



# PRESS RELEASE

## **58 abducted women and children are reunited with their families**

**2 April 2021:** Fifty-eight women and children who were abducted last year during vicious intercommunal fighting in Jonglei State in South Sudan are finally being reunited with their families.

The exchange of abducted women and children came following a community-led goodwill agreement between the Lou Nuer, Murle and Dinka Bor ethnic communities.

Intensive efforts to broker peace between the three communities have been underway since December 2020, backed by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) working together with agencies supported by the UK and US.

At a recent peace conference in Pieri, traditional leaders, women, youth and cattle camp leaders discussed compensation for lives lost and the return of abducted women and children.

The result led to UNMISS helicopters shuttling between Pibor, Pochalla, Pieri and Juba to pick up groups of women and children and return them to their communities. The victims of abduction are receiving support from Save the Children and local NGOs Grassroots Empowerment and Development Organization (GREDO) and Community Action Organization (CAO).

“Abductions are a horrific aspect of conflict in this area,” said David Shearer, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for South Sudan and head of UNMISS. “However, the agreement reached to release abducted women and children is an essential step to build trust and avoid the cycle of revenge. I applaud all those involved for their efforts to reunite these innocent victims with their families.”

It is estimated that as many as 686 women and children were abducted during the extreme violence between these communities in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) between January and August 2020.

Abductions of women and girls have been a feature of violence in Jonglei because of their economic importance where women demand a bride price paid in the form of cattle. Tragically, the abductions often involve sexual violence.

Efforts are continuing to return the remaining women and children. It is the first part of a coordinated programme supported by the UN’s Reconciliation, Stabilisation and Resilience Trust Fund to tackle the underlying drivers of conflict between communities that have plagued the Jonglei region for years.

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