

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

My name is **Michael Malual**, a holder of two Master's degrees in closely related fields of **International Relations** and **Conflict, Peace & Security** studies. I also have a Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration as my third Master's degree. Currently, I am a career diplomat with the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary and a Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan in Oslo, Norway.

It is my sincere desire to earn a doctorate (PhD) in Peace and Conflict Studies.

I am interested in Peace and Conflict Studies to prepare myself with relevant knowledge to make sure that peace prevails in South Sudan. South Sudan has been engaged in a series of brutal wars of which I was affected personally since my childhood. In 1987, at the age of eight (8), I was forced by warfare to flee as an unaccompanied minor and to move on foot from the Aweil Area bordering current Sudan, eastwards to Ethiopia. I spent three (3) months walking before arriving in the Panyido Refugee Camp in Ethiopia.

Thousands of people were forced to flee like me in 1987. On the way to Ethiopia, we suffered severely due to hunger, thirst, fatigue, mosquito bites, and sicknesses, because we had to walk continuously without enough rest. Many children died miserably on the way, due to the hardships, and some of us who reached the destination were like moving skeletons. This is the background and experience that motivates me to choose a study of Peace and Conflict, so that I can become an Ambassador for Peace in South Sudan and beyond.

The conflict in South Sudan is a multifaceted one, stemming from political guerilla warfare, tribal war, cattle raiding, human trafficking, and abductions. Until today, peace has never been enjoyed in South Sudan, despite the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which ended the war between Sudan and current South Sudan, and despite the fact that South Sudan became an independent country in July 2011. After independence, there was a brief period of relative peace, until the eruption of tribal war in 2013. This motivates me to seek knowledge in Peace studies, enabling me to advocate for peace in South Sudan and the region.

Research shows that countries that have borders with many other countries, this becomes a potential source of conflict in itself. In the case of South Sudan, it has borders with six (6) countries, namely, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo and Central Africa. When a neighboring country has an ongoing armed conflict, for instance, as is the case now in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Sudan, there is a high probability that the conflict spills over to the other country. This is currently happening in South Sudan, where many atrocities — such as killing, raping, looting, and abductions — are being perpetrated by the military forces that spill over from Congo and Sudan into South Sudan. From this perspective, Peace and Conflict studies have become crucially important for me, because I want to actively contribute to maintaining peace, and to foster good relations with our neighboring nations.

Being a career diplomat is another motivator for me to aspire to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Peace and Conflict Studies. The aim of diplomacy is to resolve issues and conflicts through peaceful means and non-violent approaches in the arena of international affairs. Since I am currently based in Norway as a diplomat, I would very much like to embark on studies in the field of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Norway. I aspire to study in Norway, not least given its valuable experiences in global peace mediation, so that I also become a resource person in keeping international peace.

All in all, Peace is paramount and a prerequisite in human life. Without it, life is meaningless. Development and prosperity can flourish only where there is peace and stability. Conflict in South Sudan motivates me to aspire to a PhD in Peace Studies.