

Juach Juach Akok

Age: 33

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

I saw my friends, neighbors, and nephews get killed and that is what made me want to join the movement, the SPLA. I also wanted to join because of what a government soldier did to me. When I was fourteen, a soldier grabbed me when I was on a tower and dropped me down. Everyone was crying that day. They thought I was dead because I couldn't move for thirty minutes. My friend, sister, and brother picked me up. I then joined the SPLA and went to the front line and made revenge for those whom I knew for so many years that I didn't see again.

I was on the front line for five and half years. I wasn't scared. If the enemy comes to shoot you, you have to shoot back. A bomb dropped and injured my head and leg. I was also shot in my leg and back. It was very painful. As a lieutenant commander in the SPLA. I had to give the commandos orders. When commandos left to visit their families, I had to replace them with new soldiers.

After five and a half years, I decided I didn't want to fight any more. I wanted more education and wanted to do something different. I went to Nairobi, Kenya and worked as a volunteer with the Joint Volunteer Agency. I was the director who helped Sudanese get protection letters that permitted them to stay in refugee camps and get items they needed.

In 1995, I came from Nairobi to Washington D.C. I graduated from George Washington H.S. and went to Northwood College. After graduation, I worked with the IRC in Springfield, VA.

I've only been in Phoenix for three months. I came here for my three and a half year old son. He lives with another family, but I would like to see him. My brother-in-law, John Mayol and my brother, Kai Bol, live with me.

I am looking for a job and want to go to school. My documents were stolen in the Greyhound bus station and I don't have the money to replace them. I need my documents in order to work and get my child.

People think our war in Sudan is about our religion, but it's about independence. You can't tell me "don't eat the food" and you can't dress me the way you want. I can dress myself. That brings us into the war and killing innocent citizens, slavery, taking young kids and looting cattle. That hurts so much. That's what we're fighting for, to stop the killing and the looting. Because we think forward, we have a lot of hope for Sudan to be more independent.