

# Peace, Mediation, and Justice in South Sudan



South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, following decades of conflict. However, the promise of peace quickly faded as political rivalry between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar led the country to civil war in 2013. Since then, South Sudan's history has been shaped by repeated cycles of violence, fragile ceasefires, and power-sharing agreements that have failed to hold up. Efforts to restore peace, such as the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) and the 2018 Revitalised ARCSS (R-ARCSS), offered frameworks for reconciliation, but implementation has faltered due to mistrust, governance challenges, and ongoing armed disputes. Despite setbacks, regional and international mediation has remained central to South Sudan's peace process. This poster explores the country's ongoing struggle for peace, mediation, and justice, focusing on three recent developments that reflect these issues. First, the Tumaini Initiative, led by Kenya, represents renewed diplomatic efforts to re-engage opposition groups. The African Union's Panel of the Wise serves as a key third-party mediator, promoting dialogue and encouraging adherence to peace commitments. Finally, Riek Machar's arrest in 2025 underscores the complex relationship between justice, accountability, and political reconciliation. Together, these cases demonstrate both the persistence of mediation efforts and the challenges that continue to impede South Sudan's path to peace.

## Tumaini: hope or hollow promise

**Mediator:** Kenya  
**Goal:** Re-engage non-signatories of the 2018 R-ARCSS in renewed peace talks (Wol, 2024).

### Strengths

- **Renewed dialogue:** Revived talks with holdout groups to address local violence and power-sharing (Akuocpiir, 2024).
- **Inclusive:** Brought in civil society and faith leaders to build trust (Akuocpiir, 2024).
- **Support:** mediation revived diplomatic momentum and global goodwill (Pospisil & Magara, 2024).

### Downfalls

- **Duplication:** Repeated 2018 R-ARCSS content (Wol, 2024).
- **Overlap:** New bodies clashed with old structures (Wol, 2024).
- **Fractures:** Machar's SPLM-IO withdrew, over mandate concerns (Wol, 2024).
- **Mistrust & weak will:** Government overreach, poor funding, and poor political will stalled progress (Manyang, 2025).

### Current Status

Tumaini has largely stalled. Stands as a reminder that without political will, peace remains a hollow promise.

## Panel of the Wise

Panel of five representatives appointed by African Union

Goal: De-escalate tensions and promote dialogue

### Actions

Visited Juba on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Talked with President Salva Kiir, but could not see Riek Machar.

Visited Juba again in May, meeting President Salva Kiir. Discussed preserving the 2018 peace agreement.

### Result

Due to inability to meet all belligerents, has so far failed to mediate the South Sudan conflict. There is potential for the Panel of the Wise to continue meeting in Juba, but so far no progress. Without a willingness to mediate from local belligerents, the Panel of the Wise exemplifies that dialogue alone goes only so far

## Machar's Arrest

11 September, 2025 Riek Machar was formally charged with murder, treason, and crimes against humanity for allegedly commanding a White Army attack in Nasir County that killed 250 soldiers and a UN crew member

### Court Proceedings

A **Special Court** ruled it had jurisdiction to try Machar and seven co-accused despite defence claims that his immunity as vice-president must be lifted first

**Defence lawyers** have contested court legitimacy, citing overlap with the Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) established under the 2018 peace deal

Justice Minister **Joseph Geng Akech** said the case shows **no one is above accountability**; Machar's allies call the trial a "**political witch hunt**"

### Significance

**Domestic:** Jeopardises peace implementation and widens ethnic and political divides. Analysts warn the prosecution is a **major escalation** that could collapse the unity government and risk **renewed civil war**

**Legal:** Tests South Sudan's judicial independence and obligations under international law and the 2018 Peace Accord

**International:** Signals the fragility of post-conflict justice and raises questions about Hybrid Court relevance

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