

Sudan accepts to negotiates with SPLM-N rebels, NCP sources
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Sudanese government has accepted to hold direct political talks with the rebel Sudan people's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) but demanded a delay before engage discussions, a Sudanese source said.

A well placed source in the National Congress Party (NCP) on Thursday told *Sudan Tribune* that consultations are going on between a leading member of the ruling party, the head of the African Union mediation Thabo Mbeki and the SPLM-N leader Malik Agar over the resumption of talks between the two parties.

He added that these contacts aim to hold direct political talks between the Sudanese government and the SPLM-N following the signing of agreement to implement the buffer zone and to resume the exportation of the South Sudanese oil.

The NCP official further said that Sudanese government intends to change the chief negotiator, Kamal Obeid, who chaired its negotiating team during last year indirect talks and demanded further delay .

However, reached by *Sudan Tribune* to comment on these statements, SPLM-N Secretary General Yaisr Arman "categorically" dismissed such contacts adding that "there is no need to consult with Malik Agar" because the Movement already announced its "willingness to hold direct talks and our negotiating team is ready".

"These baseless statements aim to confuse the international community because the National Congress refuses to negotiate with the SPLM-N and rejects the resolutions of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council", Arman further said.

The SPLM-N earlier this week accused the Sudanese government of refusing talks, saying that the mediation cancelled twice two dates (5 & 10 March) it had determined for the start of negotiations to settle the conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.

Reacting to these accusations, the Sudanese foreign affairs ministry issued a communiqué on Thursday claiming that the SPLM-N seeks to spoil the recent implementation agreements signed with the South Sudan.

The statement warned the international community against the "destructive behaviour" of the SPLM-N to achieve its interests at the expense of political stability in Sudan and the normalisation of relations between the two countries.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, and United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague, in a joint statement released on Wednesday, welcomed the signing of the implementation matrix for Sudan–South Sudan agreements.

The statement called on the parties to begin implementation of all aspects of the nine agreements "immediately and unconditionally, as required by UN Security Council Resolution 2046".

The three ministers stressed the "urgent need for a cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access to all areas, and the longer-term political solution" for the conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan. They also welcomed SPLM-N's acceptance to hold direct talks and urged the Government of Sudan to do the same, without pre-conditions.

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