



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit
Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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UNMISS statement on the ongoing violence in Unity State

Since intensified military activities began in Unity State on 20 April, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has grown increasingly concerned about continuing and consistent reports coming from Guit and Koch counties of towns and villages being burned, killings, abductions of males as young as 10 years of age, rape and abduction of girls and women, and the forced displacement of civilians.

Information collected by UNMISS gives credence to some of these allegations. Although it is unclear who committed such atrocities, it is the responsibility of Government to ensure that all civilians are protected, as well as for all parties to ensure appropriate command and control of their combatants to prevent the targeting of civilians.

UNMISS has experienced exceedingly limited access to the affected areas, as well as increasingly aggressive behaviour toward United Nations staff from soldiers at checkpoints. This would seem to reflect a lack of control by local authorities over security checkpoints. Orders issued on 8 May lifting the restrictions on movement have not been uniformly followed, and access for the UN remains difficult.

UNMISS has observed civilians being blocked at the main checkpoint for access to the UNMISS protection of civilians site in Bentiu, as well as increased incidents of assault, shooting and killing near the PoC site, indicating a lack of respect by the parties for the safety and security of the civilians inside.

"I remind the parties to the conflict of their obligation to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law, take all measures not to harm civilians and guarantee the safety of international aid organizations and United Nations personnel and assets," said Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for South Sudan. "There is no legitimate reason to burn civilian homes, or target civilian girls, boys, women or men through violence, including sexual violence."

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