



# United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit  
Communications & Public Information Office

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **UNMISS expresses deep concern over mounting evidence of serious human rights violations**

UNMISS is gravely concerned about mounting evidence of gross violations of international human rights law that have occurred in South Sudan during the past 15 days. Extra-judicial killings of civilians and captured soldiers have occurred in various parts of the country, as evidenced by the discovery of large numbers of bodies in Juba, as well as the Upper Nile and Jonglei state capitals of Malakal and Bor, respectively. Massive displacement and arbitrary detentions of civilians have been observed.

The Mission has previously in statements and on a number of occasions called for an end to the serious human rights violations. Available evidence indicates that atrocities are continuing to occur in various parts of South Sudan. Many of these violations appear to be ethnically targeted. Most of the more brutal atrocities are reported to have been carried out by people wearing uniform.

“I condemn in the strongest possible terms the atrocities committed against innocent civilians of different communities by elements from both sides during the crisis. There is no excuse for these terrible acts of violence. All perpetrators must be held accountable,” said Hilde F. Johnson, Special Representative of the Secretary General to South Sudan.

Ever since violence initially flared on the evening of 15 December, UNMISS has viewed the crisis as a political struggle and has strongly taken issue with attempts to portray unfolding developments in South Sudan as an ethnic conflict. The Mission has also warned that some elements in the country might seek to exploit the ongoing violence to pursue their own ethnically driven agendas. It is deeply disturbing that this now seems to have happened.

UNMISS sees evidence of the apparent targeting of South Sudanese citizens on ethnic grounds. This can lead to a perpetual cycle of violence that can destroy the fabric of the new nation.

The Mission has been actively collecting information every day since the crisis began. It will continue this priority task of investigating all reports of serious human rights violations and collecting evidence and eyewitness testimony in order to document such allegations.

The United Nations reminds all parties of their obligation to protect civilians and act in accordance with human rights and humanitarian law. The Mission calls on key leaders in South Sudan to send strong public messages to their respective constituencies insisting that the violence must stop, and that anyone disobeying these orders will be punished severely.

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As the UN Secretary-General has already stated, those responsible for any grave human rights violations or crimes against humanity must and will be held accountable. This applies to all sides of this conflict.

“I welcome yesterday’s decision of the African Union’s Peace and Security Council at the Heads of State level, to establish a Commission under the AU to investigate the human rights violations and other abuses committed, and make recommendations on ways and means to ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing among all South Sudanese communities”, said the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Hilde F. Johnson.

The UN stands together with all the people of South Sudan and demands that all parties halt the violence with immediate effect. The leaders of all sides have a historic responsibility to the future and people of this young country. They must heed the call of IGAD member states at their recent summit in Nairobi to implement an immediate cessation of hostilities and violence, and to commence negotiations leading to a peaceful solution to their differences.

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