

Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Between July and September 2024, UNMISS Human Rights Division (HRD) documented 206 incidents affecting 792 civilians: 299 killed, 310 injured, 151 abducted and 32 subjected to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).
- ❖ This represents a four percent decrease in violent incidents (from 215 to 206) compared to the same reporting period in 2023; however, there was a 24 percent increase in the number of victims (from 641 to 792). The number of civilians killed decreased by seven percent (from 321 to 299), while injuries increased by 34 percent (from 231 to 310). Abductions and CRSV increased by 132 percent (from 65 to 151) and 33 percent (from 24 to 32), respectively.
- ❖ In comparison to the previous reporting period (April to June 2024), a 35 percent decrease in violent incidents (from 317 to 206) and a 25 percent decrease in civilian casualties (from 1,062 to 792) were observed.
- ❖ Seventy percent of the victims were attributed to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, while 19 percent were attributed to the parties to conflict and other armed groups. The remaining 11 percent were attributed to unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements.

CONTEXT

This brief presents an overview of the trends and patterns of violence affecting civilians between July and September 2024, by assessing the four major forms of individual harm (i.e. killing, injury, abduction and CRSV) experienced by victims in the areas affected by armed conflict in South Sudan. While the impact of violence extends beyond these forms of harm, they have been the most common incidents documented in the country. This brief highlights key human rights concerns monitored by UNMISS HRD, including incidents of sexual and gender-based violence.

Communal violence by community-based militias and/or civil defense groups remained the most common driver of violence affecting civilians throughout the country. In contrast, incidents of violence involving the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups remained relatively low in most parts of South Sudan. Notably, Warrap State continued to account for most of the civilian casualties (defined as killed and/or injured civilians) mainly by the community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. At the same time, parts of Central Equatoria State experienced the highest number of civilians impacted by violence linked to the on-going

hostilities between the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups.

UNMISS HRD sources of information included primary sources (i.e. victims and eyewitnesses), as well as reports from secondary sources identified during monitoring and investigations through field missions. Corroborating information was gathered from service providers, local authorities and community chiefs, including women and youth leaders. Unless specifically stated, all information in this report has been verified using independent and credible sources. All reported incidents of intra/inter-communal violence were deconflicted with incidents documented by the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division. Incidents determined as cases of CRSV were verified in consultation with the UNMISS Women's Protection Advisory Unit.

Nevertheless, the data presented in this brief should not be considered comprehensive due to challenges faced by UNMISS HRD in monitoring and reporting on violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. These included limited access to various locations due to security considerations, access denials by the state authorities, as well as inaccessibility

due to road and weather conditions. Challenges also included the unwillingness of victims and eyewitnesses to speak due to fear of reprisals and the underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence due to associated stigma.

In accordance with its mandate, UNMISS has issued this quarterly brief as an advocacy tool to reduce the impact

GENERAL TRENDS

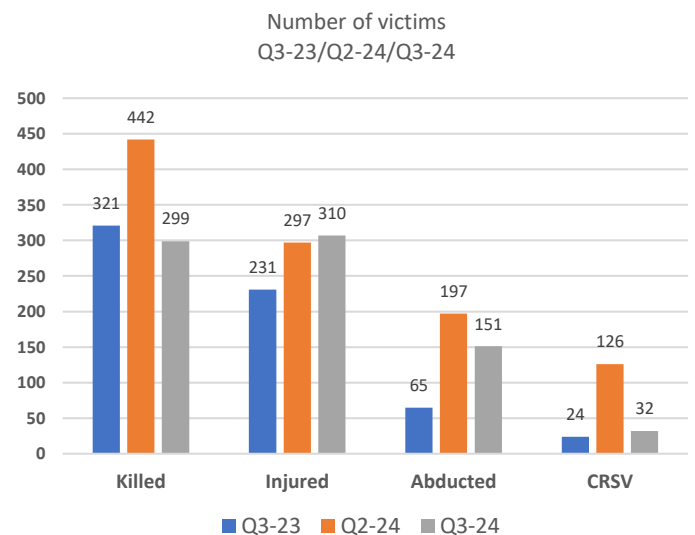
Between July and September 2024, UNMISS HRD documented 206 incidents of violence affecting 792 civilians, including 88 women and 82 children, who were subjected to one of the four major forms of harm (299 killed, 310 injured, 151 abducted and 32 subjected to CRSV). Among these incidents, 16 occurred prior to this brief's coverage; however, they were documented and verified during the reporting quarter.

Compared to the corresponding period in 2023, when 215 incidents involving 641 victims were documented, the impact of violence in the reporting quarter was more severe despite the overall four percent decrease in the number of incidents (from 215 to 206). Notwithstanding the decrease of seven percent in the number of civilians killed (from 321 to 299), there was an increase in the number of civilians injured by 34 percent (from 231 to 310), as well as the number of abductions by 132 percent (from 65 to 151) and CRSV by 33 percent (from 24 to 32). The main factors behind civilians harmed were mainly the persisting communal violence in Warrap State that recorded the highest in civilian casualties (176 killed and 187 injured) by the community-based militias and/or civil defense groups and the increase in the number of abductions in the southern parts of Central Equatoria State allegedly by members of the National Salvation Front (NAS) splinter groups.

In comparison with the second quarter of 2024 (April to June), there was a 35 percent decrease in violent incidents (from 317 to 206) and a 25 percent decrease in the number of victims (from 1,062 to 792). The number of civilians killed decreased by 32 percent (from 442 to 299), while those injured increased by four percent (from 297 to 310). Abductions decreased by 23 percent (from 197 to 151), while the number of victims subjected to sexual violence decreased by 75 percent (from 126 to 32). This reduction in the number of victims was in part due to timely interventions by the state authorities with the support of UNMISS at the grass-roots level through peace dialogues, particularly in areas greatly affected by conflict (i.e. Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile, Warrap and Western Equatoria States).

of armed violence against civilians. UNMISS also reminds the Government of South Sudan of its obligations under international human rights law to take adequate measures to protect civilians, investigate allegations of violations promptly and thoroughly and to hold the alleged perpetrators accountable while still ensuring their fair trial rights.

While most of the incidents perpetrated by the community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups were documented in Warrap State, violence committed by the parties to the conflict and other armed groups were mainly observed in Central Equatoria State.



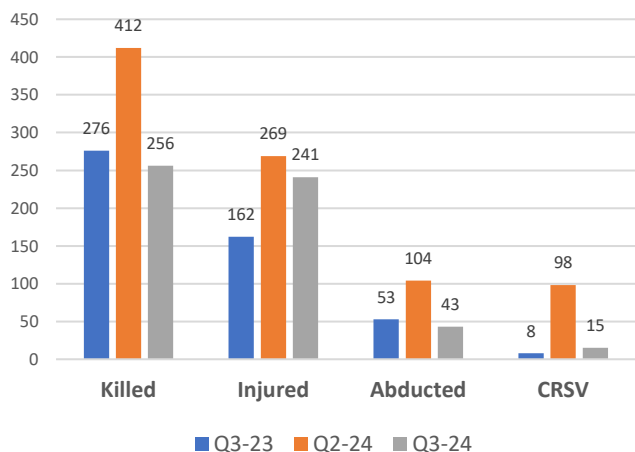
Community-based militias and/or civil defense groups

As in the previous two quarters of 2024, entrenched patterns of violence commonly referred to as intra/inter-communal violence perpetrated by community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups continued to pose threats to the security and protection of civilians and remained the main source of violence in South Sudan. During the third quarter, these actors accounted for 70 percent of the overall number of civilians harmed (555 out of 792), including 63 women and 71 children (28 girls and 43 boys). Persistently, the clashes amongst Dinka sections/sub-sections in Warrap State continued to be a concern and accounted for 61 percent of the total number of victims attributed to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. In one of the recurring clashes in Tonj East County that lasted for two days, HRD verified 100 civilian casualties (45 killed and 55 injured), illustrating the widespread use of lethal force during

attacks. Similarly, in Tonj North County, the armed violence and clashes between the Dinka sub-groups in Alabek Payam resulted in a total of 67 casualties (28 civilian deaths and 39 others injured).

In Eastern Equatoria State, armed violence amongst the civil-defense groups from Buya, Didinga, Dongotono, Logir, Lotuko and Toposa communities continued to be documented and remained a challenge in the region. For instance, in one of the incursions by the armed Logir elements in Chokorol Payam, Ikotos County, 11 civilians were injured (including two women and one girl) and another killed. Further, violence related to cross-border attacks involving armed Turkana elements from the neighboring Republic of Kenya persisted. Likewise, two incidents involving armed elements from the Nyangatom and Suruma communities from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia were recorded. Overall, 25 percent of the incidents in Eastern Equatoria were attributed to the community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups.

Violence affecting civilians by Community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups



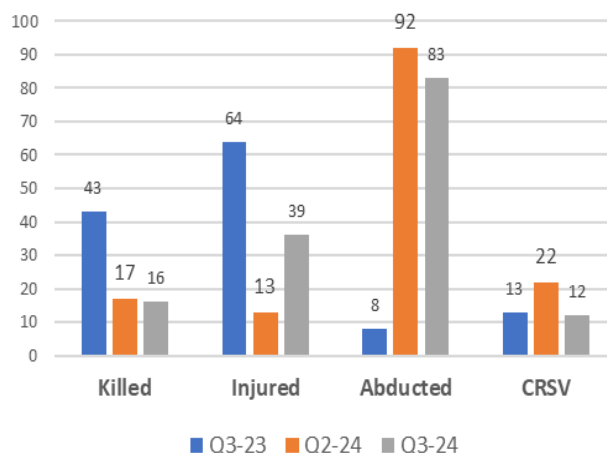
Likewise, in Jonglei State, incidents of violence, mainly involving Murle armed elements from the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), remained a concern. Incursions by these armed elements occurred in parts of Akobo, Ayod, Bor South, Duk, Nyirol, Pigi and Twic East Counties in Jonglei, as well as in Gumuruk, Pochalla and Verteth Counties in GPAA and parts of Eastern Equatoria State such as Kapoeta East, Kapoeta North, Lafon and Torit Counties. During the reporting quarter, UNMISS HRD documented 26 incidents affecting 67 civilians attributed to Murle armed elements (19 killed, 11 injured and 37 abducted).

Conventional parties and other armed groups

Incidents of violence against civilians attributed to the parties to the conflict and other armed groups remained relatively low nationwide, accounting for 23 percent of the total number of incidents (47 out of 206) and 19 percent of the victims (150 out of 792). Compared with the same period in 2023, this represents a 17 percent increase in the number of victims (from 128 to 150), while in comparison with the previous quarter (April to June 2024), there was a four percent increase in the number of victims (from 144 to 150).¹ However, consistent with the previous reporting quarters, the security and human rights situation in some areas of Central Equatoria State, particularly in parts of Juba, Lainya, Morobo and Yei Counties, remained a concern due to hostilities between the Government security forces, mainly the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) and NAS splinter groups.

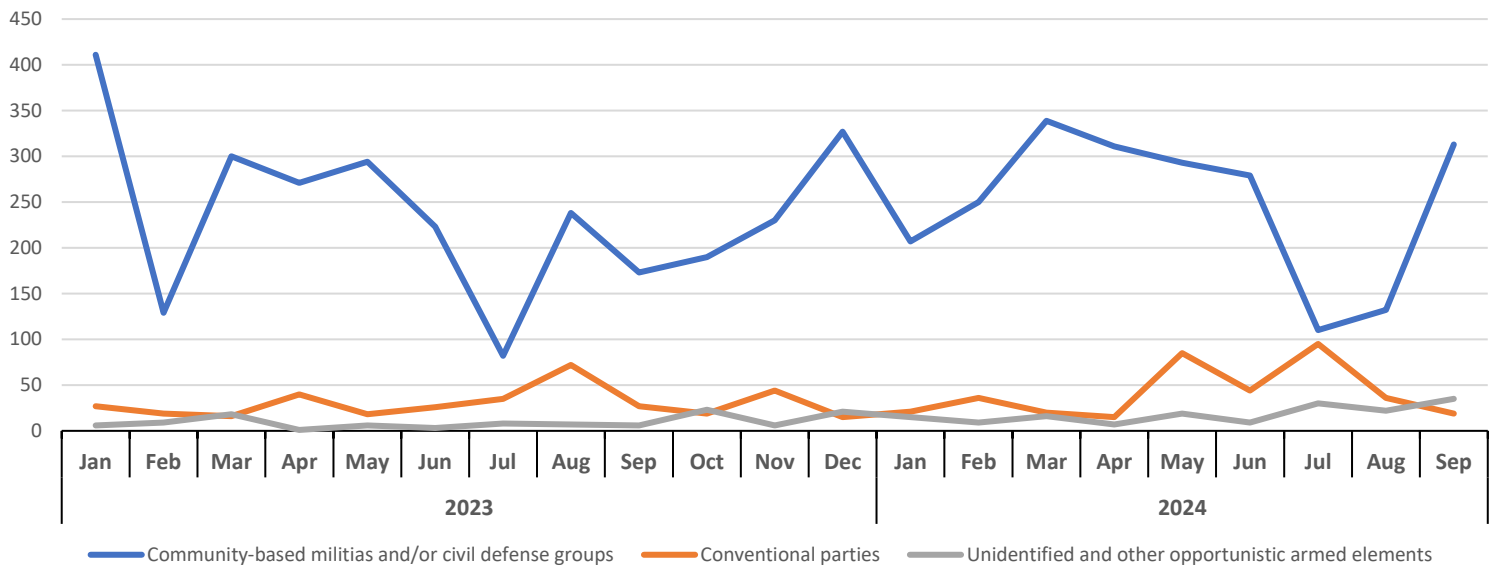
Incidents of abductions allegedly by NAS splinter groups for forced conscription to boost troops’ strength continued in the region. Between July and September, UNMISS HRD documented 17 incidents of abductions reportedly perpetrated by the members of NAS splinter groups, involving 82 victims (76 men, five women and one girl). Among these abductees, seven either worked as humanitarian staff or as aid workers. On the other hand, in response to NAS splinter groups’ insurgencies, the SSPDF’s counter-insurgency operations continue to

Violence affecting civilians by Conventional parties and/or other armed groups



¹ Nevertheless, it should be noted that beyond the scope of violence described in this brief, UNMISS HRD continued to document concerning incidents of other human rights violations and abuses (i.e. arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention, extra-judicial executions and ill-treatment) perpetrated by the Government security forces and other armed groups that greatly affected the safety and security of civilians in the community.

Trends in the number of civilians affected (January 2023 to September 2024)



threaten the security and protection of civilians. Reportedly, civilians perceived as collaborators of the NAS splinter groups were subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and ill-treatment. Further, civilians continued to be displaced due to the confrontations between the parties.

Relatedly, in Upper Nile State, the fragile security environment in Nassir County, exacerbated by longstanding disputes and competition over control and access to the Sobat River² and previous political and ethnic grievances were marked by the recurrence of clashes between the SSPDF and the local armed groups, widely known as the “White Army”. During the reporting quarter, the confrontations between these groups resulted in eight civilian casualties (four killed and four injured). The hostilities and volatility in the area have led to the forced displacement of civilians and the destruction of their properties.

Unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements

UNMISS HRD also documented incidents of violence by unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements, which demonstrate a link to the conflict based on their modus operandi, the location of the incidents, or other relevant factors observed during the perpetration of violence (such as the language spoken or clothing worn by the alleged perpetrators). For instance, in Eastern Equatoria State, 12 civilians from the Didinga community were killed and four others were injured after alleged foreign elements fired a Rocket Propelled Grenade upon the victims while harvesting honey in the mountain areas of Budi County. Reportedly, this area of Lotukei Payam

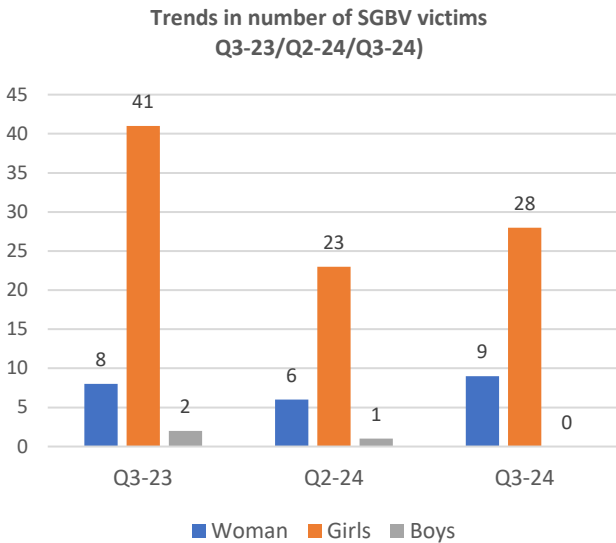
in Budi County is contested between the Didinga (Eastern Equatoria State) and the Karamojong communities of Karenga District, Republic of Uganda. Separately, in Unity State, a group of unidentified armed elements allegedly from Mayom County, attacked and opened fire on a group of civilians in Aliny County of Ruweng Administrative Area, killing three civilians and injuring five others, including one woman and one boy. Overall, a total of 21 incidents impacting 87 civilians, including nine women and two children, attributed to unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements were documented within the reporting period.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

In the third quarter of 2024, UNMISS HRD documented at least 37 incidents of SGBV in nine states, which affected 37 victims (nine women and 28 girls). Among these 37 incidents, 30 were rape, two gang-rape, one attempted rape, three forced marriage and one sexual assault case. Compared to the previous quarter, this represents a 23 percent increase in SGBV incidents. These 37 incidents (37 victims) are in addition to 23 CRSV incidents (32 victims, including 15 girls), affecting a total of 69 victims. Fifteen of these incidents happened prior to the coverage of this brief; however, they were documented within the third quarter. At least eight percent of the alleged SGBV perpetrators were not known to the victims; 70 percent were family members, fellow community members or neighbors; and 22 percent were members of the SSPDF, Sudan People’s Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) and National Police Service (NPS), and National Prison Service. This demonstrates

² A branch of the Nile River in the Greater Upper Nile region that formed the White Nile and the main source of fishing in the region.

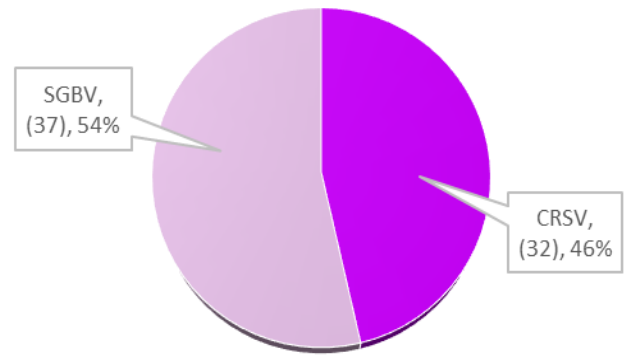
that



victims and potential victims require more protection in family and community settings, where they remain vulnerable due to gender discrimination exacerbated by harmful traditional practices.

UNMISS HRD considers that incidents of SGBV are underreported due to various factors, including stigma,

Total number of sexual abuse victims Q3-24



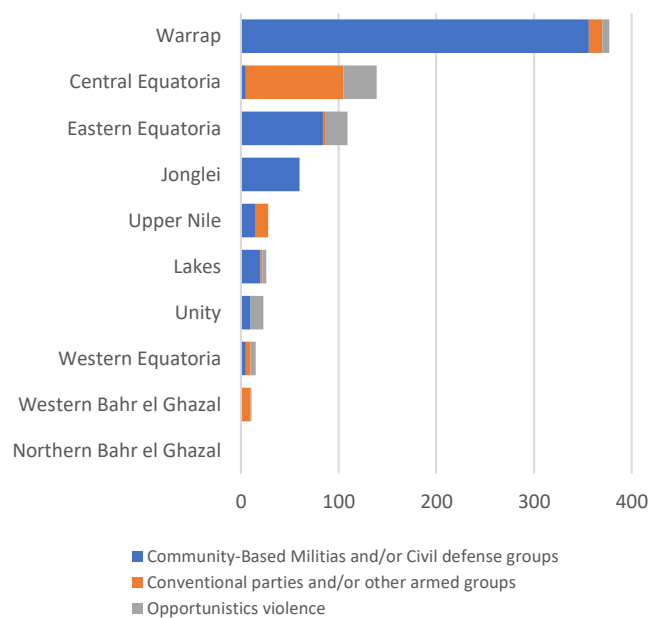
trauma and fear of retaliation, that prevent victims and families from reporting. The dearth of formal justice structures across most South Sudan impedes survivors' access to justice. Consequently, many families are compelled to resort to adjudication by traditional leaders. Furthermore, intersectional vulnerabilities faced by the victims often result in families preferring the immediate economic benefits from compensation ordered through customary courts and the perceived reduced stigma by addressing sexual violence through marriage between the perpetrator and victim rather than filing criminal charges for the prosecution of offenders.

GEOGRAPHICAL TRENDS

Warrap and Central Equatoria states, were the most affected areas of violence nationwide, accounting for 66 percent of the total number of victims (or 519 individuals: 377 for Warrap and 142 for Central Equatoria). While the violence in Warrap State was mainly caused by the persistent intra/inter-communal violence amongst Dinka sub-groups and cross-border attacks involving armed elements from Lakes and Unity states; Central Equatoria State continued to experience hostilities between Government security forces and NAS splinter groups, despite overarching respect of the ceasefire throughout the country by the majority of the conventional parties to the conflict. However, the degrees and impact of violence in these areas varied. For instance, while Warrap State experienced the highest number of civilian casualties (176 killings and 187 injuries), accounting for 60 percent of the total victims of killing and injury in South Sudan, Central Equatoria State experienced the highest number of abductions (104), accounting for 69 percent of all the documented abductions in the country.

As in the previous quarters, Warrap, Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei states, remained the most affected areas of conflict mainly attributed to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, accounting for 63 percent of

State most affected by violence



the overall number of victims recorded throughout South Sudan.

Notwithstanding general respect for the ceasefire throughout the country, the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups remained active in hostilities in many parts of Central Equatoria State (i.e. in parts of Juba, Kajo-Keji, Lainya, Morobo and Yei areas), as well as parts of Western Equatoria State (i.e. Mundri East County), primarily involving the Government security forces and NAS splinter groups.

Security situation in Nassir County of Upper Nile State remained fragile and unpredictable due to recurring confrontations between the SSPDF and the White Army

from the Nuer community. Incidents in July and August resulted in civilian casualties and civilian displacement.

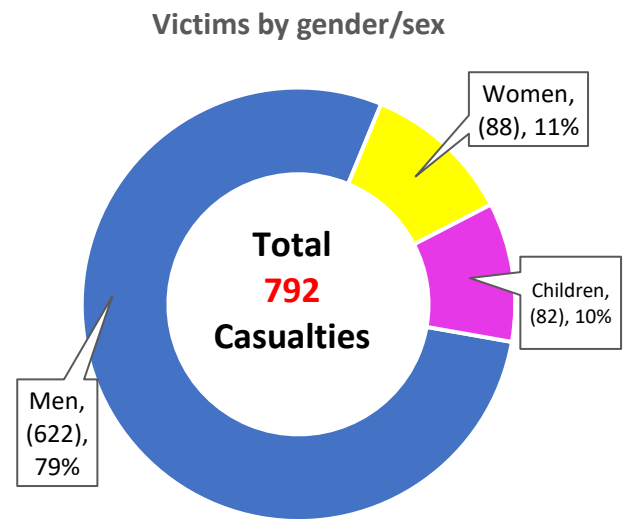
Military operations and activities involving Government security forces and organized armed groups and their respective proxy armed elements, continued to place civilians at risk of violence, predominantly in parts of Central Equatoria State as well as in some areas of Eastern Equatoria, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria States.

VICTIMS

HRD established that men, particularly young men, comprised the majority of victims (79 percent, or 622 individuals); followed by women at 11 percent (88 individuals); and children at 10 percent (82 individuals). However, beyond the direct impact of violence, women and children were disproportionately affected by the effects of conflict, particularly in terms of access to health care, education and livelihoods in volatile areas.

The primary form of harm perpetrated against men was injury (44 percent), followed by killing (40 percent) and abduction (16 percent) - largely in the context of armed confrontations and violence attributable to the parties to the conflict and other armed groups. UNMISS HRD has reasonable grounds to believe that CRSV affecting male survivors is grossly underreported due to social stigma.

The primary form of harm perpetrated against women was injury (35 percent), followed by killing (34 percent), CRSV (17 percent) and abduction (14 percent). Women were primarily subjected to CRSV during, or in the aftermath of armed violence in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Warrap and Western Equatoria States.



Abduction was the leading form of harm perpetrated against children (49 percent), followed by killing (23 percent), CRSV (18 percent) and injury (10 percent). Further, girls continued to be severely affected by CRSV, with 15 victims documented during the reporting period.

PERPETRATORS

Investigations by UNMISS HRD have identified three major categories of perpetrators involved in conflict-related violence affecting civilians: i) community-based militias and civil-defense groups; ii) conventional parties to the conflict; and iii) unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements.

In the third quarter of 2024, investigations by UNMISS HRD attributed responsibility for 138 incidents of violence affecting 70 percent of victims to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. Violence by

these groups is historically rooted in traditional and societal practices, particularly among pastoralist societies. Over the years, it has taken on an increasingly militarized character, with the alleged support and involvement of the conventional parties to the conflict. Furthermore, political elites at the local and national levels have contributed to this intensification of violence, including through instigating and/or participating in the planning of attacks, financial and logistical support, as well as provision of military grade weapons and ammunition. Intra/inter-communal violence, therefore,

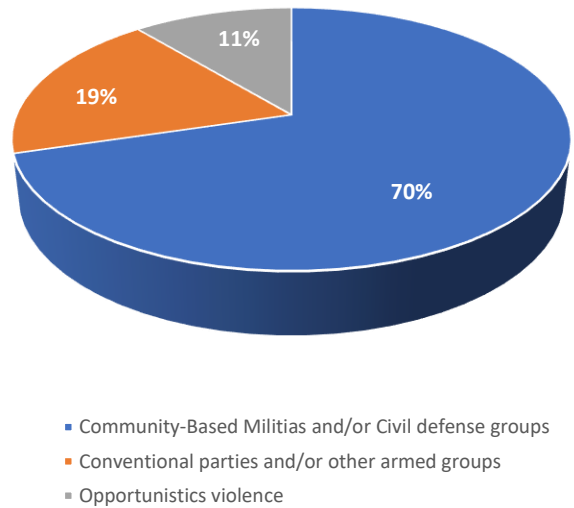
cannot be dissociated from local and national political and military dynamics. UNMISS HRD noted that in many instances, military-scale attacks and mobilizations were carried out and incorporated into most of their offensives aimed at recovering looted cattle.

The second largest category of perpetrators remained the conventional parties to the conflict (i.e. Government security forces, organized and non-organized opposition armed groups), who were accountable for 23 percent of incidents and 150 victims documented during the reporting quarter.

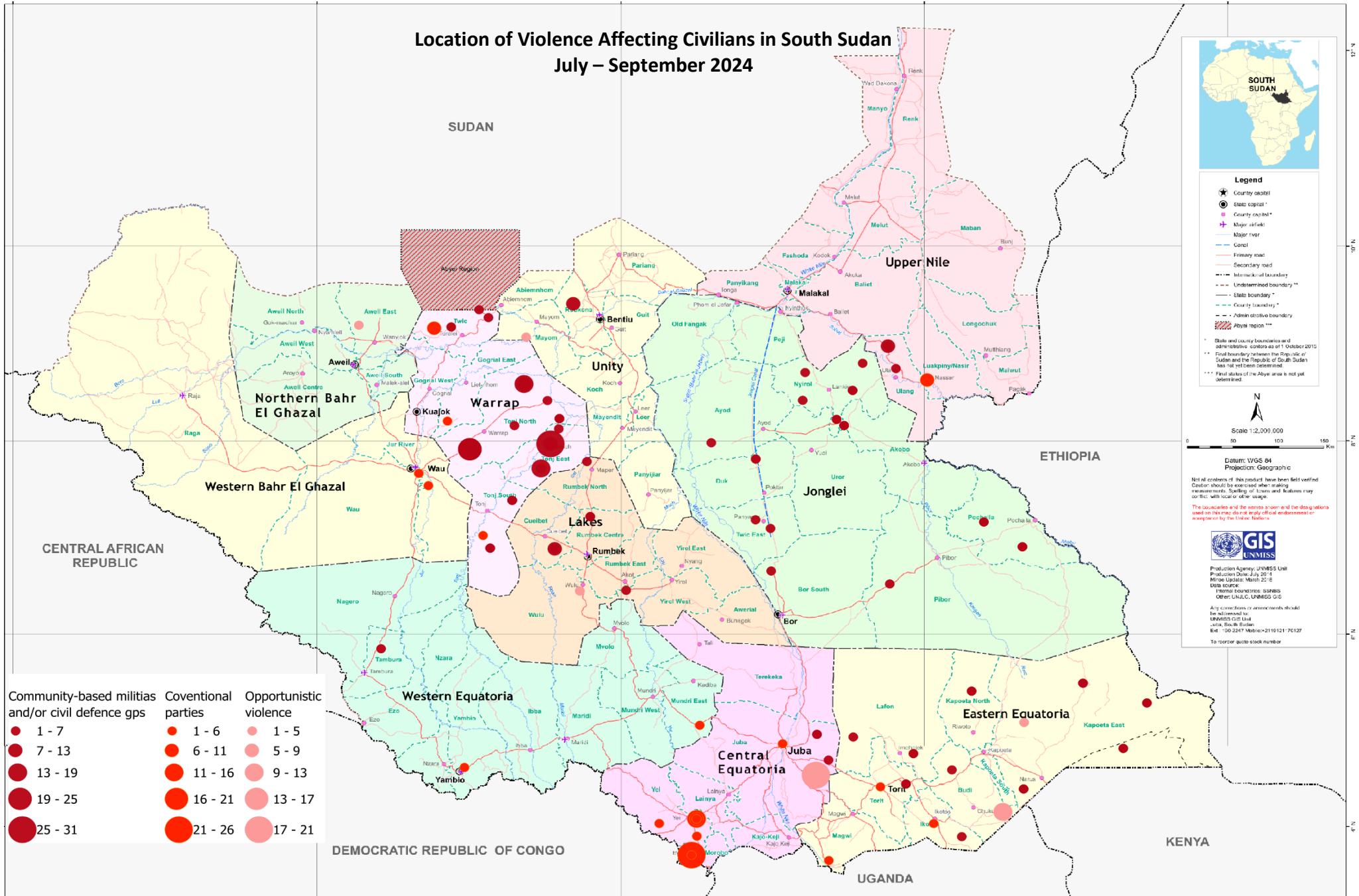
Among the Government security forces, acts of violence affecting civilians were attributed mainly to the SSPDF, National Security Service (NSS), NPS, and/or joint security operations consisting mainly of these three security agencies. As for other armed groups, both the SPLA-IO, which is a signatory to the Revitalized Agreement, and NAS splinter groups and affiliated armed elements, who are non-signatories to the Revitalized Agreement, also committed abuses against civilians. The primary form of harm perpetrated by the conventional parties to the conflict and/or other armed groups was abduction (55 percent), CRSV (eight percent), killing (11 percent) and injury (26 percent). The distinction between government forces and other armed groups should not obscure the extreme fluidity between and within these entities, whose loyalties often shift according to the formation of alliances of convenience, defections and buy-offs.

Unidentified armed elements comprised the third category of perpetrators, primarily in the form of opportunistic violence and accounted for 11 percent of civilians harmed during the reporting period. Often, they are deserters or have historical affiliations with the Government security forces or other organized groups, or members of foreign armed forces, as well as community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, who have progressively acquired autonomy from their sponsors and now carried out acts of violence against civilians without any clear strategic or military objectives.

Civilian casualties by type of perpetrators



Location of Violence Affecting Civilians in South Sudan July – September 2024



Community-based militias and/or civil defence gps	Conventional parties	Opportunistic violence
● 1 - 7	● 1 - 6	● 1 - 5
● 7 - 13	● 6 - 11	● 5 - 9
● 13 - 19	● 11 - 16	● 9 - 13
● 19 - 25	● 16 - 21	● 13 - 17
● 25 - 31	● 21 - 26	● 17 - 21

Legend

- Country capital
- State capital
- County capital
- Major airfield
- Major river
- Canal
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- International boundary
- Undetermined boundary **
- State boundary *
- County boundary *
- Administrative boundary
- Abyei region ***

* State and county boundaries and administrative centers as of 1 October 2015
 ** Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
 *** Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Datum: WGS 84
 Projection: Geographic
 Note: All contents of this product have been field verified. Caution should be exercised when making measurements. Spelling of towns and features may differ with local or other usage.
 The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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