is damaged from the fighting in the 16-month civil war in the country. On the day talks began in Geneva aimed at ending the conflict, a Catholic bishop in the region said Aug. 14 that the humanitarian situation in the northeast African country could not wait for "tomorrow." (OSV News/El Tayeb Siddig, Reuters)

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Khartoum, Sudan — December 6, 2024
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Sudanese Catholic Bishop Yunan Tombe Trille Kuku Andali of El Obeid Dec. 2 described narrowly escaping execution in his country, where he has remained with the faithful amid a deadly war between the Sudan Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

The bishop was returning to his diocese after attending a Eucharistic congress in Juba, the South Sudanese capital. The congress Nov. 24 was organized to mark 50 years — or golden jubilee — of the Sudan and South Sudan Catholic bishops' conference.

In a message written to fellow bishops and obtained by OSV News, Andali said that after arriving in El Obeid from the gathering, he encountered — in separate incidents — the army and, immediately afterward, the paramilitary. A deacon named Joseph was accompanying him.

"On the side of Rapid (Support) Forces, I was treated badly with heavy blows on the neck, the face and the sides of the head. I can't bite food, and (even) worse ... we narrowly missed martyrdom," Andali said in a text message to local bishops Dec. 2. Its authenticity was confirmed by OSV News.

The attacks occurred near the South Sudanese border town of Renk. According to church sources, the bishop was traveling on public transportation when he was picked out at an army checkpoint, after a personal search confirmed he was traveling with money. The soldiers took away some of the money he carried in dollars — under the pretext that the bishop was carrying "forbidden currency" — and let him go.

Soon after, he fell into the hands of the paramilitary RSF.

"Guns (were) given to the lads and (they were) instructed to carry out their usual business," the bishop said in his message to fellow bishops, underlining that they were clearly being led to execution.

"Thanks to the prayers of the church," he was saved, he emphasized, as on the way to what seemed like imminent death, a leader of the paramilitary had emerged from his office and ordered the gunmen to free the church people.

"That's how we survived," he said, adding that he "will try to see the doctor and feed you with further information. My situation is stable, just some mild pains," Andali told his fellow bishops.

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As the war forced out clergy from cities and towns, Andali told OSV News in June 2023 that he would remain with his flock until it became impossible to do so.

"I prefer to stay with them (Catholics) till it is not possible for us to be there. We hold some services on Sundays and, when necessary, on other occasions," he said.

Out of a Sudanese population of 46.8 million, 5.4% are Christians. Catholics account for about 1.1 million people, with a Muslim majority.

The war in the northeastern African country was triggered on April 15, 2023, after disputes between the army's chief, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, called Hemedti, boiled over.

An estimated 61,000 people have died in the war, according to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with the United Nations saying 11 million people have been displaced, and 25 million are in need of humanitarian aid.

On Nov. 21, the bishops in Sudan and South Sudan expressed deep concern over the deteriorating conflict in Sudan. The bishop said war was continuous and there was no chance for dialogue between the two fighting sides.

"Thousands of Sudanese lost their lives and millions fled their homes to seek refuge in relatively peaceful states or in the neighbouring counties. The humanitarian consequence on the civilians has gone beyond toleration and must be condemned in the strongest terms possible," said Cardinal Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla, president of Sudan and South Sudan bishops' conference in a statement.

The cardinal said the bishops urged the Sudanese people to learn to survive together, reject violence and work together.