



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Press Release

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Escalation of fighting in South Sudan puts thousands of civilians at risk and compromises peace process

A surge in violent clashes in Unity, Jonglei and Central Equatorias is having a devastating impact on thousands of civilians and on humanitarian agencies trying to provide desperately needed assistance to vulnerable people.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is deeply concerned at the intensification of fighting in areas such as Nhialdiu, Mayendit, Rupchai, Thaker, and Mirinyal, in the vicinity of Leer and Bentiu in the Unity region, as well as around Motot and Akobo in Jonglei.

“Innocent civilians are being caught in the crossfire, including many women, children and elderly people,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer. “Our teams on the ground are reporting incidents of killing, sexual violence, homes being burnt to the ground, cattle raiding, and the looting of hospitals and schools.”

There has been gunfire overnight near UNMISS’ temporary operating base at Leer and Ghanaian peacekeepers are on high alert to protect an influx of 600 internally displaced people who have sought sanctuary from the violence in recent days. This brings the total number of IDPs at the Leer base to around 1100. A small number of displaced people have also arrived at the UN protection site at Bentiu and more are expected.

More than 30 humanitarian workers have been relocated over the past two weeks because it is too dangerous for them to operate in the midst of the escalating conflict. Thousands of people have fled into swamp and bush areas without access to much-needed aid, including food, clean water and medical care.

“This surge in violence is causing immense suffering and harm to civilians and the ability to provide humanitarian support,” said David Shearer. “It is at odds with the cessation of hostilities agreement that was signed just a few months ago. We urge the warring parties to lay down their guns, put the interests of the people first, and work together to build lasting peace.”

“The success of the upcoming round of peace talks at the High Level Revitalization Forum is dependent on all parties committing to stop the fighting and to come together in good faith. Political leaders must demonstrate they are willing to compromise and resolve this conflict which is causing terrible harm to their people,” he said.

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