

Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Between April and June 2024, UNMISS Human Rights Division (HRD) documented 317 incidents of violence affecting at least 1,062 civilians: 442 killed, 297 injured, 197 abducted, and 126 subjected to sexual violence.
- ❖ Compared to the same period in 2023, this represents a 43 percent increase in the number of incidents (from 222 to 317), and a 22 percent increase in the number of victims (from 871 to 1,062).
- ❖ In comparison with the previous quarter (January to March 2024) there was a 32 percent increase in violent incidents (from 240 to 317), and a 16 percent increase in the number of victims (from 913 to 1,062).
- ❖ Sub-national violence involving community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups accounted for 83 percent of the total number of victims (or 883 individuals), while the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups were accountable for 14 percent of the victims (or 144 individuals).

CONTEXT

This brief presents an overview of trends and patterns in violence affecting civilians in the second quarter of 2024, by assessing the four major forms of individual harm experienced by victims in the context of the armed conflict (i.e. killings, injuries, abductions, and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence [CRSV]), as well as other violations linked to conflict in South Sudan. While the impact of violence extends beyond these forms of harm, these have been the most common incidents documented in conflict affected areas in South Sudan.

Incidents of violence involving the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups remained relatively low in most areas of the country in general compliance with the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). However, intra/intercommunal violence involving community-based militias and/or civil defense groups linked to border disputes, cross-border violence, cyclical attacks and retaliatory attacks, and ethnic polarization, continued to be the primary driving factor of violence affecting civilians throughout the country. Notably, Warrap State continued to account for most civilian casualties (defined as killed and/or injured civilians), while parts of Central and Western Equatoria States experienced the highest number of abductions from the

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

The information contained in this brief was primarily obtained from victims and eyewitnesses accounts, as well as reports from secondary sources identified during monitoring and investigations by UNMISS HRD through field missions. Sources of information include 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 incidents of intra/intercommunal violence were deconflicted with incidents documented by the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division. Incidents determined as cases of CRSV were corroborated in consultation with the UNMISS Women's Protection Advisory Unit.

In accordance with its mandate, UNMISS has issued this quarterly brief as an advocacy tool to reduce the impact of armed violence against civilians. UNMISS also urges the Government of South Sudan to investigate human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, and to hold all perpetrators into account.

GENERAL TRENDS

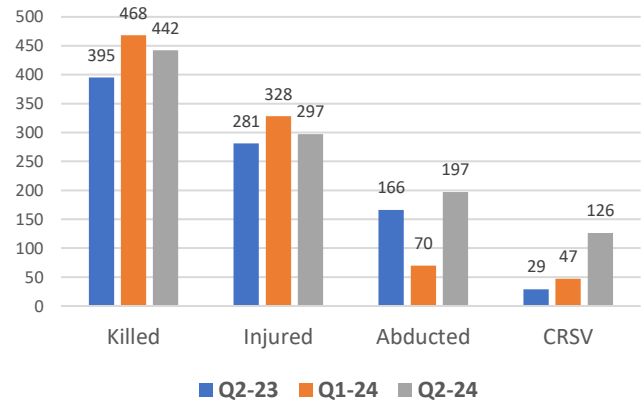
Between April and June 2024, UNMISS HRD documented 317 incidents of violence affecting at least 1,062 civilians, including 160 women and 188 children, who were subjected to one of the four major forms of harm (442 killed, 297 injured, 197 abducted, and 126 subjected to sexual violence). Among these incidents, 13 occurred prior to the reporting period; however, were documented and verified during the current reporting quarter.

Compared to the same period in 2023, this represents a 43 percent increase in the number of incidents (from 222 to 317), and a 22 percent increase in the number of victims (from 871 to 1,062). Intensification of violence arising from intra/intercommunal disputes involving community-based militias and/or civil defense groups were common in both reporting periods; however, most of the incidents documented in the second quarter of 2024 occurred in Western Equatoria State, mainly in Tambura County.

Compared to the first quarter of 2024 (January to March) there was an increase of 32 percent in violent incidents (from 240 to 317), and a 16 percent increase in the number of victims (from 913 to 1,062). While the number of civilian casualties decreased by six percent for the civilians killed (from 468 to 442) and by 10 percent for the civilians injured (from 328 to 297), the number of abductions concerningly increased by 181 percent (from 70 to 197). Further, an alarming increase of 168 percent in the number of victims of sexual violence were observed (from 47 to 126). While the majority of abductions were documented in parts of Juba, Morobo, and Yei Counties

in Central Equatoria State, Tambura County in Western Equatoria State recorded the highest incidents of CRSV.

Number of victims
Q2-23/Q1-24/Q2-24

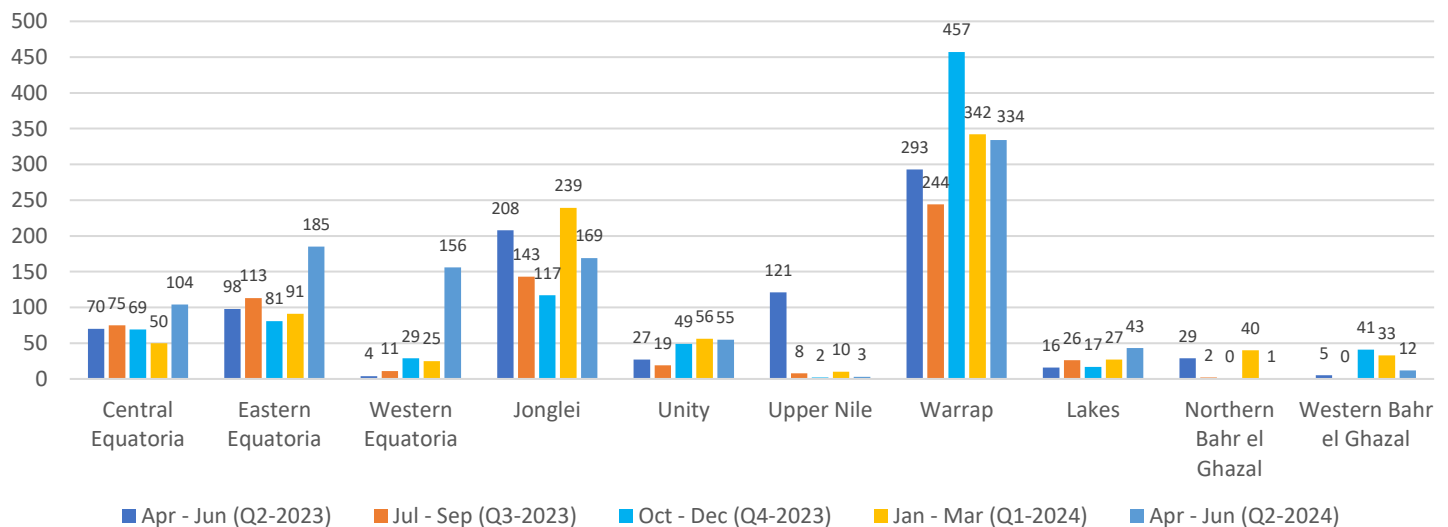


While Western Equatoria State recorded the highest number of incidents, Warrap State remained the most affected area of armed violence, impacting 32 percent of the total number of civilian victims, mainly due to the persisting intra/intercommunal violence in the region by various community-based militias and/or the civil-defense groups.

Community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups

During the second quarter of 2024, intra/intercommunal violence involving community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, constituted the primary source of violence affecting civilians in South Sudan, accounting for 83 percent of documented victims (or 883 individuals). This localized violence, which continued to

Trends in the number of civilians affected by states in Q2-2023 to Q1-2024



undermine peace across South Sudan, was exacerbated by long-standing cultural practices, communal tensions over access to natural resources and grazing land, current economic crisis, extreme food insecurities, and outbreak of seasonal diseases. Notably, incursions by these armed elements, including road ambushes, have disrupted humanitarian operations, particularly in parts of Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei States.

In Warrap State, persistent communal tensions and cyclical retaliatory attacks continued amongst armed Dinka sub-groups, as well as cross-border attacks, territorial disputes involving armed elements from the bordering areas such as the armed Nuer from Unity State; Dinka Ngok from Abyei Administrative Area, Dinka Gok and Pakam from Lakes State, and the Luo/Dinka Marial-Bai of Jur River County in Western Bahr el Ghazal. Violence involving these armed elements resulted in 317 civilian casualties (206 killed and 111 injured), of which 16 were women and five children. In comparison to the previous quarter, an increase in the number of incidents (from 46 to 55) and a decrease in the number of civilians affected (from 334 to 317) was observed; however, the overall situation remained fragile and concerning.

Likewise, in Lakes States, 12 incidents impacting 43 civilians (15 killed, 22 injured, and six abducted) were documented in relation to the tensions and communal clashes in the region involving Dinka sub-groups, as well as armed Dinka elements from Warrap State, and armed Nuer elements from Panyijar County, Unity State. The tension between the Dinka (from Lakes) and the Nuer community escalated following the displacement of the latter to Lakes States in May 2024 after a severe flooding engulfed Panyijar County. Reportedly, the Dinka from Lakes States used the displacement as an opportunity to recover the cattle they had lost to the Nuer in the past.

On the other hand, in Unity State, intracommunal violence amongst armed Nuer elements; the persisting cross-border related violence involving armed elements from Lakes and Warrap States; and the tension between armed Dinka and Nuer elements in the areas bordering Pariang County in Ruweng Administrative Area and Rubkona County continued to pose threats to the protection of civilians in the region. UNMISS HRD recorded at least 46 civilians affected by these conflicts, including 16 women and five girls, mainly subjected to sexual violence.

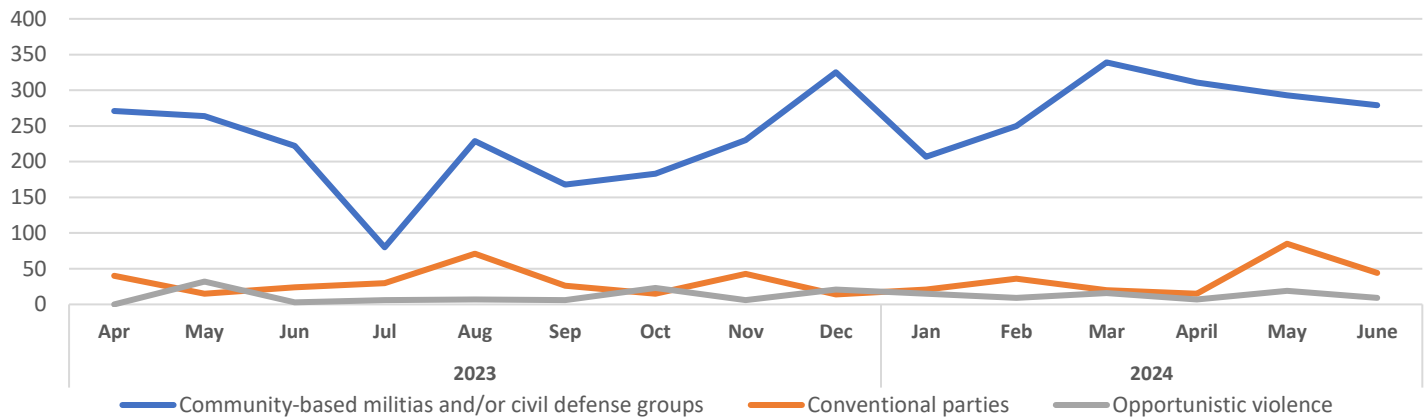
Similarly, in Jonglei State, small-scale incursions and abductions allegedly by the armed Murle elements, mainly from Kurenen and Lango age-sets, of Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) against the Nuer and Dinka communities in Greater Jonglei (i.e. Akobo, Duk,

Nyirol, and Urur Counties) remained a concern amongst the civilian communities. Relatedly, the alleged revenge attack in Pochalla County (GPAA) by a group of armed Murle elements that was documented in April 2024, resulted in 37 civilians harmed (12 killed, 10 injured, and 15 abducted), including six women and 20 children (13 boys and seven girl). In total, UNMISS HRD documented 36 incidents of violence in Jonglei State attributed to these actors impacting 153 civilians (55 killed, 49 injured, 48 abducted, and one subjected to sexual violence), including 18 women and 56 children (33 boys and 23 girls). Out of 48 abductees, eight percent (four individuals) were recovered.

Relatedly, in Eastern Equatoria State, the tensions between the armed Murle elements from GPAA (backed by the armed Buya and Tenet from Budi and Lafon Counties in Eastern Equatoria State) and armed Toposa from Greater Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria State heightened following the attack by Murle armed elements in Kauto Payam, Kapoeta East County in April 2024 that resulted in 31 civilians killed, 18 injured, and 24 abducted, including three women and 24 children (11 girls and 13 boys). Separately, persistent armed violence amongst civil-defense groups from Buya, Didinga, Dongotono, Logir, Lopit, Lotuko, Madi, and Toposa communities, as well as armed Dinka elements (from Greater Bor in Jonglei State who settled in Magwi County), armed Jie elements (from GPAA border), and armed Turkana from the bordering area of the Republic of Kenya impacted 86 civilians (45 killed, 39 injured and two abducted). Further, the increasing reports of attacks and road ambushes by these armed actors committed against humanitarian convoys delivering aid and food items for the population in the region persisted. In June 2024 alone, five incidents of road ambushes were documented by UNMISS in the region.

In Western Equatoria State, the recurrence of violence between armed Balanda and Azande communities in Tambura County as well as Nagero and Ezo Counties in April 2024 led to the collapse of the peace initiatives aimed at reconciling both communities. Tensions were reportedly driven by the same actors involved in the 2021 crisis in the region and were reportedly exacerbated by lack of accountability, stalled peace dialogues, availability of weapons, insinuations of the politicians, and polarization. The resurgence of violence resulted in 30 civilian casualties (27 killed and three injured), nine abductions, and displacement of civilians. Alarmingly, reports of sexual violence and particularly experienced by women and girls, mostly from the Azande community,

Trends in the number of civilians affected April 2023 to June 2024



were also documented. Between April and June 2024, HRD verified at least 77 incidents of rape and gang-rape, linked to the conflict between Azande and Balanda communities.

Conventional parties and other armed groups

Prior to the signing of the Revitalized Agreement in September 2018, the conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups were responsible for the majority of violent incidents affecting civilians documented in South Sudan. However, consistent to the previous reporting period, violence involving these actors remained relatively low, accounting for 14 percent (144 civilians) of the overall number of victims documented, with the exception of some specific areas of Greater Equatoria States.¹

Noticeably, in Central and Western Equatoria States, violence and armed confrontations involving the alleged elements of the National Salvation Front (NAS) splinter groups and Government security forces continued to be documented, placing civilians at risk of further harm. Further, during the reporting period, increased incidents of abductions allegedly perpetrated by elements of NAS splinter groups affecting 92 civilian men were documented, particularly in parts of Morobo and Yei River Counties in Central Equatoria State and Mundri West County in Western Equatoria State. On the other hand, the safety and security of civilians in these areas, including parts of Juba County, Central Equatoria State were further aggravated by continued incidents of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and ill-treatment by the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) against civilians perceived to be sympathizers of the NAS splinter groups.

¹ Outside the scope of violence described in this brief, UNMISS HRD continued to document alarming incidents of other human rights violations and abuses (i.e. arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention,

While abductions by alleged elements of NAS splinter groups were mainly documented in Central and Western Equatoria States, incidents of killing (12), injury (five) and sexual violence (16), as well as other human rights violations perpetrated by the conventional parties to the conflict, mainly the government security forces, were recorded in all other parts of South Sudan with the exception of Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.

Unidentified and other opportunistic armed elements

Incidents of violence by armed elements which do not fall within the above-mentioned categories but bear a link to conflicts or violence affecting civilians based on the modus operandi of the suspected perpetrators, geographic locations, and other relevant factors (such as objective of violence, clothing, language spoken, etc.) were also documented. Overall, violence involving these armed elements accounted for 18 incidents affecting 35 individuals (three percent of the total civilian victims): 13 killed, 15 injured, one abducted, and six subjected to sexual violence, of whom 14 were women and five were children (three boys and two girls). Western Equatoria State recorded the highest number of victims attributed to this type of armed actors, followed by Unity, and Central Equatoria States.

Further, in Eastern Equatoria State, HRD documented an incident of violence involving foreign armed elements in April that resulted in a killing of one man and injury of a 17-year-old boy, from Lango community of Ikotos County.

extra-judicial executions, and ill-treatment) perpetrated by the government security forces that greatly affected the safety and security of the civilians in the community.

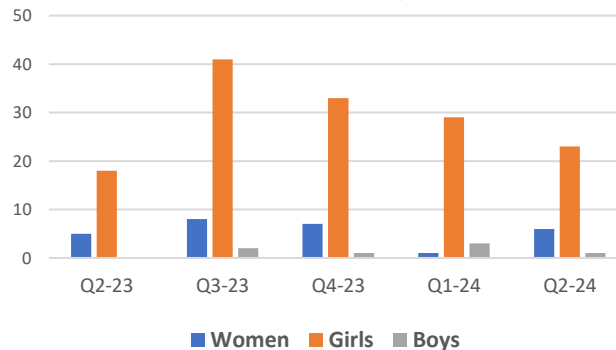
Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the key characteristics of violence against women and girls in South Sudan and remained one of the critical threats to their protection and well-being. Despite the establishment of Revitalized Agreement and various efforts by both international and national stakeholders, the issue remained unabated. The perpetrators of this type of violence could be acquaintances, strangers, and family members, including individuals considered as family members by the victim and members of the armed forces.

During the second quarter of 2024, HRD documented 29 incidents of sexual violence classified as SGBV throughout South Sudan, which affected 30 victims (23 girls, one boy and six women). This is in addition to 107 incidents of sexual violence linked to the armed conflict affecting 126 victims, including 49 girls. Among these 29 incidents, 22 were rape, two gang-rape, three attempted rape and two physical assault cases. In comparison to the

previous quarter, this represents a four percent increase (from 28 to 29) in the documented SGBV incidents and a nine percent decrease in the number of victims (from 33 to 30). Overall, CRSV and SGBV incidents directly affected 156 victims (82 women and 72 girls).

Trends in number of SGBV victims
Q2-Q4 23/Q1-Q2 24



GEOGRAPHICAL TRENDS

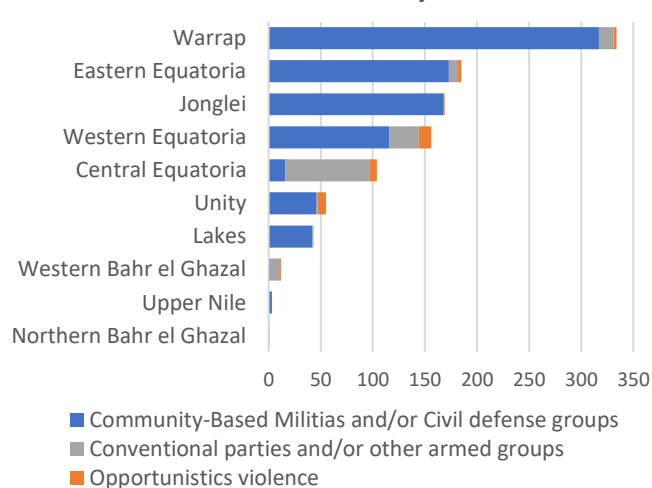
The majority of states, except Central Equatoria State, were primarily impacted by violence involving community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, which altogether accounted for 82 percent of the overall victims recorded. While Western Equatoria State recorded the highest number of incidents followed by Warrap and Eastern Equatoria States, the majority of the victims impacted by violence were documented in Warrap State, followed by Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei States. Within these regions, incidents of violence were concentrated in 79 payams (out of 132), mainly due to competition over resources and access to raid cattle. Generally, economic hardships, worrying food insecurity due to failed harvest caused by flash flooding, economic crisis, disease outbreaks (such as hepatitis and measles) and the disruption of livelihood activities in many areas, as well as the desire to recoup the loss of cattle, were among many other compounding factors that exacerbate the persistent intra/intercommunal violence. Compared to the previous quarter, the number of incidents documented in Warrap, Jonglei, and Eastern Equatoria States decreased by one percent (from 163 to 162).

During the reporting period, Warrap State experienced the highest number of civilian casualties (214 killings and 118 injuries), accounting for 45 percent of the total victims of killing and injury in South Sudan. Whereas Central Equatoria State experienced the highest number of abductions (67), accounting for 34 percent of all abductions in the country; while Western Equatoria State

experienced the highest number of CRSV (80), accounting for 64 percent of documented cases nationwide.

Notably, Western Equatoria State experienced the sharpest percentage increase in the number of victims documented compared to the previous quarter (from 25 to 156), followed by Eastern Equatoria State (from 91 to 185), and Lakes State (from 27 to 43). Conversely, Northern Bahr el Ghazal experienced a sharp percentage decrease in the number of documented victims (40 to one), followed by Upper Nile State (from 10 to three), and Jonglei State (from 239 to 169).

State most affected by violence



Notwithstanding general respect for the ceasefire throughout the country following the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, conventional parties to the conflict and other armed groups remained active in some areas of Central Equatoria State (i.e. in parts of Juba, Lainya, Morobo, and Yei areas), as well as parts of Western Equatoria State, primarily involving the Government security forces, Sudan People’s Liberation

Army - in Opposition (SPLA-IO), Necessary Unified Forces (NUF), and NAS splinter groups. Military operations and activities involving Government security forces and organized armed groups and their respective proxy armed elements, have continued to place civilians at risk of violence, predominantly in parts of Central Equatoria State as well as in areas of Eastern Equatoria, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Western Equatoria States.

VICTIMS

The capability of UNMISS HRD to comprehensively document the number of victims affected by violence was impacted by capacity constraints, safety and security concerns, as well as access restrictions, particularly in conflict-affected areas, which may have resulted in the underreporting of the number of incidents and victims. Nevertheless, between April and June 2024, HRD documented 1,062 victims of the four main forms of harm experienced in South Sudan (killings, injuries, abductions, and CRSV) – a 16 percent increase compared to the previous reporting quarter (January to March 2024).

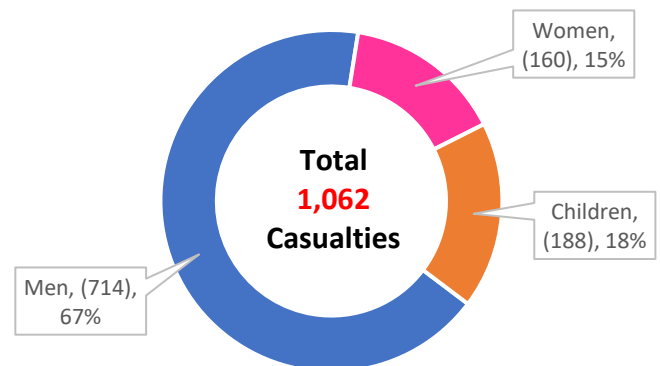
Men, particularly young men, comprised the majority of victims (67 percent or 714 individuals). Children were the second-largest group of victims (18 percent or 188 individuals), while women accounted for the remaining victims affected by violence (15 percent or 160 individuals). However, beyond the direct impact of violence, women and children were disproportionately affected by the indirect effects of conflict – particularly related to access to health care services, education, and livelihoods in volatile areas.

Ninety-nine percent of adult male victims were either killed or injured, largely in the context of intercommunal violence by community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. Sexual violence was the least frequent harm experienced by adult male victims.

Children (53 boys and 38 girls) were primarily subjected to abduction with most incidents documented in Jonglei (52 victims) followed by Eastern Equatoria (32), Lakes

(six), and Central Equatoria (one) States. Further, girls were primarily subjected to sexual violence (49 CRSV and 23 SGBV) in incidents documented in nine states, the majority of which were recorded in Tambura County, Western Equatoria State.

Victims by gender/sex



Women were primarily subjected to killings and injuries (44 percent or 71 victims) and sexual violence (53 percent or 82 victims), followed by abduction (eight percent or 13 victims) primarily in the context of sub-national violence. Cases of sexual violence, including rape and gang-rape, were recorded in eight states, with the majority recorded in Western Equatoria followed by Unity States.

PERPETRATORS

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

In the second quarter of 2024, investigations by UNMISS HRD attributed responsibility for violence affecting 83 percent of victims to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. These groups represent a longstanding feature of pastoralist communities across South Sudan who culturally believe cattle to be a

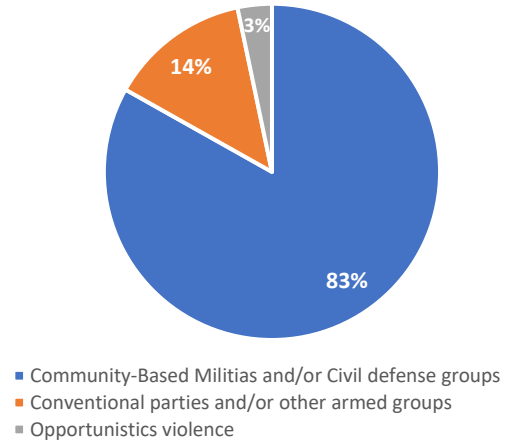
semblance of wealth and a key indicator of societal status. Traditionally, their main objective revolves around protecting herds of cattle from external attacks. However, compounded by years of armed conflict and the resultant illicit proliferation of small arms among local communities, members of these groups have been co-opted, armed, and used as proxy armed elements by all conventional parties to the conflict as well as by local actors, which has contributed to the progressive militarization of intercommunal violence. At times, they become an extension of political rivalries at the national level. 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 root causes of the conflict are notoriously complex, endemic, and longstanding.

The second category of perpetrators remained the conventional parties to the conflict (i.e. Government defense and security forces, NUF, organized and non-organized opposition armed groups) who were accountable for 14 percent of incidents and 144 victims documented during the reporting quarter.

Reportedly, among the Government security forces, violence affecting civilians were largely attributed to the SSPDF, National Security Service (NSS), National Police Service (NPS), and/or joint security operations consisting mainly of these three security agencies. As for other armed groups, both the pro-Riek Machar SPLA-IO, which is a signatory to the R-ARCSS, and the NAS splinter groups and affiliated armed elements, who are non-signatories to the R-ARCSS, also committed abuses against civilians. The primary form of harm perpetrated

by the conventional parties to the conflict was abduction (64 percent), CRSV (15 percent), killing (12 percent), and injury (nine percent).

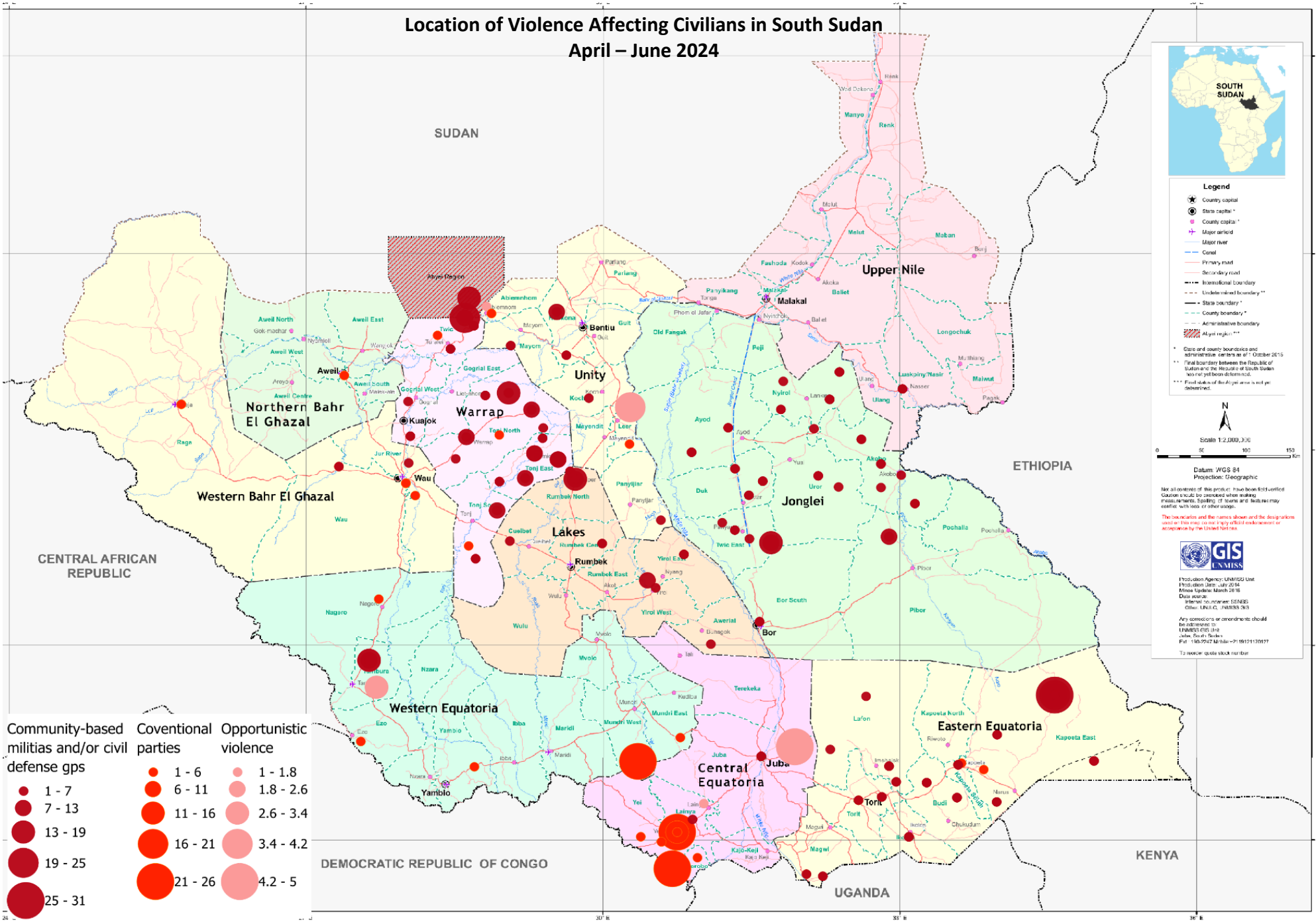
Civilian casualties by type of perpetrators



Unidentified armed elements comprised the third category of perpetrators, primarily in the form of opportunistic violence, and accounted for three 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 and community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups, who have progressively acquired autonomy from their sponsors and now carry out acts of violence against civilians without any clear strategic or military objectives.

Location of Violence Affecting Civilians in South Sudan

April – June 2024



Community-based militias and/or civil defense gps	Conventional parties	Opportunistic violence
● 1 - 7	● 1 - 6	● 1 - 1.8
● 7 - 13	● 6 - 11	● 1.8 - 2.6
● 13 - 19	● 11 - 16	● 2.6 - 3.4
● 19 - 25	● 16 - 21	● 3.4 - 4.2
● 25 - 31	● 21 - 26	● 4.2 - 5