



# THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

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## Weekly Review

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### **Understanding the Parameters of Lakes State Authorities' Extremism on Alcohol Production and Consumption**

*Agook Mayek*

**T**he case of Lakes State's ban on both alcohol production and consumption is very corporeal and at the same time interesting, particularly, when one looks at its pros and cons. In the olden days of Khartoum regime, there were profound constrictions to alcohol production and consumption in the country, which constituted an allegiance to sharia Laws. However, the radicalism never became a panacea, as people could still creep secretly to brew and consume it. That was Khartoum phenomenon, but what is the verdict on this extremism and alcohol ban in Lakes State?

As an eye-witness to some of the most atrocious inter-ethnic clashes in the state, I could see a glimpse of sense in the decision, though there is no any clear provision in the state's Transitional Constitution. Recalling what I refer to as "Makuriric Holocaust" early this year, there were substantial reports of the cattle keepers' binge drinking on the night before they could clash. One must assume that the atrocities wound up as a result of individuals being under influence of alcohol. Truly, the ban is a consequence of a political will and an endeavor to identify the real cause to the State's enormous inter-ethnic clashes and civil unrests. This must be applauded as a magnificent effort by the state authorities to resolving them, regardless of how unconstitutional this might be. In addition to alcohol consumption being one of the likely causes of crimes in the state, it also carries other elements of negative social effects, like breakdown of families, where individuals squander money in debauchery and fail to meet their families' obligations, as well as leading to job loss.

Last but not least, overindulgence in alcohol comes with precarious health effects and economic costs. Too much drinking leads to health issues like high blood pressure and stroke, liver disease and many more. However, where a scaling machine is tilting to one side, a careful examination must be done.

Alcohol is part of Lakes State's culture and way of life. Traditionally, in the state, people drink alcohol to relax, socialise, celebrate, and for its taste. Lakes State is also a home to different expatriate communities and other cultures, with different social

organizations and values related to alcohol. Economically, alcohol is a source of livelihood to some of our humble citizens. On the night of the raid, there were reports of widows and single mothers' livelihoods being shattered, as their income mainly comes from brewing local alcohol. In addition, the individual citizens of Lakes State, whose shops and houses are rented by retailers, would automatically lose rent and much more, and the government itself losing alcohol related levies.

Therefore, the challenge for Lakes State authorities is to balance alcohol's place in the culture, economy and the shortcomings associated with overindulgence in its production and consumption. Still, how does one unravel this conundrum, especially when you have the grip of power?

The following proposals could be deliberated by the council of ministers and the State Legislative Assembly, with guidance from both the transitional constitutions of South Sudan and Lakes State, and subsequently pass into law:

- Restrict the hours of sale and consumption of alcohol
- Have and restrict trade licenses
- Have reasonable increases of alcohol taxes if deemed necessary
- Restrict alcohol sales to business facilities
- Restrict alcohol sales to persons 18 years or older
- Heavily fine the evaders
- Tailor mechanisms and special fines for the target group "the cattle keepers"
- Monitor and evaluate the progress

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### **About Sudd Institute**

The Sudd Institute is an independent research organization that conducts and facilitates policy relevant research and training to inform public policy and practice, to create opportunities for discussion and debate, and to improve analytical capacity in South Sudan. The Sudd Institute's intention is to significantly improve the quality, impact, and accountability of local, national, and international policy- and decision-making in South Sudan in order to promote a more peaceful, just and prosperous society.

### **About the Author**

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