

Kiir vows to end war through dialogue

BY AGENCIES

JUBA. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir said the national dialogue he announced two weeks ago will end war in the world's youngest nation.

In a Christmas message to the nation, Mr Kiir said anyone doubting his initiative would be surprised.

"Let the sceptics be reminded that the proclamation of South Sudan's independence on July 9, 2011 was perceived as a mission impossible," said South Sudan's leader.

He reminded the South Sudanese population about the unity demonstrated ahead of the July 2011 Independence Day, which saw peaceful celebrations and surprised the world.

"Therefore if you could accomplish such a feat, why would anyone question your ability to recover from the present predicament," he said.

Conflict erupted in December 2013 between President Kiir and former vice president Riek Machar's forces, causing thousands of death, displacement of millions, as well as some of the worst human right abuses in the country. A peace agreement signed in August 2015, collapsed in April when fighting resumed in Juba, forcing Machar to flee.

A unity government led by Kiir, however, remains in Juba and Machar loyalists have continued to engage government forces in Equatorial and other parts of the country.

Kiir announced a national dialogue on December 14, which he said will be bottom-top approach to address local grievances and political issues. He single-handedly formed a committee to lead the dialogue, a move his critics claim could derail the process.