



# United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit  
Communications & Public Information Office

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **UNMISS CONCERNED ABOUT INDICATIONS OF SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER NUMBERS OF CASUALTIES IN SOUTH SUDAN AS IT ACCESSES MORE AREAS AND MORE DISPLACED PERSONS**

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) notes media reports (New York Times, 9 January) estimating that up to 10,000 people may have been killed since the conflict in South Sudan started on 15 December 2013. On 26 December, ten days into the conflict, UNMISS estimated that 1,000 people may have been killed as a result of the conflict. This was based on UNMISS' initial monitoring and investigations in Juba and other relatively more stable locations where its Human Rights Officers and other staff were able to access, investigate and document the unfolding developments.

After two weeks of subsequent violence, characterized by sometimes intense fighting with heavy weapons, there are clear indications that the casualty count must be much higher. While UNMISS has continued to closely monitor the human rights situation, interviewing witnesses, and following leads, the Mission is not at this stage in a position to establish and verify the exact numbers of casualties. As Hervé Ladsous, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations observed on 9 January, at this juncture "We are not able to provide final figures. We know it will be very substantially in excess of the 1,000 figure".

Despite serious security constraints due to the fighting in Bor and Bentiu which has restricted access by UNMISS Human Rights Officers, during the course of last week UNMISS started interviewing victims and eyewitnesses among displaced people from Bor who have arrived in Juba and Awerial County in neighbouring Lakes State. UNMISS Human Rights Officers have also been able to return to Bor on 9 January. Preliminary indications from these interviews and investigations in Bentiu and Malakal contain horrific allegations of atrocities by anti-government forces against civilians and surrendering soldiers, including summary executions, torture, sexual violence and ethnically targeted killing. UNMISS deplores these horrendous acts of violence and utter disregard for human life and dignity.

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The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General Ms. Hilde F. Johnson calls on all parties to cease hostilities immediately, and respect and protect civilians. She reiterates the Secretary-General's reminder that those who commit such heinous acts will be held accountable.

UNMISS will continue to investigate and document the atrocities committed by both sides, in all affected areas. The Mission calls on the Government and the anti-government forces to cooperate with these important investigations and to facilitate unhindered access by the Mission's Human Rights Officers to all affected areas.