



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit
Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 10 December, 2014

UNMISS commemorates International Human Rights Day

At a ceremony held in Juba today to commemorate International Human Rights Day, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for South Sudan, Ellen Margrethe Loej, read out UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for Human Rights Day, which this year is being observed under the slogan "Human Rights 365" to underscore the message that every day of the year should be Human Rights Day.

"The United Nations protects human rights because that is our proud mission," said Mr. Ban. "We are rallying in response to violations – before they degenerate into mass atrocities or war crimes."

In 1950, the UN General Assembly declared 10 December as International Human Rights Day to draw attention to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a global standard to which all peoples and nations of the world should aspire.

Speaking at a gathering of UN staff and invited guests inside the UNMISS compound in Tomping, SRSG Loej said that "The South Sudanese people have today witnessed a dramatic deterioration in the human rights situation" since the present conflict erupted almost a year ago.

Ms. Loej called on South Sudanese political, military and community leaders to take strong, public stands against human rights violations and impunity for such abuses. "Despite multiple statements from the leaders of both sides in the conflict that perpetrators would be held to account, there have not been significant steps in the form of visible and transparent measures," she added.

SRSG Loej said perpetrators of human rights abuses had to be punished in order to ensure the credibility of a peace process in South Sudan. "Calls for accountability and justice for all the crimes committed during the crisis need to be heeded if any peace process and efforts at national healing and reconciliation are to prove sustainable," she said.

The event featured performances of traditional South Sudanese dances by the Orupaap music and dance troupe and a speech by UNMISS Police Commissioner Fred Yiga. The director of the UNMISS Human Rights Division Ibrahim Wani read out a statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein.

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