



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit, Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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UNMISS ISSUES REPORT ON WALGAK HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATION

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan today released a report on the findings of a human rights investigation into the deadly incident that occurred near Walgak, Akobo West sub-county, in Jonglei State on 8 February 2013.

“The findings confirm that the initial reports of the numbers of killed were not far off the mark, and provides recommendations to the government of South Sudan to provide justice for the victims and to avert further violence” said Richard Bennett, UNMISS’ Human Rights Director. “UNMISS and the government should also enhance their early warning capacities and cooperation.”

The report states that at least 85 persons were killed, including 69 identified by name. The majority of those slain were women and children. At the same time, some parts of the area were difficult to access, and as many as 34 additional persons are reported missing. This implies that the casualties initially reported seem to be reasonably accurate. The incident represents the highest single loss of life since the increase in inter-communal violence in recent months.

The group of pastoralists, mainly innocent women and children from the Lou Nuer community, were attacked by a group of armed men, allegedly members of the Murle community, while taking cattle on their annual migration to a grazing area. They were escorted by a platoon of approximately 40 SPLA soldiers intended to provide security and deter cattle-rustlers. The attack is assessed to have lasted several hours and involved both indiscriminate and targeted fire by the assailants against civilians as well as the SPLA who were eventually overwhelmed and suffered casualties.

“It is of grave concern that so many people were killed in such a brutal attack on 8 February,” said Richard Bennett. The report positions this criminal incident of violence in deep-rooted inter-community relations, particularly between the Lou Nuer and Murle communities of Jonglei. The causes of inter-communal attacks are multiple and complex, ranging from widespread availability of weapons and insecurity to marginalization and lack of development.

The report acknowledges the efforts that have been made by the Government to anticipate and respond to the incident and thereby reduce the number of casualties. More should be done, however, to protect communities at risk of attack. It is crucial that an investigation takes place with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice and seeking

redress through compensation. This will constitute a strong deterrent to further criminal intention.

UNMISS is also concerned that revenge attacks may happen. It is of utmost importance that the Government continues to call for restraint and engages with all communities to prevent a further escalation of violence.

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The full report can be viewed or downloaded from the UNMISS website at:
<http://unmiss.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=4BAr3GtyY4%3d&tabid=5434&language=en-US>

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