



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS STATEMENT

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UNMISS Statement on Situation in Jonglei

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is deeply concerned by the continued armed violence, displacement and human rights violations against civilians in parts of Jonglei State. UNMISS urges all concerned parties to halt the violence against civilians and allow for timely access and delivery of assistance to vulnerable persons. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan must take immediate and decisive action to protect civilians across Jonglei: address the causes of displacement, the inter-communal violence, and seek accountability for serious abuses regardless of the perpetrator.

Clashes between armed groups and the South Sudanese army (SPLA), violence and harassment affecting civilians, instances of killings, as well as looting and destruction of property, are causing significant displacement and instability in large parts of eastern Jonglei, particularly Pibor County. The exploitation by armed groups of long-standing inter-communal tensions, compounded by serious abuses allegedly committed by them, more disturbingly, by ill-disciplined elements of the security forces, has fomented widespread fear, mistrust and insecurity among the population.

UNMISS is particularly concerned that fighting between David Yau Yau's armed group and the SPLA since March has displaced thousands of civilians, with the populations centres in Pibor County, including Boma, Manyabol and Pibor being largely empty of civilians. Clashes in Boma, south-eastern Jonglei, in May displaced the population and caused considerable looting and damage of property, including those of the humanitarian organizations, reportedly by both armed groups and security forces. Also last month, a majority of the population from Pibor town fled following threats of attack by the David Yau Yau armed group, and looting and abuses committed by members of the security forces. Restrictions are reported on the movement of hundreds of civilians who remain in Pibor town, and reportedly, harassment has continued.

In Likuangole, the most senior local government official (Payam Administrator) and several chiefs were allegedly abducted by elements from David Yau Yau's group in May. Clashes with the SPLA had earlier virtually emptied the town, also, in recent weeks Manyabol, which is west of Pibor town. While the south-eastern Pibor County of Jonglei has been the area most affected by instability, the movement of elements from the David Yau Yau group has also resulted in attacks and some population displacement in other parts of Jonglei, including in the north and in eastern Pochalla County, which borders Ethiopia. Other states have also been impacted.

It is of grave concern that the rainy season and insecurity are making it more difficult for UNMISS and humanitarian agencies to gain access to the displaced persons. Refugee flows have also continued, with close to 50,000 refugees registered with UNHCR in neighbouring countries from all the three main ethnic communities of Jonglei.

Supporting the Government's efforts to increase stability and protect civilians in Jonglei has been a top priority of UNMISS since it was established nearly two years ago. Since January, UNMISS has increased its military presence in Jonglei to a height of nine infantry companies in late March, constituting around half of the total UN peacekeeping force in South Sudan. Severe operational and logistical constraints in the rainy season are now making it extremely hard to sustain more than five companies permanently deployed in Jonglei. In recent months UNMISS has conducted hundreds of long and short duration patrols in Jonglei, and since last October, on at least ten occasions, has

provided protection at its Pibor and Gumuruk bases to a total of more than 7,000 civilians seeking refuge, which has also happened in other states.

The Mission continues to deploy its Integrated Teams, and its human rights monitoring with investigations being conducted when incidents of concern are reported, and brought to the attention of the South Sudanese authorities. To strengthen awareness and accountability, UNMISS will increase its public reporting, issuing thematic reports and additional incident related public reports on human rights.

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan has the primary responsibility to protect civilians. UNMISS is mandated to support the country's institutions to help them fulfil their responsibilities in this regard. Where the Government is not providing protection, however, UNMISS will act independently to prevent harm to civilians within the limitations of its resources and capabilities.

UNMISS has welcomed President Kiir Mayardit's statement on 17 May condemning the violence by armed groups in Jonglei and the abuses committed by ill-disciplined elements of the security forces, committing to bring the perpetrators to justice. UNMISS acknowledges that SPLA investigations are now underway into the incidents in Pibor and Manyabol and other reported recent abuses against civilians involving members of the security forces. However, much more needs to be done to enforce discipline and command and control, build trust among the communities, and ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law within the security forces.

UNMISS also acknowledges the serious efforts made by the Government to reach out to the David Yau Yau armed group to come to an understanding, and to avoid military confrontation. It is regrettable that these efforts have so far not succeeded, and it is vital that the offer of amnesty now is taken up by David Yau Yau so that peace and stability can be restored in Jonglei.

The Mission encourages local authorities, community leaders, and national figures to reinforce their efforts to foster reconciliation. UNMISS urges all parties to refrain from derogatory language or hate speech against any community. The 2012 All Jonglei Peace Conference and its positive initial impact, albeit for only a few months, demonstrated that peaceful coexistence can be achieved. It is not too late for the communities to return to the spirit and implementation of the outcomes of the conference and build on the foundation for peace it provided.

Peace and stabilization efforts in Jonglei must be accompanied by the delivery of early peace dividends for all communities, and credible and decisive action to strengthen the rule of law and the accountability of the Government and of the security forces. These combined actions will help keep Jonglei more stable and its population safer as the Republic of South Sudan approaches the second anniversary of its independence.

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