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United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

# Interim Report on Human Rights

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Crisis in South Sudan

Report Coverage

15 December 2013 – 31 January 2014

Human Rights Division

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to offer an interim ‘snapshot’ on the progress of human rights investigations during the first six weeks of the crisis from 15 December 2013 through 31 January 2014. The report also sets out a ‘road map’ indicating the next steps in these ongoing investigations and pointing the way toward completing a fuller report in April that can underpin efforts to ensure that those responsible for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law will be held accountable, as envisaged in Security Council Resolution 2132.

Since the outbreak of the crisis on 15 December, UNMISS’ Human Rights Division has focused on gathering information, so far conducting hundreds of interviews with victims and witnesses across the country, in a diligent effort to document and track human rights violations and abuses that have been reported or observed. A second and corollary priority has been to address urgent protection issues in close collaboration with the Mission’s Protection of Civilians section, other Mission components, and protection actors from the wider UN community and its partners.

During these interviews, witnesses, victims, and Government and security officials reported the deliberate targeting of civilians, both nationals and foreigners, in extrajudicial and other unlawful killings, including mass killings, enforced disappearances, gender-based violence, such as rapes and gang-rapes, and instances of ill-treatment and torture by forces from both sides of the conflict.

In Juba, Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers were reported to have engaged in targeted killings of civilians of Nuer origin following house-to-house searches as many Nuer soldiers defected, while in Malakal, civilians of Dinka origin were allegedly targeted and killed by the so-called Nuer White Army, as well as by defected SPLA and South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) elements who joined up with the SPLM/Army in Opposition. In a number of instances, SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin were shot after being forcefully disarmed at military barracks in Malakal. Foreigners were targeted in Bentiu, where they were killed or beaten. Meanwhile in Bor, after fighting broke out along ethnic lines among SPLA and SSNPS, defecting SPLA soldiers and Nuer youth allegedly killed civilians of Dinka origin in their homes or while they tried to flee to safety. UNMISS is also investigating several allegations that SPLA and civilians of Dinka origin likewise engaged in targeted killings of civilians of Nuer origin after the Government recapture of Bor on 24 December. Finally, UNMISS has investigated reports of mass graves in Juba, Bentiu, and Rubkona, in addition to the 19 December attack on the Akobo UNMISS County Support Base where civilians of Dinka origin and UN personnel were killed.

Much of the information that UNMISS has gathered during the first six weeks of the crisis needs to undergo further verification and scrutiny. A rigorous and robust programme of inquiry will continue, based on detailed human rights investigations plans that have been developed by all seven investigation teams deployed in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Central Equatoria states, as well as to other locations as appropriate, to gather information from those displaced far from the major scenes of violence.

Although the ceasefire has yet to take any definitive hold in the country, wherever localised fighting has subsided, UNMISS has taken advantage of the greater access that improved security allows to venture further from the national and state capitals to gain a better understanding of what has been happening at the county and village level as the ongoing fighting has unfolded. Human rights investigators will then be

able to take forward the process of corroborating testimonies and gathering evidence that will permit the production of a further report to be issued in April.

## **I. Introduction**

On the evening of 15 December 2013, fighting erupted in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. Although what triggered the fighting and its spread beyond Juba to Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states remains deeply contested, it is clear that civilians bore the brunt of much of the fighting and that gross violations of human rights were committed.

The Human Rights Division (HRD) of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) has a mandate to investigate and report on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The present report seeks to provide an update on the HRD's efforts to fulfil its mandate, by offering a snapshot of the progress of human rights investigations since the outbreak of the crisis in South Sudan. This report will elaborate the steps taken to monitor the human rights situation and investigate alleged human rights violations, provide an overview of the incidents under investigation as at 31 January 2014, and point the way toward completing a further report.

In light of the scale and seriousness of allegations of violations of human rights that the HRD has received, and the still volatile situation on the ground, this reporting forms part of the HRD's effort to contribute to early-warning and the protection of civilians. At this stage however, the report does not seek to offer findings from its investigations; such conclusions will be reported once investigations and necessary verification are complete. The report will also not propose recommendations other than to encourage the rapid deployment of the various accountability mechanisms that have been announced by Government and regional bodies. Holding perpetrators to account is crucial not only for ensuring respect for human rights, but also as a means of addressing the underlying causes of the crisis. Accountability, including prosecution and reparations, is also crucial for a national reconciliation process to take root and succeed, as well as to promote the vitally needed institutional reforms that have been so long delayed in South Sudan.

## **II. Background**

The current crisis in South Sudan began on the evening of 15 December 2013, at the end of the meeting of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) National Liberation Council (NLC) in Juba. How the violence was triggered, why it spread so rapidly across much of the country, and how it evolved from a political dispute within the SPLM to a major security, human rights, and humanitarian catastrophe remains divisive and contested. What is evident is that rising tensions within the SPLM between President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar and several other key members of the SPLM-leadership escalated and took a violent turn as the NLC meeting was in progress.

Reports indicate that initial fighting broke out between members of the Presidential Guard. This fighting took an ethnic turn as soldiers from the country's two largest groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, divided their loyalties to either President Kiir or Mr. Machar, respectively. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS or Government) asserts that Mr. Machar and his supporters attempted a long-planned coup, an allegation which has been denied by Mr. Machar. Fighting subsequently spread to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) headquarters and an armory, and by 16 December, gunfire was

reported throughout Juba, with massive violence and consequent population displacements. Senior political and military figures were arrested in connection with the alleged coup attempt; Mr. Machar was among those sought but he evaded arrest.

In the subsequent days, fighting spread to Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states, and Mr. Machar declared his intention to bring down the Government under President Kiir's leadership. Opposition forces took control of the capitals of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states, while the UNMISS base in Akobo, Jonglei state, where around 30 civilians had sought refuge was attacked. Heavy fighting ensued as the towns of Bor, Malakal, and Bentiu changed hands several times in late December through mid-January. Although a cessation of hostilities agreement was signed by the GRSS and the SPLM/Army in Opposition on 23 January 2014, UNMISS continues to receive reports of fighting in parts of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states.

The effect on the human rights situation has been profound. Fighting between opposing armed groups took on ethnic dimensions and while some civilians were caught in the cross-fire, others were deliberately targeted along ethnic lines. A vicious cycle of retaliatory and revenge killings ensued. The number killed remains unknown, although it is likely in the thousands. Reports have also been received about sexual and gender based violence; arbitrary arrests and detentions; enforced disappearances; inhuman and degrading treatment and torture; and the burning, looting, destruction and occupation of homes and private property, as well as property and facilities of international organisations and humanitarian partners.

Massive displacement has taken place, again often along ethnic lines, as thousands have fled fighting and sought refuge wherever they could, including in UN bases. By the end of January, OCHA estimated that over 740,000 people had been displaced within South Sudan. As of 31 January, over 84,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) had taken refuge in eight UNMISS bases in areas designated as 'Protection of Civilians' (PoC) sites (Tompson and UN House in Juba, Central Equatoria state; Bor, Jonglei state; Malakal and Melut, Upper Nile state; Bentiu and Pariang, Unity state; and Rumbek, Lakes state). Had UNMISS not opened its doors, it is likely that violence on an even larger scale would have occurred. On 12 February, the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs declared a Level 3 Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Response for South Sudan, the highest level of emergency, signifying the severity of the crisis in human terms.

Although the fighting has somewhat subsided after the reporting period, particularly with the GRSS regaining control of Bor, Malakal, and Bentiu, there has been a disruption of government functions and a decline in security and basic services. Violations of human rights appear to be on-going, particularly in areas where there is continued fighting.

Many questions remain concerning why the crisis spread so rapidly and why it engulfed civilians along ethnic lines. The GRSS and the opposition offer competing narratives. While the GRSS has acknowledged that some atrocities occurred, it maintains that these were perpetrated by rogue elements of state security forces, primarily in response to crimes committed by opposition forces. Those in opposition, on the other hand, claim that the GRSS carried out orchestrated ethnic targeting. These narratives have become deeply entrenched across South Sudan and within communities, complicating attempts to discern the truth.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Mandate**

UNMISS has a robust human rights and protection of civilians mandate, as set out in Security Council Resolutions 1996 (2011), 2057 (2012), and 2109 (2013), to monitor, investigate, verify, and report regularly on human rights and potential threats against the civilian population as well as actual and potential violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. UNMISS is also directed to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

On 20 December 2013, the UN activated the Rights Up Front Action Plan for South Sudan, and the Senior Action Group shortly thereafter, placing human rights at the forefront of the UN intervention in South Sudan and leveraging all resources and assets of the UN system to that end. The Secretary-General also publicly placed the protection of human rights, as well as the protection of civilians, at the centre of the UN system-wide response. He emphasized that the UN would investigate reports of grave violations of human rights and crimes against humanity and that persons responsible would be held personally accountable. Furthermore, UNMISS adjusted its priorities to focus on human rights monitoring, investigations and reporting; supporting humanitarian activities; and protecting civilians during the crisis.

#### **Investigation Methodology**

In view of the scale and scope of the allegations of gross violations of human rights received by the HRD in the days immediately following the outbreak of violence, it adjusted its strategy to focus on monitoring, investigating and reporting. All staff were assigned to assist with these efforts and were re-deployed to different duty stations as appropriate.

The HRD has established seven investigation teams, alongside the existing reporting and analysis team. Investigation teams work in each of the so-called ‘red’ states – those experiencing the most serious violence – of Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity, and Central Equatoria. Investigations thus far have been conducted mainly by interviewing victims and witnesses as well as secondary sources.

Between 16 December and 31 January, teams interviewed over 500 victims, witnesses, and secondary sources, including civilians, security forces, former ministers, human rights defenders, local NGOs, and members of parliament. Given security constraints, most interviews have been conducted at PoC sites within the UNMISS compounds where people have sought protection. However, to overcome security and access challenges, Human Right Officers also sought out witnesses wherever they were located, including in neighbouring states, less affected by the fighting. For example, Human Rights Officers in Warrap interviewed IDPs and wounded SPLA soldiers from neighbouring Unity, while Bor-based Human Rights Officers travelled to Lakes state to interview IDPs from Jonglei state, and IDPs and State officials from Bor were also interviewed in Juba.

In addition to interviews, investigation teams conducted fact-finding missions to affected areas and to the sites of alleged human rights violations. These include Integrated Team missions to affected neighbourhoods; refugee camps and IDP locations such as churches; police detention facilities and prisons; SPLA barracks; and hospitals. For example, with surge support from Juba, Human Rights

Officers in Jonglei conducted assessments of major incident sites in Bor town on 30 and 31 January. Human Rights Officers in Bentiu visited the barracks of SPLA Division IV, where the crisis began in Unity state and violations by the defected Division were reported.

As part of monitoring and in order to broaden its information base, the HRD works with a wide range of actors. Primary collaborators are other UNMISS components, both military and civilian, including UN Police (UNPOL), Military Liaison Officers, the Child Protection Unit, Civil Affairs, Public Information and the Joint Operations Centre. The HRD also works with UN partners in agencies, funds and programmes, and South Sudanese counterparts, including state authorities, the South Sudan Human Rights Commission, local NGOs, the national Red Cross, and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.

Information collected from investigations are passed to the reporting and analysis team, which oversees the drafting of reports, including twice daily situational reports to the UNMISS Joint Operations Centre, a weekly analytical report, and a monthly synopsis. The team ensures that information gathering and analysis are both systematic and standardized. An incident matrix records and tracks reports of human rights violations as they are received and all Human Rights Officers use standard interview and case report forms. Complaints and cases are entered into the OHCHR Human Rights Case Database, which is a confidential tool. Each investigation team provides preliminary analysis of allegations under investigation which are reviewed and synthesized by the reporting and analysis team.

In addition to its focus on investigation and reporting, the HRD has undertaken significant protection activities. All investigation activities are subject to the protection needs of interviewees and protection plans have been put in place when appropriate. Human Rights Officers have facilitated the relocation of witnesses, survivors, individuals facing specific threats or who are otherwise particularly vulnerable. They have also conducted human rights assessments in IDP camps, including UNMISS PoC sites; informed the routing and scheduling of UNMISS Force patrols; assisted with family reunification and tracing; assisted victims to seek medical treatment; advocated for gender-sensitive approaches to the security and policing of PoC sites; and have assessed UNMISS medical facilities concerning services available to survivors of sexual violence. As individuals often expose themselves to risks by sharing their experiences, HRD has consistently favoured protection concerns over investigation and reporting deliverables.

There have been challenges in undertaking these investigations. Most were caused by the violence and the resulting insecurity which impeded access to victims, witnesses, and sites of reported violations. Security constraints, with on-going fighting in many locations, hindered Human Rights Officers' ability to deploy quickly, to monitor freely, to gain access to the sites of alleged violations, and to conduct interviews expeditiously and in adequate conditions of confidentiality and security. The politically-charged environment has raised the prospect of distortion and biases affecting human rights investigations. For instance, interpreters, witnesses, victims, and sources may exaggerate allegations depending on their ethnicity and those of the alleged perpetrators. It should also be noted that there are many different uniforms in the organized forces of South Sudan which may make the specific branch of the military or security forces involved in an incident hard for witnesses to discern. Moreover, SPLA uniforms are widely available, and can therefore still be used opportunistically, increasing the difficulty of correctly identifying perpetrators and their current status.



These constraints manifested themselves in a number of ways. For example, Human Rights Officers in Malakal were unable to verify the alleged presence of bodies in the Doleib Hill area due to heavy fighting between opposition forces and the SPLA. In Juba, Human Rights Officers were unable to visit the sites of alleged mass killings due to heavy SPLA presence, and access to some detention centres, prisons, and SPLA and National Security Service (NSS) offices is restricted. In Bor, Malakal and Bentiu, security restrictions seriously constrained Human Rights Officers' ability to systematically gather and verify information. Due to the heavy fighting in Bor for example, Human Rights were only able to leave the UNMISS compound to conduct investigations in field locations on 28 January, almost six weeks after the crisis began there.

These constraints and state-specific dynamics result in a divergence in the quality and quantity of information that have been possible to obtain by investigation teams. While Human Rights Officers in Juba had greater freedom of movement and access to a diversity of potential witnesses as many civilians fled to the capital, Human Rights Officers in Malakal could rarely leave the compound – and sometimes their bunkers – due to regular heavy fighting as the town changed hands. These security realities created two very different environments and to a large extent determined the ability of Human Rights Officers to gather and verify information.

Investigations are therefore still on-going. With the stabilization of the security situation, investigations can expand into areas not yet reached and interviews can be conducted with witnesses who were difficult to access. Particularly in Malakal, there are still serious security constraints and it will take more time to access key areas of concern. Efforts continue to corroborate information received, particularly with national and local authorities, including security forces such as the SPLA, the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), and opposition forces. For these reasons, the information presented below is preliminary, incomplete, and requires additional verification. These caveats should be borne in mind when reading the narratives that follow.

#### **IV. Incidents under Investigation**

The human rights situation in South Sudan took a dramatic turn for the worse on 15 December following the outbreak of armed clashes in Juba and subsequent fighting between Government and opposition forces. The violence spread to Jonglei (18 December), Unity (19 December), and Upper Nile (23 December) states in quick succession.

In these four affected 'red' states, the HRD has documented a number of human rights violations, including extrajudicial and mass killings; the deliberate targeting of civilians, both nationals and foreigners; arbitrary arrests and detentions; enforced disappearances; ill-treatment and torture; and the looting and destruction of property. Information received to date also suggests that sexual violence was a consistent characteristic of the crisis in all affected states. Since incidents are still being investigated, it is premature to judge whether or not sexual violence was used as a weapon of war. However, HRD investigations suggest that alleged perpetrators include members of the SPLA, SSNPS, and opposition forces who committed sexual violence such as rape, forced abortion and sexual harassment. Civilians of Dinka and Nuer origin and foreign women were specifically targeted, although opportunistic sexual violence could also have victimized other ethnic groups. The HRD has also found that child recruitment,

among other serious violations against children such as killing, was also reported in many of the regions that were affected by the fighting.

Although similar violations occurred in all states most affected by the fighting, the incidents are presented below state by state in order to capture differences in context, sequence, scope, victims, and alleged perpetrators.

## Central Equatoria

At around 10:00 p.m. on 15 December, fighting erupted at the SPLA General Headquarters in Giada between SPLA elements in the Presidential Guard who were loyal to different factions of the SPLM party. That night, the crisis spread and fighting occurred in at least two other SPLA locations, Bilpam SPLA Headquarters and the SPLA armory in New Site. Fighting continued into the early hours of the next morning, and the armory was broken in to, with killing and looting of arms, ammunition, and uniforms. An unknown number of presidential guards and SPLA soldiers were killed, in addition to civilians who were killed or injured when caught in the crossfire.

By the morning of 16 December, there was general confusion and panic. Radio broadcasts advised people to stay at home and the President imposed a curfew. Witness testimonies suggest that as early as 8:00 a.m., SPLA-elements went to various neighborhoods, including Kor Williams, Lologo, Jebel, and New Site. There, SPLA of Dinka origin reportedly began targeting civilians of Nuer origin, who were beaten, arrested, and killed, notably after house-to-house and hotel-to-hotel searches. By the end of day, about 800 civilians had taken shelter at the UNMISS Tomping compound. By the next day, that number had swelled to over 10,000. Thousands more sought protection at sites such as churches in Juba and surrounding areas. By 31 January, the incidents that are described below had led to nearly 38,650 people – the vast majority of whom were civilians of Nuer origin – seeking shelter in the PoC areas within the two UNMISS compounds in Juba.

On 16 December, the HRD began interviewing witnesses at the UNMISS Tomping compound. After movement restrictions were partially lifted on 18 December, a small team surveyed Juba by car. It observed that some areas of the city were deserted, while in others people were moving freely, except around the Presidential Palace. A few stores were open amidst the presence of large numbers of security forces, notably in Gudele. As movement restrictions were further lifted, the HRD deployed Integrated Team missions to priority sites across Juba on 19 December and 20 December, in addition to separate human rights assessment missions.

With interviews and site visits, Human Rights Officers documented allegations of extra-judicial killings including mass killings, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detentions, abductions, threats and harassment, looting, and the destruction of public and private property. The description below focuses on the early period of the crisis (16-20 December), when the most egregious violations occurred on a large-scale. After this time, the situation in Juba stabilised: shootings became more sporadic and violations more isolated.

Credible witness accounts indicate that armed SPLA soldiers – primarily of Dinka origin – deliberately targeted civilians of Nuer origin in extra-judicial killings after the shooting in the SPLA armory in New Site ended on the morning of 16 December. Eyewitness accounts gathered to date suggest that at least 225 civilians, mainly of Nuer origin, were extra-judicially killed in individual incidents in Mia Saba and New Site on 16 December. Extra-judicial killings continued on a daily basis until 18 December. House-to-house searches for civilians of Nuer origin were conducted in areas near the armory that were known to be populated with people of Nuer origin – Mia Saba, Mangaten, Eden, Lologo, and Jebel – as well as in other parts of Juba. Survivors and witnesses reported that civilians of Nuer origin were killed at police stations, in the streets as they tried to flee, or in their homes and residential compounds. In some cases, civilians of Nuer origin were reportedly tied to each other in a line before being forced to walk to another location to be killed. In others, SPLA soldiers reportedly of Dinka origin went to the homes of colleagues they knew to be of Nuer origin and killed them, or identified Nuers with a language test or by facial scarring. Witnesses reported seeing hundreds of bodies of civilians in the streets of their neighbourhoods or as they fled to UNMISS compounds. Most victims were reportedly male, but several women and children were also killed, threatened or beaten by SPLA soldiers. In one specific incident, a family of two wives and eight children, male and female, were reportedly all found dead with gunshot wounds. UNMISS continues to further verify and corroborate all this information.

In many cases, the perpetrators of these extrajudicial killings were allegedly SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin, with some witnesses identifying members of the Presidential Guard, also known as the Tiger Battalion. There are also reports that SPLA soldiers of Nuer origin allegedly killed civilians and soldiers from their own community after being coerced by SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin. Further reports suggest that a so-called ‘special forces’ unit composed of SSNPS, SPLA, NSS, and Wildlife engaged in these targeted killings, among other violations.

The HRD is investigating these incidents and a number of emblematic cases of extra-judicial killings, notably those that occurred on 16 December. That morning, for example, eight youth of Nuer origin were reportedly shot after being forced to face a wall with their arms behind their heads, allegedly by SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin in uniform. In another incident that same morning, an unknown number of SPLA soldiers arrested 38 civilians of Nuer origin living in Northern Bari Payam. They reportedly tied them together in a line and forced them to walk. Along the way, some individuals were untied and told to run while the soldiers shot at them. The HRD is also investigating at least three mass killings that allegedly took place between 16 and 17 December in Khator Payam and Gudele. In one widely reported incident, it is alleged that approximately 200 men of Nuer origin, aged from 15 to 50 years, were gathered at a former police station in Gudele and were killed. The HRD currently estimates that hundreds of civilians of Nuer origin were killed in these mass killings, allegedly by Dinka SPLA soldiers, NSS, and some SSNPS. This information is currently being further verified.

During these first days of the crisis, a number of civilians of Nuer origin and security personnel were also arbitrarily arrested and detained at unknown locations, allegedly by SPLA and SSNPS of Dinka origin. For example, witness accounts suggest that up to 250 people – mostly civilians of Nuer origin, but also SPLA soldiers – were arbitrarily arrested in New Site, Mia Saba, and Mangaten on 16 December, mainly by SPLA soldiers in uniform. After their arrest, the victims were reportedly killed, disappeared, or released, while some managed to escape. The HRD has documented five separate incidents on 16 December in Northern Bari Payam, where several male civilians of Nuer origin, including a group of

students, were reportedly tied together by armed SPLA soldiers in uniform and taken on foot to different locations in Juba, where they were killed or made to disappear. The HRD is also documenting a case of a Nuer male civilian who was arrested on 17 December in his house in Kor William and transferred to NSS Headquarters in Jebel, where he was beaten and questioned along with 40 other male civilians of Nuer origin.

As widely reported in the media, the Government also arrested prominent SPLM political figures. Between 16 and 19 December, 11 people were arrested for plotting the alleged coup. On 27 December, the Government released one of the detainees – the former minister for Higher Education – as well as another former Government official who had been under house arrest without charge. On 29 January, six other detainees were released on bail and sent to Nairobi, along with the former minister who had been previously released. While in detention, the eleven detainees were reportedly held incommunicado; they were not charged and they had no access to legal counsel. With respect to the four remaining detainees, the HRD has yet to see the formal charges, but press statements indicate that they will be charged with treason which is a capital offense in South Sudan.

Abductions and enforced disappearances were also prevalent in the first days of the crisis. In one case, four men in one family of Nuer origin were allegedly abducted at gunpoint from their residential compound in Jebel on 16 December. They reportedly remain missing and are presumed dead by a relative who escaped. During the same period, two Nuer civilians allegedly disappeared in the Jebel and Lologo areas of Juba, and a group of youth of Nuer origin were reportedly taken from a house in SPLA pick-ups and taken to an unknown location. In all instances the alleged perpetrators were uniformed SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin.

Eyewitnesses and victims also reported that private property was looted and destroyed. Testimonies suggest that the homes of Nuers were systematically targeted by security forces and opportunist criminal elements. One witness described seeing houses burned to ash on 16 December by SPLA soldiers, even while civilians were inside. Houses inhabited by civilians and by high profile leaders of Nuer origin were also reportedly stormed, demolished, and set aflame by SPLA tanks.

After this initial period of the crisis (16-20 December), the situation in Juba stabilised. Immediately thereafter, defected SPLA soldiers of Nuer origin began to leave Juba to join opposition forces elsewhere. At this time, the HRD began receiving reports that opposition forces were indiscriminately looting and destroying civilian property around Juba. In one particular instance on 12 January, opposition forces mounted a road block on the Juba-Yei road. The SPLA was deployed to the scene and the fighting that ensued displaced the local civilian population from their villages. Later, on 22 January, about 3,000 civilians fled to Tombe Payam from Kalthok Payam after opposition forces reportedly destroyed their homes following a clash with the SPLA.

In early January, the HRD began receiving information that the looted houses of displaced civilians of Nuer origin were being occupied, predominantly by people of Dinka origin, both in Juba and in surrounding areas. In Yei, River County, for example, the homes of killed or displaced Nuers were reportedly looted and occupied by SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin following fighting between Nuer and Dinka SPLA at the military barracks on 31 December.

Throughout the crisis, freedom of expression and opinion suffered further restrictions in Juba after incidents of newspaper confiscations and arbitrary arrests of journalists in early December. The HRD received numerous reports of the illegal arrest, detention, intimidation and harassment of national journalists, the looting of media houses and their property, the confiscation of newspapers, and the suspension of one media house's operations. Some human rights defenders and local human rights organisations also reported that they were being threatened and that their property had been looted. Others fled the country and/or shut down their operations. For example, the Executive Director of the South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy (SSHURSA) was forced to leave South Sudan early in the crisis after receiving numerous death threats by phone. While in exile, his house was attacked, looted, and destroyed by security forces who took official documents and the organization's car. SSHURSA subsequently decided to shut down its operations. In another incident on 27 January, a National UNMISS Human Rights Officer was arrested, detained for several hours and beaten, allegedly because he was mistaken for a local human rights defender.

The HRD has also documented acts of sexual violence in conflict, reportedly committed by members of the SPLA and SSNPS. Reported incidents include rape, including penetration with objects, forced abortion, and sexual harassment.

As of 31 January, attacks against civilians of Nuer origin in Juba continued. SPLA soldiers and heavily-armed civilians were reportedly still conducting house-to-house searches for Nuers, who were also targeted on their way to and from safe havens. This included a number of incidents against IDPs leaving UNMISS PoC sites, including abductions, arrests, harassment, and acts of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV).

## Jonglei

The crisis began in Bor town in the early hours of 16 December, when Auxiliary Police (AP) of Nuer origin defected and allegedly forcefully disarmed their Dinka colleagues in the AP barracks. Two APs of Dinka origin were injured in that context. Between 16 and 18 December, a mutiny and heavy fighting broke out at the SPLA Headquarters barracks in Panpandier and Maluachat, which are south of Bor, as soldiers of Dinka origin were disarmed and reportedly killed point blank. The SPLA split into two groups: those soldiers loyal to the Government and those supporting opposition forces led by General Peter Gadet, who defected and took command of faction soldiers. These latter forces also seized a large arsenal of weapons, including tanks and heavy artillery.

In the afternoon of 18 December, opposition forces entered Bor town, shooting randomly and looting shops. The caretaker Governor returned from Juba to Bor the same day, but by evening he and other Government officials had sought refuge at the UNMISS compound in Bor. Opposition forces controlled Bor from 18-24 December. It then changed hands three times: Government forces from 24-31 December, opposition forces from 31 December-18 January, and Government forces after 18 January. There were no heavy battles when Government forces retook Bor, as opposition forces retreated prior to their arrival.

Information gathered to date suggests that serious human rights violations were committed by various actors belonging to both Government and opposition forces, including extrajudicial killings and other unlawful killings, CRSV, threats to life and physical integrity, disappearances, and large-scale looting and

destruction of property. Violations seem to have affected the most vulnerable – the elderly, injured, disabled, and individuals otherwise unable to escape. During the second period of opposition control (31 December-18 January), testimonies suggest that there were fewer incidents in Bor because civilians had been warned to flee. Rather, the violence occurred in the payams that surround Bor and it was allegedly more indiscriminate and destructive, likely due to the presence of undisciplined armed youths, reportedly from Nuer counties in northern Jonglei.

Many civilians were killed in their homes or while trying to flee. Targeted killings were committed either on the basis of ethnicity or given an individual's suspected involvement in or support for the opposition. Information received suggests that such incidents were more common in December, *i.e.* in the first days of the conflict when opposition forces and then Government forces controlled Bor town. Reportedly, a few dozen civilians were able to survive in town.

During the fighting, Bor town was completely looted and its market was almost entirely destroyed, while many residential and public structures remained intact. The entire civilian population of Bor fled. Hundreds of South Sudanese of all ethnicities and foreigners first arrived at the PoC site within the UNMISS compound in Bor on 16 December. This number peaked at 17,000 on 25 December, and then dropped to 6,000 by 31 January, at which point mostly only people of Nuer origin remained. Many civilians also fled to their home villages and counties: civilians of Nuer origin went to northern counties in Jonglei while civilians of Dinka origin went to the payams and counties surrounding Bor. Nearly 100,000 civilians, mostly of Dinka origin, fled across the Nile River to Mingkaman Payam in Awerial County, Lakes state.

The HRD is currently investigating four major cases, in addition to information gathering activities on other alleged incidents. The first case is the 19 December attack on the UNMISS Akobo County Support Base, which was overrun, ransacked, and looted by around 2000 armed Nuer youth and defected security forces personnel, reportedly under the direction of certain individuals. Many civilians of Dinka origin, most likely 27, who had sought protection at the base were killed, as well as two UNMISS peacekeepers. Preliminary information indicates that the attack was well planned and that former SPLA commanders controlled all participating armed elements (armed youth, defected SPLA, SSNPS, and civilians).

The second is a reported mass killing that occurred at the residential area of St. Andrew's Church compound and chapel in Bor on an unknown date. While many civilians sought refuge in the compound of St. Andrews, eight to twelve women of Dinka origin, some belonging to the clergy, were reportedly killed in the chapel, allegedly by opposition forces. The HRD has received information that CRSV also occurred prior to the killings.

The third case is an attack on civilians at Bor Hospital that occurred on an unknown date. Eight to 17 patients and/or visitors were reportedly raped and/or killed, allegedly by opposition forces.

The final case relates to reports that IDPs from the PoC site of the UNMISS compound in Bor were killed just outside the compound. Information received suggests that most of these attacks were carried out by SPLA, reportedly of Dinka origin, and armed civilians during the first Government recapture of Bor sometime between 24-31 December.

The HRD is conducting investigations in an attempt to corroborate and verify all these incidents. While the HRD cannot estimate the overall number of casualties, Human Rights Officers saw around 100 bodies in Bor town during patrols and site assessments between 28 and 31 January. Victims were men and women, both in civilian and uniformed clothing; there were a few children. Many more bodies – possibly hundreds – have reportedly already been buried, burned, or gone down the river. By the end of January, local authorities had collected around 200 bodies in Bor town for burial. The circumstances of these killings are not yet known and are being investigated. Following a request from the Mayor of Bor and Jonglei state officials, Human Rights Officers have participated in a number of site visits to view and document bodies and scenes before burial as part of their human rights investigations.

At the end of January, the situation in Bor town slowly began to improve. A few civilians and some local authorities and humanitarian actors returned. However, the HRD continued to receive reports of targeted harassment and killings of civilians in Bor by Government forces and armed civilians.

For security reasons, the HRD has not been able to visit several other locations where grave violations of human rights may have taken place, such as in payams north and south of Bor. The HRD has also received reports of attacks and possible violations of human rights in other locations, such as Mathiang and Kolnyang payam. The HRD will expand its investigations into some of these areas as the security situation permits.

## Unity

The first reported incident in Unity State occurred during the night of 16 December at the Hufra SPLA Military Barrack in Pariang County, north of Bentiu. There, SPLA soldiers of Nuer origin allegedly shot at their colleagues of Dinka origin, allegedly killing a total of four soldiers from both sides.

Between 16 and 18 December, Human Rights Officers received unconfirmed reports that the SPLA Division IV Commander had defected with the bulk of the troops from the Division. On 18 December, the crisis moved from the SPLA barracks to Tharjath, about 70 kilometres from Bentiu. At around noon that day, about 15 passengers of Dinka origin manifested to travel from Tharjath to Juba on Kush Air reportedly disappeared after they were taken from the airstrip by security elements of Nuer origin, allegedly SSNPS, SPLA and NSS officers in civilian clothing. The whereabouts of these passengers remains unknown.

After this incident, fighting became more widespread. In the evening of 18 December, shooting began between soldiers from the SPLA Oil Brigade (23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade) at the Unity oil field in Rubkona County. It then spread to the nearby compound of the Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company (GNPOC), where SSNPS and civilians of Nuer origin armed with crude weapons attacked GNPOC workers of Dinka origin. Non-Nuer civilians were caught in the crossfire and the family members of SPLA soldiers of Dinka origins – including women and children – were reportedly targeted and killed. That same night, GNPOC workers of Dinka origin were reportedly attacked with crude weapons by Nuer colleagues and security elements (SSNPS, SPLA and Wildlife) at the Tharjath oil field in Koch County. The number of casualties is unknown.

The next day, on 19 December, reports indicate that non-Nuer SPLA soldiers were disarmed at most SPLA brigades and barracks in Unity state. This led to shoot-outs between SPLA soldiers in the Lalop, Panakuach, Khaljak, and Tharwanjyel barracks. The attacks were along ethnic lines. Information received also suggests that some commanding officers of Nuer origin tried to save the lives of fellow soldiers of Dinka origin. Soldiers originating from other communities, including Equatorians, were also killed in the crossfire. That day, civilians began arriving at the PoC site within the UNMISS compound in Rubkona, notably civilians of Dinka origin, other ethnic communities, and foreign nationals.

Also on 19 December, shooting began at the Headquarters of the SPLA Division IV in Rubkona after SPLA soldiers of Nuer origin allegedly attempted to disarm the predominantly Dinka Tank Unit. Reports received suggest that 85 soldiers, both Dinkas and Nuers, were killed in this incident. The violence then spread into Rubkona market, where the homes of Dinkas were targeted for looting, reportedly by SPLA and security forces including SSNPS, NSS, National Prison Service of South Sudan (NPSSS), and Wildlife officers of Nuer origin. That night, businesses owned by foreign nationals were looted by soldiers and civilians of Nuer origin, and at least a dozen foreign women were targeted and subjected to sexual violence, allegedly by SPLA soldiers of Nuer origin. The unrest continued for many hours and dozens of tukuls were burned.

On the morning of 20 December, looting continued in Rubkona with sporadic shooting by SPLA, SSNPS, and civilians. The unrest spread to Bentiu, which is about three kilometres from Rubkona. On 21 December, the SPLA Commander of Division IV declared on the radio that he had deposed the Governor and that his soldiers were no longer loyal to the President.

Credible reports indicate that over 200 soldiers of Dinka origin from Kaljak, Lalop, Thomas House, Rubkona, SPLA Headquarters barracks and the Tank Unit were killed by their defected Nuer colleagues between 16 and 20 December, although this information has not been verified due to access constraints. Casualties at Panakuach, Hufra, Oil Brigade, and Tharwanjyel barracks are not currently known. Human Rights Officers have been unable to gather and/or corroborate information regarding casualties of opposition forces due to access constraints and the fact that many bodies have gone down river or have already been buried.

Between 20 December and 9 January, both civilians and members of security forces of Dinka origin were reportedly targeted in looting and/or killings by security forces including elements from SSNPS, NPSSS and Wildlife of Nuer origin, loyal to the opposition. These opposition forces also looted property belonging to international NGOs, UN agencies and businesses. Information received to date suggests that civilian houses were not looted and that no inter-ethnic killings occurred at the headquarters of the SSNPS and the NPSSS.

Interviews with victims also indicate that women, mostly foreign nationals, including Kenyans, Ugandans, Ethiopians, and Eritreans, were targeted and subjected to sexual violence in Rubkona and Bentiu. The HRD received reports that between 17 and 27 December, at least a dozen women were gang raped, allegedly by opposition forces. Some reported knowing their aggressors.

While the opposition forces controlled Rubkona and Bentiu (from 16 December to 9 January), at least 15 civilians, mostly Dinkas, from Bentiu, Rubkona, and the Unity and Tharjath oil fields may have been



subjected to enforced disappearance when they were arrested by security elements (SPLA, SSNPS, NSS and Wildlife) affiliated to opposition forces. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

The balance of power began to shift in the first week of January, when Government forces including the SPLA and the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) – an anti-Government rebel group who had recently reached a truce with the GRSS but had yet to be integrated, allegedly also supported by forces from the Darfuri Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – started advancing to Rubkona and Bentiu from Warrap State and Mayom County in Unity State.

On 9 January, information that Government forces were approaching Bentiu led civilians in Rubkona and Bentiu to flee. Opposition forces looted many stores and homes before retreating south. WFP premises were completely looted and the cars of some UN agencies were forcibly seized.

On the morning of 10 January, Government forces entered Rubkona and passed in front of the UNMISS compound. Human Rights Officers and other UNMISS staff saw IDPs at the compound break down the barrier to join Government forces, and some of them were given guns. Together, they began looting tukuls on the main road, destroying civilian property, and attacking civilians. Government forces also began shooting randomly, including at civilians who happened to find themselves in their path; one male was killed outside the UNMISS gate. Between 10 and 12 January, Rubkona and parts of Bentiu were almost completely burned down and looted by the combined security forces (SPLA, SSLA and JEM), IDPs, and women and children.

With the arrival of Government forces in Bentiu on 10 January, most civilians of Nuer origin fled to the UNMISS PoC site in Rubkona or towards the south. The latter were reportedly followed by Government forces, who pushed them further into the bush. Human Rights Officers have received unverified reports that Government forces committed targeted attacks against civilians of Nuer origin in Leer County, in a similar pattern of extrajudicial killing, sexual violence, torture, pillaging, and wanton destruction of property. As soon as security improves, HRD will proceed with investigations with regard to these allegations.

In Rubkona and Bentiu, Government forces reportedly engaged in pillaging and the massive destruction of civilian property. These acts were reported to have mainly targeted civilians of Nuer origin, foreign businesses, and the properties and premises of humanitarian aid organizations. In addition, HRD documented one incident of CRSV, allegedly involving Government forces.

The HRD has received information regarding the existence of three alleged mass graves in Rubkona and at least four others outside the area of the state capital. Investigations into these graves and alleged mass killings are on-going. For now, preliminary interviews with victims and witnesses suggest that at least 230 civilians – including of both Dinka and Nuer origin, women and children – were extra-judicially killed on ethnic grounds in Rubkona, Bentiu, the Unity oil fields and Tharjath between 16 December and 31 January. In addition, at least a dozen civilians were injured in the crossfire or targeted individually.

## Upper Nile

The violence began in Malakal on 23 December, when soldiers of Dinka origin were allegedly forcefully disarmed and then shot at in the SPLA Kokpiet Military Training Centre in Baliet County. The SPLA split along ethnic lines: SPLA soldiers of Dinka and Shilluk origin loyal to President Kiir, while most soldiers of Nuer origin constituted themselves as opposition forces in support of Machar, although some high-ranking Nuer officers chose not to join the opposition. Fifteen SPLA soldiers of Dinka origin were reportedly killed at Kokpiet, allegedly by defected Nuer SPLA soldiers and Nuer youth dressed in SPLA uniforms. On 24 December, similar clashes occurred at SPLA and SSNPS barracks, including at the SPLA Wanding barracks in Nassir County and the SPLA Ulang barracks in Ulang County. The number of casualties is currently unknown.

Heavy fighting between the SPLA and opposition forces on 24 December led to the capture of Malakal town by opposition forces on 25 December. After three days of control by opposition forces, the town was taken by Government forces (28 December-13 January), then by opposition forces (14-19 January), and finally by Government forces (since 20 January). The opposition capture of Malakal on 14 January nearly doubled the IDP population at the UNMISS PoC site to 22,000, and stray bullets killed seven IDPs in and around the compound. As of 31 January, 27,783 IDPs had sought refuge at the UNMISS PoC site and thousands more were sheltered at safe havens such as hospitals, churches, and schools.

Through interviews and site visits, the HRD in Malakal has documented a number of grave human rights violations, including extra-judicial killings, CRSV, arbitrary arrests and detention, and the looting and destruction of property. The violations were committed by both Government and opposition forces, including armed youth and so-called 'White Army' elements – a Nuer armed group originating from the greater Nassir area – who attacked both soldiers and civilians in Malakal. Interviews with victims and witnesses suggest that attacks were carried out based on ethnicity, with different groups being targeted at different moments: when the opposition controlled Malakal, Dinkas and Shilluk were targeted; when Government forces were in control, civilians of Nuer origin were targeted both for their ethnicity and because they were seen as supporting the opposition. For example, from 14 to 19 January, opposition forces including armed youth-elements reportedly killed civilians of these communities through house to house-searches, as well as attacking the Malakal Teaching Hospital and the market. Investigations into these incidents are underway.

Foreign nationals and their businesses were also targeted, notably when Malakal was controlled by opposition forces. For example, the HRD received unverified information that over 30 Ethiopian traders were killed in Malakal on 23-25 December and that their shops were subsequently looted and/or burned down. In the prevailing climate of lawlessness, armed youth and private citizens also engaged in a number of crimes, such as homicide, looting, and arson.

The number of casualties is difficult to estimate. Over 635 individuals were treated at UNMISS hospitals in Malakal with gunshot wounds, while dozens of others were treated at the clinic run by the ICRC at the Malakal Teaching Hospital. Interviewees report being injured either because of ethnicity or because they were caught in the crossfire. By mid-January, the South Sudan Red Cross had collected and buried approximately 263 unattended bodies. Others were buried by the SPLA and the victims' relatives, or seen floating in the river. The HRD also observed dozens of bodies in the streets and in burned houses during patrols through Malakal town. The number of victims is therefore likely to be high, but will depend on additional investigations.

The HRD received numerous reports of CRSV, including rapes and gang rapes. The alleged perpetrators include SPLA soldiers and unidentified men in various types of uniforms. Women leaving the PoC site within the UNMISS compound to fetch water were particularly exposed to threats, harassment, abductions, and sexual violence.

Malakal town was looted by both sides in January, including Government offices and public institutions such as the Malakal Teaching Hospital and the South Sudan Red Cross, as well as the WFP and IOM warehouses. Reports indicated that looting was carried out by opposition forces when they were in control (23 – 26 December and 14 – 19 January), while Government forces looted when the town was recaptured. Reportedly, looting was also carried out by the local population after both opposition and Government forces left.

As mentioned, the looting of foreign businesses occurred mostly during opposition control. Reports suggest that looted houses in Malakal were then occupied by military forces. Dozens of houses in Malakal town were burned by both sides, either as collateral damage of fighting or in deliberate attacks, including by civilians. On 20 January, an UNMISS medical facility was hit by a bomb during fighting between Government forces and opposition forces; a number of patients were injured, but no one was killed.

Some civilians from other communities began returning to their homes in town around 24 January, a few days after the SPLA retook control of Malakal. However, the majority of civilians of Nuer origin remained at the PoC site within the UNMISS compound, while civilians of Dinka and Shilluk origin have left for Renk and other areas. As of 31 January, the situation remained tense: the market was still closed and deserted, bodies remained in the street, and newly-burned houses could still be seen. The HRD also continued to receive numerous reports that SPLA soldiers were killing suspected Nuers and opposition soldiers and sympathisers, extorting money from civilians in town, and harassing, abducting and/or beating women. There were also periodic reports of fighting on the outskirts of town. Investigations will continue as the security situation permits.

## **V. Accountability Measures**

On a number of occasions, the GRSS has candidly acknowledged that atrocities were committed in the context of the current crisis. President Kiir acknowledged that targeted killing occurred on the basis of ethnicity in late December and on several occasions demanded that the killings must stop, warning those involved that they would be held accountable. The SPLA Chief of General Staff acknowledged that atrocities were committed by both sides. In mid-February, the Minister of Foreign Affairs acknowledged that Dinka members of the SPLA targeted the Nuer community.

In response, the GRSS, the SPLA, and the SSNPS have established several committees to conduct investigations at the national level. On 2 January 2014, the GRSS announced that the SPLA was creating two investigation committees: a first to inquire into the killing of civilians and a second to examine the cause of the divisions and fighting within the Presidential Guard. In addition, the Inspector-General of the SSNPS established a five-member committee to investigate the reported killings of civilians in Juba. On 11 February 2014, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that the GRSS had formed an investigation

unit led by former Chief Justice John Wuol to verify reports of human rights abuses and targeted killings of civilians in Juba and other areas. According to the Minister, one hundred suspects have been arrested in connection with these incidents. The HRD does not currently have information about the composition of these committees, their terms of reference, or their jurisdiction. Without further information, it is difficult to assess whether these accountability mechanisms meet international standards of due process, objectivity, independence, and transparency.

HRD is also monitoring judicial proceedings related to abuses committed during the conflict. In Juba, for instance, it is monitoring hearings held by the Gudele County Court regarding an SPLA soldier who allegedly abducted a young woman in Juba on 18 December and sexual assaulted her until his arrest in mid-January 2014. Human Rights Officers are also following the case of three SSNPS officers who were arrested in Wau on 7 February for allegedly organising support for the opposition forces. HRD will continue to monitor these accountability measures.

The widespread violence and the magnitude of alleged human rights violations have also drawn the concern of the international community. On 30 December 2013, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union decided to establish a commission to “investigate the human rights violations and other abuses committed during the armed conflict and make recommendations on ways and means to ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing among all South Sudanese communities.” The Commission was requested to submit its report within three months.

## **VI. Road Map for Further Investigations**

In the next stage of its investigations, HRD teams will continue to gather new information with greater focus on supplementing, completing, and verifying the preliminary information that has been received to date.

Detailed investigation plans have been prepared by all seven investigation teams. These plans will elaborate incidents that have been investigated and those that are yet to be investigated, with associated timelines; targeted follow-up interviews with witnesses and survivors; site visits and town patrols, including with forensic assistance where applicable; UNMISS partners with whom to collaborate; and resource requirements. Human Rights Officers are also gathering non-testimonial evidence such as medical records, forensic reports, satellite imagery, photographs, and military analyses. To complete its investigations effectively, these plans and associated staffing arrangements are constantly adjusted to respond to prevailing priorities and circumstances.

Investigation plans are aimed at expanding the scope of information collected thus far and substantiating the allegations under investigation. In many instances, the HRD has only been able to interview witnesses in UNMISS PoC sites; IDPs in these locations are typically congregated by ethnic group. As mentioned above, in this highly polarized environment, it is possible and indeed likely that some information has been distorted or exaggerated. It is also apparent that a sharp divergence exists across communities with respect to perception of the crisis and the scale and scope of human rights violations. It is therefore imperative that allegations are further verified.

The HRD is therefore working to expand the range of individuals it interviews, notably to include GRSS officials and the senior leadership of the numerous forces, including opposition forces, that were allegedly involved in the crisis. This engagement will aim to interview alleged perpetrators and gather information on command and control and the structure of security forces on both sides. As the GRSS has admitted on numerous occasions that atrocities were committed in relation to the crisis, engagement concerning accountability measures by various governmental bodies is also crucial. The President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the SPLA, and SSNPS have all announced investigations; the HRD will seek to ascertain which incidents are under investigation and what information has been collected. Equally, once violations of human rights are verified by the HRD, they will be presented to the GRSS for comment.

Another aspect of expanding the scope of investigations will be visiting previously inaccessible areas and sites of human rights violations. Thus far, and as described above, Human Rights Officers have had difficulty leaving main population centres and even sometimes visiting areas within main towns. Neighbourhoods in Juba such as New Site, Mia Saba, Kor William, and Mangaten that saw intensive fighting and destruction will be assessed more thoroughly. Areas outside of state capitals that saw intensive fighting over prolonged periods will be visited as the security situation permits; such areas include Bor South County and areas north of Bor in Jonglei, and Leer and Koch Counties in Unity. Investigations will also be more thoroughly conducted in relation to Malakal and environs.

As information is corroborated, HRD will be able to move from information-gathering to the consolidation and analysis of information. With the transition to an analytical phase, the HRD hopes to identify broader trends and form a more comprehensive picture of the human rights situation during the crisis. This will be a vital step as it moves towards the preparation of a more fulsome report.

These plans are of course subject to existing constraints. Although the security situation has eased, serious access challenges remain with the result that access to both places and people may be less than ideal. However, these challenges can be addressed, at least in part. The HRD regularly works with Mission components and other actors to facilitate access to sites and information. In Jonglei, for example, Human Rights Officers are working with the State Coordinator, the Civil Affairs Division, and Military Liaison Officers to seek the acting Governor's support to ensure that the HRD can conduct its work freely and in proper conditions of confidentiality. Human Rights Officers in Central Equatoria regularly work with UNPOL to access to detention centres and have received the cooperation of SSNPS in that regard. Human Rights Officers continue to join UNMISS Integrated Team patrols with other Mission components both to protect its staff and gain access to sites it cannot reach alone.

HRD investigation activities will inform the preparation of a fuller report, being prepared for release by the end of April. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations will help national authorities hold perpetrators to account, encourage protective and remedial measures for victims, and prevent future violations of human rights.