



PRESS RELEASE

UNMISS statement welcoming justice delivered through a General Court Martial in Yei

Juba, 18 July 2022: The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) welcomes recent steps taken by the Government of South Sudan to pursue accountability and justice for survivors of sexual violence in Yei, Central Equatoria State. A General Court Martial that took place from 1 to 27 June 2022 resulted in convictions of 21 individuals for serious crimes including murder, rape, and the rape of a minor committed in 2021 and 2022. The confirmation of the judgements is expected to follow in accordance with the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act.

Five members of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) accused of rape were convicted, dismissed and stripped of their rank, sentenced to up to 10 years of imprisonment, and required to pay compensation to survivors. "We commend the authorities and the SSPDF for holding perpetrators accountable for the horrific crimes committed. The community played an essential role, as they demanded that these cases be investigated and adjudicated," said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan Nicholas Haysom.

UNMISS provided funding for survivors and witnesses to receive counselling before and after the trial, as well as interpretation and logistics assistance such as transportation through the Yei River Women's Association. Survivors were also assigned a dedicated support person during the proceedings. "We must ensure that survivors get the help they need, are treated with compassion and respect, and are not further traumatized," SRSO Haysom added.

Across all of South Sudan, UNMISS and partners have been supporting processes for accountability and access to justice, including justice for children, through a range of special and mobile courts. The Yei General Court Martial is part of the Mission's ongoing collaboration with the Military Justice Directorate to strengthen accountability within the SSPDF. The Yei River County Commissioner Aggrey Cyrus Kanyikwa expressed his gratitude for the expedited establishment of the General Court Martial, calling it "a declaration of an end to impunity and lawlessness", adding that "it proves that South Sudan can end impunity and provide justice; and that nobody is above the law."

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