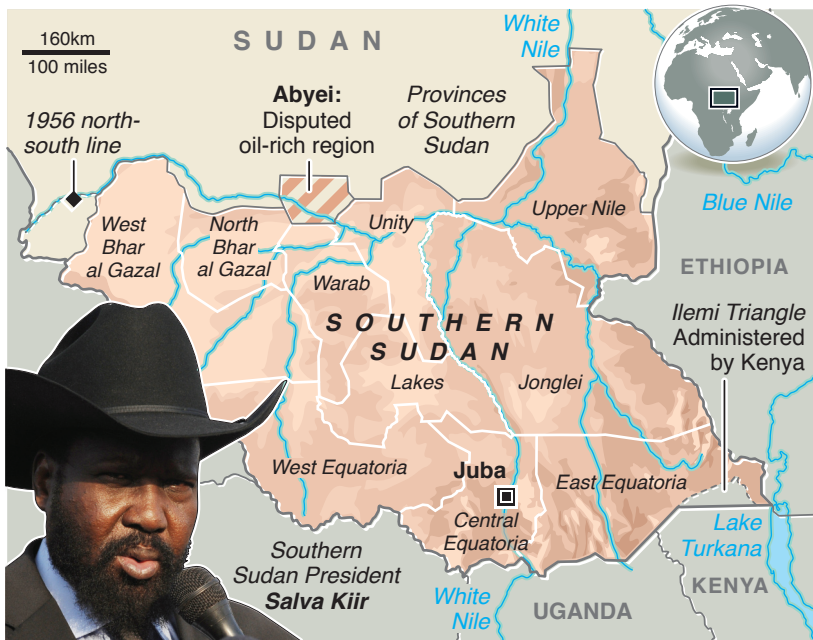


# Southern Sudan's road to independence

The separatist movement in the south – in existence even before Africa's largest nation had emerged from British colonial rule in 1956 – seems certain to achieve its ambition and create the continent's newest state



■ **1955:** Christian/animist south rebels against domination by Muslim north

■ **1956:** Sudan gains independence from Britain and Egypt

■ **1972:** South granted autonomy

■ **1983:** **President al-Nimeiry** revokes autonomy and imposes Islamic **sharia** law sparking new rebellion. Dissident colonel **John Garang** founds **Sudan People's Liberation Army**

■ **1989:** **Omar al-Bashir** seizes power in Islamist coup, cracks down on south

■ **1995:** Opposition in north unites with SPLA to fight al-Bashir regime

■ **2005:** U.S.-brokered ceasefire promises 6-year autonomy followed by referendum on independence. Al-Bashir forms government of national unity with SPLM – **Salva Kiir** heads autonomous South

■ **2007:** South Sudanese walk out of national government over peace deal implementation, but later rejoin

■ **2008:** Fighting in oil-rich Abyei kills dozens, displaces 50,000

■ **2010:** Kiir elected south's first president after multi-party elections

■ **Jan 9, 2011:** Voting begins in independence referendum