



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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UNMISS Presents Interim Report on South Sudan crisis to UN Security Council

The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) presented its interim report on human rights abuses committed during the first six weeks of the crisis in South Sudan to the UN Security Council today. The product of over 500 interviews of victims, witnesses and other sources, the interim report is intended to provide the Security Council with an initial account of human rights violations and atrocities perpetrated between 15 December 2013, when the hostilities, which engulfed the world's youngest nation, broke out in Juba, and the end of January 2014 as documented by UNMISS. A more comprehensive public report on human rights violations and the ongoing crisis in South Sudan will be issued in April.

The interim report focuses on alleged human rights abuses that occurred in the four states of South Sudan that have seen the heaviest fighting to date – Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile. Numerous witnesses reported the deliberate targeting of both national and foreign civilians 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.

The report notes that large numbers of civilians were deliberately targeted and killed along ethnic lines and many more were displaced for similar reasons. For example, soldiers of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) reportedly engaged in killings of Nuer residents of Juba during the initial 72 hours of the crisis in mid-December. Conversely, Dinka civilians in the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal were allegedly killed by armed Nuer youths as well as SPLA and South Sudan National Police Service defectors. UNMISS is also investigating reports of mass graves in Juba, Bentiu and Rubkona. "It is clear that civilians bore the brunt of much of the fighting and that gross violations of human rights were committed," states the report.

UNMISS notes with deep regret that civilians have continued to be targeted and killed in the conflict in South Sudan. Fresh evidence of continuing human rights abuses surfaced during the recent battle for control of the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal. An UNMISS patrol visited the city centre yesterday and collected eyewitness testimony from residents alleging that armed opposition forces targeted and killed ten unarmed civilians at the Malakal Teaching Hospital on the basis of their ethnic background on 19 February. UNMISS staff in Malakal also witnessed the extra-judicial execution of two children outside the perimeter of the UNMISS compound yesterday by armed youths believed to be allied with armed opposition forces. UNMISS condemns the continuing perpetration of such human rights abuses in the strongest possible terms and calls on all parties to the current crisis to desist from committing additional atrocities.

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The report points to increased ethnic polarization in the wake of the crisis in South Sudan and the wide divergence in perceptions about the scope and magnitude of the human rights violations and abuses – which make it challenging to discern the truth. The report states that holding perpetrators to account is crucial not only for ensuring respect for human rights but also as a means to address the underlying causes of South Sudan’s current crisis.

UNMISS Special Representative of the Secretary General Hilde F. Johnson, SRSG of UNMISS: “Accountability is crucial for a national reconciliation process to take root and succeed. Without bringing to justice the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes, revenge and impunity is likely to lead to a perpetual cycle of violence.”

In that context, UNMISS welcomes the African Union’s decision to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate the human rights violations and atrocities committed during the armed conflict. The Mission has also noted that the Government of the Republic of South Sudan has established various committees to investigate the alleged involvement of the Government’s organized forces in the killings of civilians in Juba, and calls for speedy, transparent, and objective investigations consistent with due process that holds international standards.

The report concludes with a road map that indicates the next steps in the UNMISS Human Rights Division’s ongoing investigations and points the way towards the completion of the comprehensive public report that is due to be released next April.

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