

Oil, pollution, devastation and corruption in South Sudan: dossier

1956

On January 1, 1956, Sudan achieves its independence from the British-Egyptian colonial powers. The first civil war between north and south begins.

1959

Prospecting for oil begins in the Red Sea.

1971

Separatist movements join to form South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM).

1972

Southern Sudan awarded autonomy through peace treaty of Addis Ababa, end of the first civil war.

1974

Chevron, the US oil giant, awarded concession to territory covering 156,000 square kilometers and located around Muglad and Melut; company begins prospecting for oil.

1979

Chevron discovers oil in fields in Upper Nile and in Muglad basin.

1980

Total, the Franco-Belgian oil corporation, receives oil concession, but does not exploit it due to security situation.

1982

Chevron investigates possible oil fields in Heglig and Unity (in the north of today's South Sudan).

1983

President Gafaar Numeiri helps cause rupture of peace agreement of Addis Ababa. He dissolves administration of southern Sudan. Islamic-based code of laws – the Sharia – is introduced throughout Sudan, where it is now the law of the land.

Led by John Garang, the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLAM) is founded.

Second civil war starts.

Subsequent to the attack on oil facilities in Rubkona (located in today's state of Unity), Chevron suspends its production of oil in Sudan

1991

SPLA-Nasir (led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol, both belonging to Nuer ethnic group) splits off from SPLA (led by John Garang, who belongs to the Dinka). Salva Kiir (Dinka) stays with the SPLA. Sudan's provinces are reconstituted as states.

1992

Armed conflict between SPLA and Sudanese government. Chevron sells its oil concessions. Canada's State Petroleum of Vancouver signs contracts foreseeing the production of oil. The company in turn is taken over by Canada's Arakis.

1993

Oil production commences. Daily output: 2000 barrels a day.

1994

Sudan's government makes 26 states out of the 9 hitherto in existence. Sign of Hope launches its operations in Sudan, with the southern part of the country being its main focus.

1995

CNPC is an oil company owned by the Chinese government. It receives the concession rights to Block 6 in the Muglad Basin.

1996

The Sudanese government uses separate peace treaty to co-opt splinter groups of rebels holding sway over the oil fields in southern Sudan.

Arakis scales down investment and enters into joint venture with the Chinese CNPC, with the Sudanese government's Sudapet and with the Malaysian government's Petronas (representing the latter's first stake in a Sudanese oil concession) through the setting up of the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC).

1997

The GNPOC (renamed SPOC after independence) consortium is formed by the Sweden-based Lundin, Petronas, Austria's OMV and Sudapet; consortium's signing of concession contract with Sudanese government for the production of oil in Block 5A.

Construction is launched of oil pipeline leading to Port Sudan.

1998

Arakis purchased by Canada's Talisman Energy. Arakis' oil production concessions in Blocks 1, 2 and 4 are transferred to GNPOC.

Sign of Hope publishes an article on human rights in Sudan in the Internationales Afrikaforum political science publication.

1999

Oil starts flowing through 1,540 km pipeline to Port Sudan.

2001

Discovery of oil in Thar Jath field in Block 5A.

2002

The SPLA and the Sudanese government agree upon ceasefire in the Nuba mountains, a stronghold of the SPLA.

2003

Lundin sells its stakes in the concession rights to Thar Jath to Petronas. Talisman sells its stakes to India's ONGC Videsh. This is viewed as being a cautious step towards achieving detente among the parties fighting the civil war.

Nilepet is founded. This oil company is owned by the state.

Sign of Hope protests the expulsion of the residents from their home in the oil fields in the state of Unity, which is being fought over by the civil war's parties.

New oilfields are discovered in Blocks 3 and 7.

2004

Amount of oil produced in Sudan comes to more than 300,000 barrels a day.

OMV sells all of its stakes in the concession rights (Blocks 5A and 5B) to India's ONGC Videsh.

2005

Conclusion of Comprehensive Peace Agreement yields extensive autonomy for southern Sudan and ends second civil war. Division of oil revenues between north and south agreed upon. John Garang becomes country's vice-president, but dies in helicopter crash.

2006

Launching in June of oil pumping in Thar Jath.

Sign of Hope is awarded consultant status by the United Nation's Economic and Social Council, which Sign of Hope briefs on the violation of human rights in South Sudan.

2007

Sign of Hope learns of the problems with drinking water in and around the Thar Jath oil fields.

Oil production peaks at nearly 500,000 barrels a day.

2008 - 2010

Sign of Hope collects samples of water. These form the basis for a comprehensive study. Since 2008

Sign of Hope has repeatedly contacted WNPOC (subsequently Sudd Petroleum Operating Company) to demand its desisting from their destructive actions. Sign of Hope also stages in oil-producing regions demonstrations designed to alert the world to the poisoning of ground water –

and devastation of human health and the environment.

2010

98.6% of the voters vote for South Sudan's independence in a referendum.

Southern Sudan receives in March the revenues from oil production in Sudan accruing to it in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

2011

July 9

South Sudan becomes an independent country, with Salva Kiir as its first president.

South Sudan's Ministry for Energy and Mining concludes pre-contract with Petronas.

In November, all state holdings in South Sudan's oil fields that were previously owned by Sudapet in Sudan are transferred to Nilepet.

2012

SPOC (formerly WNPOC) becomes a registered company in South Sudan.

2013

The president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, fires vice-president Riek Machar and the rest of the cabinet.

Strife breaks out in Bor, a city located in the state of Jonglei, and in the oil fields of the state of Unity.

Production drops to 160,000 barrels a day.

2014

The United Nations reports that thousands have lost their lives due to the conflicts between South Sudan and Sudan. More than one million people have fled. Five million are dependent upon humanitarian assistance. The governments of Sudan and South Sudan join with the groups opposed to the latter in accusing each other in being responsible for the conflicts consuming the border areas and the oil fields in them.

The NPF reports in October on the contamination of the environment through oil spills in and around Thar Jath.

Sign of Hope informs in June the United Nation's Council on Human Rights of violations of human rights caused by the conflict that broke out in 2013 and of the accompanying lack of constitutional structures.

Published in November 2014 is a hydro-geological study entitled "Effect of oil exploration and production on the salinity of a marginally permeable aquifer system in the Thar Jath, Mala and Unity oil fields in southern Sudan".

2015

The conflicts roiling the region cause the postponing of elections.

President Kiir signs – with reservations and due to international pressure – the peace agreement reached with South Sudan's opposition. The agreement returns Riek Machar to being vice-president.

A number of journalists are murdered in South Sudan during the year. International media criticize the restrictions on freedom of the press.

Fierce fighting rages during May-July in the vicinities of Thar Jath in Unity state and of Malkal in Upper Nile state.

Sign of Hope presents in February the study of the samples of water collected in the Thar Jath region at a press conference in Juba. To ascertain the contamination by heavy metals, hairs are collected in May and September from 96 residents in Koch, Leer, Nyal and Rumbek.

2016

February

The results of the analyses of the samples of hair taken from residents living in the oil-producing region confirm the worst fears. The residents have consumed water poisoned with such contaminants as lead and barium. The source of these contaminants: the wastes seeping from oil production areas into the local ground water.

March

International media report in March on Sign of Hope's findings of contamination-caused damaging of the health of the people living in the Thar Jath region and resulting from the oil industry. Munich's Süddeutsche Zeitung issues a headlining article on March 8th on “Petronas' dirty dealings put the pressure on Daimler”. ARD, Germany's national TV channel, also extensively and prominently covers Petronas, which is the sponsor of the Mercedes Silver Arrows race team, Daimler and their role in the environmental catastrophe in South Sudan.

April

Publishing of book “Oil, Power and a Sign of Hope” by Zurich's rüffer & rüb. Book details poisoning of South Sudan's water, environment and politics by Petronas and other international oil giants.

December

Publication of scientific article detailing the contamination of ground water by oil companies – and its ramifications upon local population

2017

Oil production averages 125,000 barrels a day.

Proven oil reserves are pegged at 7 billion barrels – 20th largest in the world.

98% of governmental revenues and 60% of GDP stem from oil.

Half of South Sudan's people are experiencing or facing famine and thirst.

One third have been forced to flee.

Thanks to oil companies' poisoning of political life, South Sudan is ranked as being one of the world's most corrupt countries.

Transparency International ranks South Sudan the second most corrupt country in the world.

https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_South_Sudan

March 7

Atlas Oranto Petroleum, a closely held Nigerian company, announces plans to invest \$500 million to develop the B3 oil block awarded to it (90%) and to Nilepet (10%) by South Sudan. The 25,000 square kilometer-large block is thought to hold “vast” reserves of oil.

May 18

Staging of press conference in Berlin on links between contamination of ground water by oil companies and damaging of human health in South Sudan.

June 16

South Sudan's ministry of petroleum invites companies to bid on a public tender to perform an audit of the country's oil production and downstream activities.

September 7

South Sudan President Salva Kiir fires James Thelweng, CEO of state-owned Nilepet due to scarcity of fuel in the country.

October 11-12

Holding of South Sudan Oil & Power 2017 at UAP Equatoria Tower in Juba.