



# Security Council

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## Situation in South Sudan

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2677 \(2023\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to 15 March 2024 and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Mission's mandate every 90 days. The report covers political and security developments, the humanitarian and human rights situation and progress towards the implementation of the Mission's mandate between 1 September and 30 November 2023.

#### II. Political and economic developments

2. Progress towards the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic South Sudan remained limited. Nevertheless, the President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, publicly reaffirmed his commitment to holding elections in December 2024.

3. On 21 September, at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, the President acknowledged the importance of expediting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement.

4. During a swearing-in ceremony of senior officials of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) held on 13 September, the President ruled out another extension of the transitional period and cautioned his political opponents against violence if they were defeated in the elections. On 12 October, the First Vice-President of South Sudan, Riek Machar, assured the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) supported elections, but reiterated that the conditions for conducting free, fair and credible elections were not in place.

5. On 1 September, the National Agenda Political Party, led by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Martin Elia Lomuro, endorsed Mr. Kiir as the Party's candidate for the 2024 presidential elections. On 11 September and 11 October, respectively, SPLM in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area and in Uror County, Jonglei State, also endorsed the President.



6. On 19 September, the leader of Common Peoples Alliance, Deng Bol Aruai, expressed interest in running for President. On 23 September, Daniel Mabior Achiek launched the National Progress Party in Juba. Despite these positive developments in political competition, National Security Service operatives obstructed the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) from holding a rally organized to welcome one of its principals, Lam Akol, back to the country on 16 September.

7. On 27 September, the President appointed Angelina Teny as Minister of Interior, ending the political impasse with SPLM/A-IO following her removal as Minister of Defence in March. On 14 November, Lieutenant General Atem Marol Biar was appointed Inspector General of Police, by Presidential decree. On 18 November, Joseph Geng Akec was appointed Minister of Youth and Sports. On 27 November, Bangasi Joseph Bakosoro was appointed Minister of Presidential Affairs; William Anyun Kuol as Minister of Trade and Industry; Dak Duop Bichiok as Minister of Public Service and Human Resource Development; and Kuol Mur Mur as Governor of Warrap State.

8. On 5 October, the interim Chairperson of the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission noted that the lack of sufficient progress and clarity on electoral preparedness was creating uncertainty nationwide. On 6 October, the government spokesperson and Minister of Information, Communication Technology and Postal Service, Michael Makeui, said there was sufficient time to ensure successful elections, noting that those unwilling to participate were free to abstain.

9. On 7 October, several SPLM/A-IO commanders from Unity State, led by Lieutenant General Simon Maguek Gai, defected to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces. On 28 November, forces allied with him attacked Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) forces in Leer County, Unity State. On 20 October, opposition commanders Michael Wal and Samuel Both defected in Jonglei State.

## **Elections**

10. Some progress was made on critical prerequisites for holding free, fair and credible elections in December 2024. However, with only 12 months remaining, the focus of international partners, civil society and some parties to the Revitalized Agreement was on whether conditions, institutions and resources were in place for elections.

11. Regarding the legal framework for elections, on 18 September, the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly passed the National Elections Act, 2012 (Amendment) Act, 2023. Through the Act, the Assembly introduced new provisions to add elections for the three Administrative Areas of Abyei, Ruweng and Pibor and to increase the number of elected members of parliament from 250 to 332 and members of the Council of States from 40 to 56. Consensus was also reached for elections to be held for local government authorities, including county commissioners, city mayors and urban and rural councils, and for funding for political parties to be provided for use during and after the electoral process.

12. Some SPLM/A-IO and SSOA parliamentarians boycotted the vote on the amended National Elections Act to protest a provision that would empower the President to appoint 5 per cent of the seats in the Assembly. The Government maintained that the provision was included to protect minority groups.

13. On 3 November, the National Elections Commission, the Political Parties Council and the National Constitutional Review Commission were reconstituted. Of those, however, only the Council met the 35 per cent quota for women members. On 20 November, the Council was sworn in. In addition, some civil society activists

raised questions surrounding the impartiality of the Chairperson of the National Elections Commission, Abednego Akok Kacuol.

#### **Transitional security arrangements**

14. The formation of the Necessary Unified Forces continued to face significant delays, with national and international stakeholders expressing concerns. On 11 September, the Joint Defence Board ordered the remainder of the Forces, yet to graduate, to report to their training centres to commence training for the second batch of forces. After continued deferrals, food and supplies were procured and distributed to the training centres. Starting from 18 September, the Joint Transitional Security Committee deployed teams for the verification of the first batch of forces ahead of its deployment.

15. The first batch of the Necessary Unified Forces was deployed on 15 October, following significant delays. On the same day, the Minister of Finance and Planning, Bak Barnaba Chol, pledged that salary payments would follow.

16. In a meeting with UNMISS on 9 October, the First Vice-President clarified that the delayed unification of the middle ranks of the defence forces was the result of ongoing disagreement between the parties.

#### **Regional engagements and developments**

17. On 1 September, the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, discussed issues of mutual concern with his counterpart in Juba, including with regard to the conflict in the Sudan. They signed a memorandum of understanding on border security.

18. On 4 September, First Lieutenant General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan of the Sudan visited President Kiir in Juba. Following that meeting, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Ali Elsadig Ali, said that President Kiir was best placed to mediate the conflict in the Sudan. On 6 September, the President attended the second meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) quartet in Nairobi, at which attendees discussed the implementation of the IGAD road map for peace in the Sudan.

19. On 14 September, the President travelled to Uganda to discuss regional peace and security matters with his Ugandan counterpart, Yoweri Museveni. The two Presidents pledged to redouble efforts to resolve the Sudanese crisis through dialogue.

20. From 27 to 29 September, the President undertook his first State visit to the Russian Federation, to strengthen bilateral ties and discuss ways to end the conflict in the Sudan.

21. On 11 November, the President attended the first Saudi-Africa summit, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he met with regional counterparts from Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya and the Sudan, while focusing on finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Sudan.

22. On 15 November, a delegation of the African National Congress of South Africa visited Juba to provide support for the peace process, especially with regard to elections.

23. On 24 November, President Kiir assumed the Chairmanship of the East African Community during the summit of Heads of State, held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania.

**Economic situation**

24. As at 30 November, the South Sudan pound had depreciated against the United States dollar by 60 per cent since January 2023. The decrease was attributed to increased money supply, the depletion of central bank reserves and pressure on foreign exchange. The combined impact of currency depreciation and reduced commodity supplies due to the conflict in the Sudan has raised market prices.

25. From 4 to 9 September, the Ministry of Finance and Planning organized the first National Economic Conference in Juba, under the theme “Towards a diversified, inclusive and sustainable economic growth”. Conference participants recommended a review of financial laws and the implementation of a biometric payroll system.

26. On 25 September, the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly passed the Bank of South Sudan Act, 2011 (Amendment) Act 2023 and the Banking and Other Financial Institutions (Amendment) Act 2023, which resulted in the name of the currency being changed to the South Sudan pound. The Assembly also passed the South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2009 (Amendment) Act 2023 and the National Revenue Authority Act, 2016 (Amendment) Act 2023, on 4 and 11 October, respectively.

27. On 2 October, the President appointed, by decree, new officials in the Central Bank, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the National Revenue Authority. James Alic Garang was appointed as Governor of the Bank and Africano Mande as the new Commissioner General of the Authority.

28. The Spokesperson for the Assembly, John Agany, announced that, as from 16 October, civil servants and organized forces would receive new salary levels, with a 400 per cent increase.

**III. Security situation**

29. Concerns relating to security and protection of civilians were related primarily to the impact of returnees from the Sudan; attacks allegedly committed by the National Salvation Front (NAS); arrests of civilians by the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces, on suspicion of collaboration with NAS in Lainya County; land tenure issues in Juba County; and persistent cross-border clashes along the Abyei Administrative Area and Warrap State borders, between the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities.

**Greater Upper Nile region**

30. In Upper Nile, as at 30 November, approximately 356,019 returnees and refugees had arrived through various border crossing points from the Sudan, resulting in overcrowding and increased criminality. There was also increased tension over land between the Melut Dinka and Mabanese youth in Kilo 10, Melut County. In Nasir County, on 7 September, the Director of Police reportedly fled with 21 weapons, posing a security threat to the area. UNMISS continued to engage with the local authorities, the police and religious leaders to calm the situation and promote peaceful coexistence.

31. In Jonglei, the situation remained tense. The killing in September of a former South Sudan People’s Defence Forces commander in Pochala, following his refusal to be redeployed, exacerbated tensions in the area, leading to fighting between Anyuak youth and South Sudan People’s Defence Forces. The inspector of police in Pochala claimed that the commander had been killed by elements of the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces. Two instances of the use of helicopter gunships by South Sudan People’s Defence Forces were reported. These clashes resulted in at least 30

individuals killed and 12,000 displaced internally and into Ethiopia. Some 20 humanitarian staff were relocated to Juba. In mid-October, a government delegation was sent from Juba to de-escalate tensions. The National Security Service was deployed to the area, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces Area Commander was replaced with a member of the Anyuak community, and the Defence Forces unit implicated was withdrawn.

32. More than 1,000 women and children staged a peaceful demonstration at the internally displaced persons camp in Bentiu to demand the resumption of general food distribution and the reallocation of responsibility for distributions from a United Nations agency to an international non-governmental organization (NGO). Tensions were also reported in the area following the defection of senior SPLM/A-IO officials and members to SPLM.

### **Greater Equatoria region**

33. In Central Equatoria State, South Sudan People's Defence Forces operations against NAS elements resurged following the murder of the Executive Chief of Ombasi and two civilians, on 8 September, in Yei River County. The situation was compounded by the arrest of civilians on 4 and 9 August in Yei River County by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces on suspicion that they were NAS collaborators. These events caused tensions in the Kakwa community and resulted in large-scale civilian displacement. The UNMISS company operating base in Yei conducted patrols to monitor the security situation, engage with local leaders and advocate in favour of a cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians. There were also heightened tensions among the Bari, Mundari and Tali communities and with South Sudan People's Defence Forces as a result of land grabs in Juba County. Meanwhile, UNMISS was informed that the disarmament exercise in Terekeka County, undertaken between mid-July and late October, had been marred by excessive use of force towards civilians by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces.

34. The situation in Western Equatoria State continued to be tense and unpredictable, with ongoing tensions between the state Governor and his Deputy and persistent clashes in Mundri West County between host communities and Dinka cattle keepers from Bor. The reported presence of NAS elements in Mundri East County, an attack on an NGO vehicle and reports of the forceful recruitment of young people by SPLA-IO on 16 October in the barracks in James Diko and in the suburbs of Yambio town continued to pose concerns with regard to security and protection of civilian in the area.

### **Greater Bahr-el Ghazal region**

35. There were persistent cross-border clashes between the Dinka Twic and Dinka Ngok communities. The situation was exacerbated by abduction of five Dinka Twic traders in three attacks by Dinka Ngok youth in September. In response to the increase in violence in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, reportedly as a result of weapons having been illegally brought into the country from the Sudan, a disarmament exercise was conducted by police in Aweil on 26 September. UNMISS conducted patrols to Ajakuac, Turalei, Panyok, Aweng and Bombil, in Twic and Tonj North Counties to engage with key actors and encourage dialogue.

## **IV. Humanitarian situation**

36. The inter-agency rapid needs assessment conducted from 1 to 5 September served to identify nearly 20,000 people affected by flooding as a result of heavy rainfall in Nyal, Mayom and Kol in Unity State. The people affected included about

2,500 returnees (415 households) from the Sudan. The flooding resulted in the destruction of crops and the pollution of water sources. A surge in cases of malaria, acute watery diarrhoea and acute respiratory tract infection has been reported in the affected areas. Urgent needs include emergency shelter and non-food items, food, medical supplies, water, sanitation and hygiene.

37. In September, officials in Imehejek Administrative Area in Eastern Equatoria State reported that more than 3,000 people had left, owing to food insecurity. Following an assessment conducted on 14 and 15 September, similar dry spell conditions were reported in Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State. In late September, flash floods were reported in Mangala and Gemmeiza, the only remaining areas with farming activities, destroying crops. Humanitarian partners reported limited access to water, food and other sources of livelihood, resulting in increased rates of moderate to high malnutrition and population displacement.

38. As at 30 November, 416,132 people had been recorded as having crossed the South Sudan border from the Sudan. Monitoring teams reported increased arrivals of Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers, accounting for more than 45 per cent of total arrivals in October, as compared with 7 per cent between April and September. The rate of arrivals at the border points exceeded the rate of onward travel to final destinations, leading to congestion, especially at the transit centres in Renk and Malakal.

39. Although food assistance to refugees in Ethiopia resumed in early October, as at 30 November, 96,780 people had returned from there to South Sudan, overwhelming the host community in Akobo, Jonglei State. Some of the returnees have travelled to other areas, such as Nasir, Maiwut, Ulang and Longochuk Counties in Upper Nile State, and Pibor, Pochala and Uror Counties in Jonglei State/ Greater Pibor Administrative Area.

40. Over the course of three weeks in September, a suspected new disease outbreak killed 21 children under the age of 5 in Meiwun, Greater Pibor Administrative Area. With support from the World Health Organization, a national health rapid response team was deployed to Meiwun to investigate and to provide mobile outreach. The disease is yet to be identified.

41. During the reporting period, 66 incidents relating to humanitarian access restrictions were reported; 20 of those involved violence against humanitarian personnel. In addition, 12 incidents of looting and theft of humanitarian assets were reported. In September, 25 humanitarian staff members were relocated as a result of violence in Pochala, in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, and Rubkona, in Unity State. To date in 2023, four humanitarian workers have been killed while on duty.

## **V. Implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks**

### **A. Supporting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the peace process**

42. UNMISS continued to exercise its good offices by engaging with the parties, partners and stakeholders of the Revitalized Agreement. Mission leadership engaged with the President, the First Vice-President, Cabinet ministers and others to follow up on the peace process, explore ways to mitigate intercommunal violence and advocate in favour of reaching the critical benchmarks required for the conduct of elections.

43. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan continued to engage with regional and international partners to urge their continued support to the peace process. For this purpose, he travelled to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and

South Africa. On 16 November, he gave a briefing on South Sudan to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

44. From 1 to 2 September, UNMISS supported the launch of the Central Equatoria State Civil Society Network, through a workshop for 54 civil society representatives (25 women), establishing a framework between the state government, civil society and partners to support the role of civil society in the peace process.

45. On 25 and 26 September, to sensitize the South Sudanese people about the peace process, UNMISS facilitated awareness-raising programmes for 320 (110 women) members of the state parliament and community representatives in Pacong and Cueicok, in Rumbek East County, Lakes State, on the road map and the state Customary Law and Public Order Act, 2022.

46. In partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNMISS facilitated virtual sessions on the permanent constitution-making process for 113 South Sudanese refugee community leaders (43 women) in Ethiopia and Uganda, on 26 September and 12 October, respectively. On-site workshops were organized with UNHCR and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission for 108 refugees (22 women) in Ethiopia, from 18 to 19 October, and for 564 refugees (208 women) in Uganda, from 25 October to 9 November.

47. As part of a series of dialogues to improve relationships between political parties, expand political and civic space and create an enabling environment for free, fair and credible elections, UNMISS and partners facilitated a forum for political parties in Juba on 27 September. Held under the theme “Focusing on democratic governance and the political transition”, the forum was attended by 72 senior members (11 women) of 58 political parties. From 4 to 6 October, a similar forum was organized in Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, to enhance understanding of electoral processes for 150 participants (35 women). The forum concluded with recommendations, including for regular engagements between security actors and political parties. On 5 October, UNMISS conducted a workshop on civic and political space for 50 representatives (25 women) of the government of Jonglei State, the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly and civil society organizations.

48. From 3 to 5 October, UNMISS and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs facilitated an awareness-raising workshop for members of the Unity State Legislative Assembly, state government officials and civil society on issues relating to electoral and constitution-making processes, transitional justice and democratic governance; 147 participants (35 women) attended.

49. From 24 to 31 October, UNMISS supported the South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission in conducting workshops in Aweil, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, and Kuacjok, Warrap State, thus promoting the participation of civil society in the fight against corruption following the passage of the amended South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission Act.

50. From 13 to 17 November, UNMISS supported the South Sudan Law Review Commission in reviewing the Code of Criminal Procedure Act, 2008, and to develop a paper on reforms needed to align criminal trial procedures with international human rights standards and best practices.

51. UNMISS continued round-table discussions on Radio Miraya to widen civic and political space, engaging political party leaders and civil society representatives in a total of five discussions.

## **B. Protection of civilians and mitigating intercommunal conflict**

52. UNMISS continued to promote inclusive dialogue, peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and social cohesion at the subnational level to enhance the protection of civilians. UNMISS provided physical protection to 40,321 internally displaced persons (21,244 women) in Malakal, Upper Nile State.

53. UNMISS engaged with all stakeholders on transitioning the Malakal protection of civilians site into an internally displaced persons site, including prerequisite actions to build community confidence, address challenges relating to protection of civilians and ensure service continuity. Malakal is the only remaining UNMISS-secured protection site in South Sudan, and discussions about its transition to an internally displaced persons site have been ongoing for some time. On 25 September, UNMISS provided an awareness-raising session for 28 humanitarian and development partners on the transition process.

54. UNMISS advocated with government security services to maintain the protective environment of the internally displaced persons sites in Juba and Bentiu, following resurgences of gang-related criminality. In addition, UNMISS facilitated community engagements to promote peaceful responses to communities' grievances towards humanitarian service providers at the Bentiu site, triggered by the halt of general food distributions at the end of the lean season.

55. UNMISS continued to monitor the impact of arrivals from Ethiopia and the Sudan and coordinated with protection actors and government officials to advance a comprehensive response in order to address emerging protection needs. This included providing technical guidance to state-level taskforces in Jonglei, Unity and Western Bahr el-Ghazal. On 4 October, UNMISS facilitated intercommunal peace events in Renk and Maban Counties in Upper Nile State for more than 5,000 participants (1,500 women) to enhance peaceful coexistence between South Sudanese returnees, Sudanese refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities.

56. UNMISS organized seven capacity-building sessions for 475 community leaders and security personnel (108 women) in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity, Lakes and Northern and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States, to enhance the capacity of state government officials to protect civilians. The Mission held a capacity-building workshop with 50 women leaders of the Yei River County Women's Association in Central Equatoria State on participation in governance structures.

57. In support of intercommunal conflict mitigation at the grass-roots level, UNMISS conducted 23 workshops, as well as community dialogues and peace campaigns. Activities were facilitated for traditional authorities, civil society organizations, women and young people and strengthened the capacity of government officials in conflict management. There were 10,084 participants (3,690 women) across all 10 states.

58. From 1 to 3 September, UNMISS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Peace Building and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs convened a national conference of traditional authority leaders for 125 participants (6 women), involving leaders from the 10 states and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. Forum participants discussed strategies for strengthening the role of traditional chiefs to mitigate tensions and support peace in connection with elections. Resolutions were adopted on reviewing customary laws to enhance local access to justice, consolidating the traditional leaders' position in support of the peace process and supporting local authorities in their roles to strengthen governance. From 14 to 19 September, UNMISS, together with the state government, Legislative Assembly and judiciary of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, conducted a workshop on justice for 110 traditional and community leaders (23 women) in Aweil. There was



consensus that collaboration between the judiciary and traditional justice mechanisms was required to enhance reconciliation through accountability.

59. In support of local peace efforts to address intercommunal violence in Jonglei State, UNMISS and the national NGO Peace Canal convened a peacebuilding workshop on 3 October for 48 members of a local youth-led community defence force known as the White Army. White Army leaders agreed that peace was beneficial and expressed the desire to reconcile with their Murle neighbours. From 11 to 13 October, UNMISS also facilitated a consultative meeting for Dinka Bor and Murle leaders in Juba with 41 members of the national parliament, community leaders and former and current state and national officials. The meeting was convened by the Governor of Jonglei and the Chief Administrator of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area to forge durable solutions to conflict and to create peaceful coexistence between communities.

60. From 10 to 14 October, UNMISS and the South Sudan Council of Churches facilitated a trauma-healing, awareness and reconciliation forum in Malakal between Shilluk and Nuer communities, following the conflict that occurred in June 2023 at the Malakal protection of civilians site. In all, 41 representatives (15 women) of both communities engaged in dialogue for the first time since June, resulting in a commitment to continue dialogue towards reconciliation.

61. UNMISS handed over five quick-impact projects to local authorities, with a view to mitigate protection threats for 2,028 direct beneficiaries (785 women) in areas with a high prevalence of intercommunal violence, including the construction of one police post each in Central Equatoria, Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Lakes States, one vocational training facility for the National Prison Service of South Sudan in Warrap and a one-stop centre for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Western Bahr el-Ghazal.

62. As at 30 November, UNMISS Force had conducted 13,491 patrols, including 527 integrated patrols, comprising United Nations police and civilian personnel for protection of civilians purposes. Women peacekeepers participated in 8 per cent of those patrols. A total of 2,140 patrols were conducted by UNMISS Force in and around the Malakal protection of civilians site.

63. To increase operational reach, deter attacks against civilians and secure main supply routes, UNMISS force maintained three extended-duration temporary operating bases in Koch, Tambura and Jamjang.

64. As at 30 November, the United Nations police had conducted 4,642 patrols, of which 4,571 included women and 355 were integrated. Furthermore, 174 access controls were conducted in the Malakal protection of civilians site, as part of operational measures to prevent and/or mitigate security incidents and increase confidence and security for internally displaced persons. Eight quick response teams are on active standby daily, in two shifts of 12 hours each, to respond to security incidents in coordination with the South Sudan National Police Service in Juba, Malakal and Bentiu. The teams are composed of 10 officers from former police units. The United Nations police conducted six workshops on gender awareness, sexual and gender-based violence and human rights, attended by 169 National Police Service officers (80 women), and constructed police posts in Wau and Malakal.

65. The Mine Action Service responded to 279 requests for identification, removal and disposal of suspected landmines and explosive ordnance from UNMISS and local communities. The activities contributed to preventing injury and loss of life and enabled community access to 31 agricultural areas, 3 medical facilities and 10 natural water sources. A total of 4,786 items of explosive ordnance were disposed of, and 1,615,257 m<sup>2</sup> of land were released. A total of 81,454 participants (11,093 men, 12,182 women, 30,687 boys and 27,492 girls), including 8,859 persons fleeing the

conflict in the Sudan, were provided with explosive ordnance risk education across the country.

66. Following a request from the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, the Mine Action Service continued to survey and clear the military base in Bentiu, the site of an unplanned ammunition explosion that injured 19 people and scattered explosive ordnance up to 5 km on 8 June. During the reporting period, the Service disposed of 1,060 items of small arms ammunition and 160 items of unexploded ordnance in Bentiu.

### **Climate, peace and security**

67. Early seasonal migration triggered by shifts in rainfall patterns led to conflicts between farmers and herders within Tonj East County in Warrap and along borders between Rumbek North and Cueibet Counties in Lakes State. The Marial Bai agreement, aimed at promoting peaceful seasonal cattle migration, and broader security are under threat from climate change-induced shifts, which has been prompting early migration by cattle herders from Tonj South.

68. The El Niño effect continued to intensify. In September, IGAD reported that nine states in South Sudan were affected by drought to varying degrees. Nationwide, 14 per cent of the population faces severe dry conditions, with 4 per cent in extremely dry and alert categories. Eastern Equatoria is the hardest-hit state, with 64 per cent of the population of Greater Kapoeta experiencing acute hunger, and 25 per cent facing emergency acute hunger owing to crop failure, according to the World Food Programme.

69. Climate change was a prominent topic in high-level political discussions. In September, the President attended the Africa Climate Summit, which concluded with the signing of the African Leaders Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action. In his address to the General Assembly, he pledged efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on climate change, among other Goals.

## **C. Rule of law and accountability**

70. In the implementation of its protection of civilians mandate, UNMISS places a premium on building the capacity of the criminal justice chain and promoting accountability for violations of human rights. The Mission continued to contribute to strengthening the justice chain through its programmatic activities and through the South Sudan reconciliation, stabilization and resilience trust fund, as set out below.

71. UNMISS supported the judiciary in recruiting and vetting new magistrates and judges in Western Bhar el Ghazal, from 26 September to 6 October, as part of the judiciary's plan to increase its presence across the country.

72. From 2 to 4 October, UNMISS supported the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in validating the national prosecution policy and draft bills on mutual legal assistance and extradition.

73. From 1 to 4 November, under the trust fund project in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, UNMISS supported the intercommunal governance structures in discussing justice and accountability for intracommunal and intercommunal violence and the establishment of a traditional leaders' circuit court. In addition, UNMISS launched a research project on the drivers behind abductions in both areas.

74. Following several UNMISS-facilitated visits conducted in September and October by the state government, state prosecution service, the National Police Service and the National Prison Service to Koch County, Unity State, UNMISS, under the trust fund project, supported an investigation mission conducted from 7 to 17 November, to prepare cases for an upcoming mobile court aimed at expanding the

formal justice system to remote areas, combating impunity and building trust in the judicial process.

75. UNMISS and the trust fund consortium implemented two integrated justice actor trainings for 77 participants (9 women) in Tonj Town, Tonj South County, and Romic, Tonj East County, supported by the trust fund project for Greater Tonj, to foster cooperation between statutory and customary actors. A case assessment mission was conducted in Tonj North and Tonj South from 2 to 5 October, in preparation for a circuit court deployment aimed at increasing access to justice, addressing community grievances and breaking cycles of violence. In addition, from 10 to 16 October, UNMISS, together with the trust fund consortium and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), assessed the need for a review and update of the Bahr el-Ghazal Dinka customary law, together with 201 state representatives, traditional leaders and community representatives (64 women) in five counties in Warrap State.

76. In October, UNMISS provided technical assistance for the review and updating of the Prisons Regulations 2016, to harmonize them with the National Prisons Service of South Sudan Act, 2011 (Amendment) Act, 2022 and international standards and to strengthen the legal framework of the Service.

77. From 30 October to 10 November, UNMISS conducted training on trial advocacy and investigations for 35 prosecutors, investigators and advocates (3 women) in Malakal, Upper Nile State, to strengthen investigation and prosecution skills and enhance respect for defendants' rights.

78. UNMISS provided training on international standards for the treatment of offenders, for prison and records management and for gender-related issues to 141 prison officers (53 women) in Yambio (Western Equatoria), Juba (Central Equatoria), Wau (Western Bahr el-Ghazal), Kuacjok (Warrap) and Koch (Unity). UNMISS continued to engage with authorities to address prolonged, arbitrary and proxy detentions, resulting in the release of 124 prisoners (11 women) in Aweil and Rumbek.

79. To address food insecurity in prisons, UNMISS, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, supported the establishment, by the National Prison Service, of a prison farm in Raja County, Western Bahr el-Ghazal. Similarly, a quick-impact project supporting skills development for prisoners and corrections officers was handed over in Kuacjok, Warrap State, on 12 September.

#### **D. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance**

80. Following increasing humanitarian access impediments in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States and reports of humanitarians leaving Pochala for Ethiopia owing to continued tensions there, UNMISS advocated for government authorities to ensure that conditions remain safe and conducive for unimpeded humanitarian operations, including to assess emerging needs.

81. As at 30 November, the United Nations police had carried out 4 humanitarian assistance delivery assignments and 52 security escorts of engineers and high-level missions. In addition, the United Nations police continued its deployment of five integrated temporary operating bases and company operating bases (in Tambura, Yei, Durupi, Akobo and Pibor), which were used for confidence-building, key leadership engagements, capacity-building for the National Police Service and service delivery for communities.

82. As at 30 November, the UNMISS force had conducted 104 long-duration patrols, 1,357 short-duration patrols and 625 force protection tasks to create conducive

conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and/or in support of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers.

83. UNMISS responded to 9 requests for force protection and logistics support from humanitarian partners and to 580 protection requests for nine United Nations Humanitarian Air Service airfield sites.

84. The Mine Action Service verified and cleared 459 km of road prioritized by UNMISS and escorted patrols over 339 km, ensuring the mobility of peacekeepers and humanitarian partners, free from the threat of explosive ordnance. Following requests from IOM and UNHCR, the Service cleared resettlement sites in Wedweil and Hai Masna, in Northern and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States, respectively, for people fleeing the conflict in the Sudan.

## E. Monitoring and investigating human rights violations

85. UNMISS documented and verified 217 incidents of violence, comprising 128 incidents involving killings, 38 incidents resulting in injuries, 25 abduction incidents, 20 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, 6 cases of unlawful detention and ill-treatment, as well as the looting and destruction of civilian property. Those incidents affected 727 civilians, including 63 women and 71 children (57 boys and 14 girls) (see figure I). Of 323 civilians killed, 27 were women and 21 were children (19 boys and 2 girls). Compared with the previous reporting period, this represents a 9 per cent increase in the number of incidents and a 1 per cent decrease in the number of victims. In total, 160 incidents were attributed to community-based militias and/or civil defence groups; 27 to government security forces; 11 to NAS; 8 to SPLA-IO; 1 to foreign armed elements; and 10 to unidentified and/or other armed elements.

Figure I  
Number of victims by type of violence and perpetrator

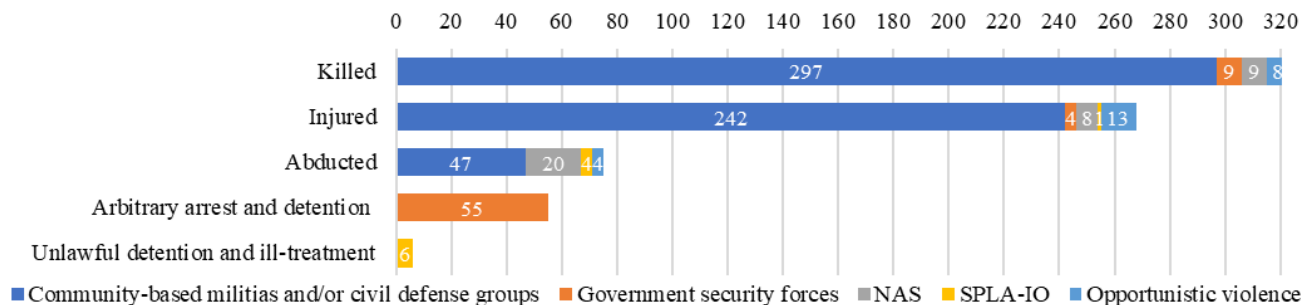
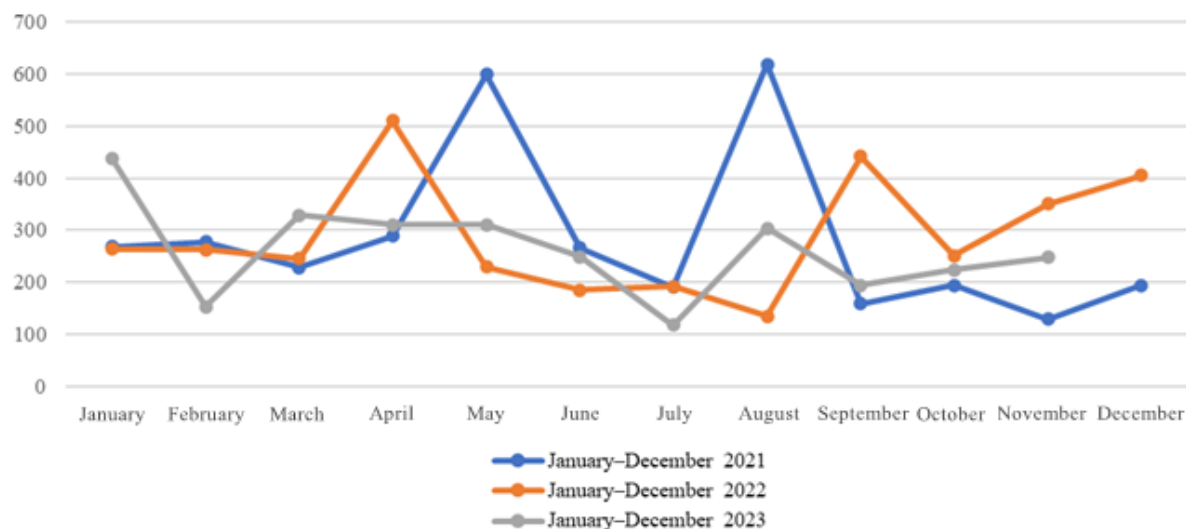


Figure II  
Comparative analysis of the number of civilians affected by violence, January 2021–November 2023



86. Reports of allegations of extrajudicial executions continued. During the reporting period, three civilians (all men) were reportedly executed in Warrap and Lakes States on accusations by state authorities of involvement in intercommunal violence and other criminal activities. UNMISS engaged with both states and national authorities to investigate and address the reports.

87. Restrictions of fundamental freedoms continue. UNMISS documented three incidents of interference by security forces in peaceful demonstrations in Aweil, Rubkona and Yambio, the arbitrary arrest and detention of a male civil society actor in Juba, for allegedly criticizing the Government, and of a male political activist in Rumbek, for registering members of a political party. UNMISS continues to engage with the Government and civil society to enhance civic and political space in the run-up to the elections in 2024.

88. On 19 September, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, with support from UNMISS and UNDP, launched its website for the dissemination of information on national laws and transitional justice mechanisms. On 6 October, the National Council of Ministers approved bills for the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparation Authority, pending enactment by the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly.

89. UNMISS conducted 78 human rights capacity-building and awareness-raising activities for 2,975 (995 women) stakeholders, including government officials, organized forces, Necessary Unified Forces and civil society organizations.

### Children and armed conflict

90. In accordance with the standards of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, the United Nations verified 28 grave violations against 27 children (23 boys and 4 girls), including the recruitment and use of 20 boys attributed to SPLA-IO (14) and South Sudan People's Defence Forces (6). The violations also involved the killing (five) and maiming (one) of six children (three boys and three girls); three violations resulting from cross-fire (one) and explosive remnants of war (two), two of which were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and one to NAS; and one rape (girl) and one abduction (boy), both

attributed to SPLA-IO. Children were affected in the following states: Western Equatoria (14), Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (6), Central Equatoria (3), Unity (2), Eastern Equatoria (1), Jonglei (1) and Lakes (1).<sup>1</sup>

91. UNMISS delivered 15 capacity-building workshops to 800 participants (217 women): 278 government security forces (33 women), 274 community members (99 women), 179 government officials (76 women), 47 SPLA-IO officers (2 women), 7 SSOA officers (all men) and 15 protection partners (7 women). UNMISS also conducted 62 child protection awareness-raising sessions for 5,425 participants (1,903 women): 3,297 community members (1,447 women), 1,794 government security forces (360 women), 149 SPLA-IO officers (5 women), 103 protection partners (70 women) and 82 government officials (21 women).

### **Conflict-related sexual violence**

92. UNMISS documented and verified 19 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 25 survivors (16 women and 9 girls). Survivors' ages ranged from 9 to 48 years. Of those survivors, 12 received medical assistance and 3 sought legal action. The incidents occurred in Jonglei (five), Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (two), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (two), Unity (three), Western Equatoria (four), Central Equatoria (two) and Warrap (one). They were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (eight), the National Security Service (two), SPLA-IO (one), NAS (one) and community-based militia (seven).

93. From 4 to 8 September, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited South Sudan to attend the National Conference on the Protection of Children against Sexual Violence. During her visit, she engaged with government officials, including the Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Inspector General of Police and, in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, met with the Deputy Governor and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in the Wedweil refugee settlement. The Special Representative underscored the necessity of strengthening accountability mechanisms for conflict-related sexual violence and emphasized the need to focus on preventive and restorative interventions, mental health support and rehabilitation for survivors.

## **F. Women and peace and security**

94. In October, progress was made in the appointment of women to high-level political and decision-making posts. Namely, the appointment of Nyiel Gordon Kuol as Second Deputy Governor of the Central Bank and Flora Gabriel Modi as the first female Mayor of Juba City. In addition, the recently adopted National Elections Act incorporates provisions on the responsibility of the Government to promote the inclusion of women and guarantee protections to allow their free participation in political and electoral processes.

95. Following the national stakeholder conference on sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan organized in August by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and supported by UNMISS, the Mission continues to support national and subnational authorities and security institutions in developing and operationalizing a national coordination mechanism to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan.

<sup>1</sup> Because the Mission's Human Rights Division has a wider mandate than those units using the monitoring and reporting mechanism, there are sometimes discrepancies between these figures.

96. In September, in order to support women appointed to the mechanisms and institutions of the Revitalized Agreement, the Mission provided technical support for training 33 women members of the Western Equatoria State Legislative Assembly.

## VI. Mission staffing, the status of deployments, and conduct and discipline

<i>Component</i>	<i>Number of staff authorized</i>	<i>Number of staff deployed</i>	<i>Percentage of staff deployed<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Percentage of men among total deployed<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Percentage of women among total deployed<sup>a</sup></i>
International civilian staff	932	879	94	70	30
National civilian staff	1 460	1 409	97	83	17
United Nations Volunteers	450	414	92	60	40
Civilian police	733	701	96	67	33
Formed police units	1 280	850	66	73	27
Government-provided personnel	88	48	55	50	50
Military observers/liaison officers	242	232	96	69	31
Military staff officers	431	425	99	81	19
Military contingents	16 327	13 241	81	93	7

<sup>a</sup> All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

97. UNMISS commenced a series of interventions to remind staff members of their status as international civil servants, with special reference to outside activities, including political engagements, conflict of interest, the duty to honour private legal obligations and the use of social media.

98. In accordance with the applicable policy, information on possible unsatisfactory conduct and/or misconduct was processed in a timely fashion. Between 1 September and 30 November, 46 allegations of misconduct were recorded in the case management tracking system. Two allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded. All identified victims of previously reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse continued to receive support from the Senior Victims' Rights Officer in South Sudan.

## VII. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement, international humanitarian law and security of United Nations personnel

99. As at 30 November, UNMISS had recorded 44 violations of the status-of-forces agreement attributed to the Government, compared with 53 violations recorded during the previous reporting period. Of those 44 violations, 34 involved movement restrictions imposed by government authorities, affecting UNMISS ground patrols in Jonglei State and in Central and Western Equatoria States. A dynamic air patrol scheduled for 15 September, from Yambio to Nagero, to monitor the security and humanitarian situations and support the evacuation of a United Nations agency staff member, was cancelled because the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters delayed acknowledging the flight safety assurance for the evacuation flight for three days. On 3 October, an UNMISS patrol was denied access by South Sudan People's Defence Forces personnel at a checkpoint located between Juba and Wulikare, Central Equatoria State, threatened at gunpoint and escorted back to the Bilpham area in Juba. The patrol team returned to the base in Juba.

100. On 7 September, an UNMISS international staff member was arrested by officers of the Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Immigration at the Juba–Yei

Road checkpoint and accused of being in the country illegally. His United Nations staff identity card and driver's permit were confiscated. Upon producing a valid visa and following the intervention of the Department of Safety and Security of the United Nations and the Diplomatic Police Unit of the South Sudan National Police Service, he was released and the seized items were returned.

101. On 13 September, in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, following the refusal of a request made by the local Chief of Bazia to use Mine Action Service vehicles to transport workers, the Chief stopped Service activities in the area and denied access for the disposal of unexploded ordnance in Menya village.

102. Criminality remained the predominant threat to United Nations personnel and operations, in the form of road banditry, petty theft and armed burglaries of locally recruited staff domiciles. Humanitarian convoys, escorted by UNMISS force protection, continued to be targeted in banditry incidents. In Lainya County, Central Equatoria, a convoy marked as belonging to the United Nations security management system organization was attacked, resulting in the deaths of two contracted drivers. In Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, a local staff member of the United Nations security management system was abducted for eight days, owing to politics surrounding an intercommunal dispute. During the reporting period, 29 incidents of access denial, harassment, intimidation and extortion against United Nations and non-governmental organizations personnel were recorded.

## **VIII. Performance of uniformed components**

103. The UNMISS force evaluated 13 units: 1 sector, 5 infantry battalions, 3 engineer units, 1 force marine unit and 3 medical units. The units were found to be well trained and operationally ready according to United Nations standards. Seven units exceeded the set military unit evaluation tool standards, three units successfully met the set standards and three units remain under review.

104. In September, the Police Division in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations dispatched a performance assessment team to Juba to conduct its annual assessment of formed police units. In addition, the United Nations police conducted internal quarterly performance evaluations and assessments of four formed police units (two in Juba, one in Malakal and one in Bentiu). The overall performance was satisfactory, and recommendations for improvements were made.

## **IX. Observations and recommendations**

105. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the road map in South Sudan remains behind schedule and continues to lack the spirit of cooperation and collaboration envisaged in the Agreement. I call upon the leadership of South Sudan to move towards a more collegial approach to delivering elections that are South Sudanese-led and -owned.

106. As South Sudan prepares for its first post-independence elections, to be held in December 2024, political leaders have yet to agree on and address key outstanding issues. The United Nations has consulted regional countries and institutions, namely IGAD, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the African Union High-level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan. Those consultations revealed widespread concerns about the risk of a relapse into violence in the absence of proper preparations for elections. Thus, in conjunction with the African Union and IGAD, UNMISS has begun a conversation with the Government on the following package of



steps and measures aimed at making the election a credible, peaceful and inclusive exercise:

- (a) Operationalizing the electoral security plans of the national police and making significant progress in implementing the transitional security arrangements;
- (b) Confirming the constitution-making process as it relates to elections and electoral timelines;
- (c) Operationalizing and funding national institutions that are critical for elections, namely, the National Elections Commission and the Political Parties Council;
- (d) Clarifying the legal framework for, types of and funding for elections, considering feasibility within the remaining time frame;
- (e) Clarifying issues relating to electoral boundary delimitation;
- (f) Agreeing on voter registration modalities and mechanisms and preventing electoral fraud;
- (g) Agreeing on an election dispute resolution mechanism;
- (h) Determining the participation of refugees and internally displaced persons in elections;
- (i) Agreeing on a framework for legitimate political conduct, the rights of political stakeholders and their ability to freely participate in an expanded civic and political space.

107. In assessing the country's preparedness to hold free, fair and credible elections, a wide range of political stakeholders have acknowledged that the conditions for holding such elections are not yet in place. It is also clear that the implementation of commitments set out in the Revitalized Agreement as a remedy for the failure to implement those benchmarks is no longer possible, as the timelines have already passed. Going forward, an engagement between the parties to the Agreement is required, in order to decide on the necessary conditions for elections to be held as scheduled in December 2024. In short, the decision as to whether or not to hold the elections, and the conditions related thereto, is a matter for the South Sudanese people to address.

108. For elections to be held in December 2024, the way forward on the aforementioned arrangements must be agreed upon by the parties. I therefore urge the Government to work towards the achievement of those objectives. Such a development would allow the Security Council to consider the conditions under which elections would not permit a relapse into violence. It would also allow Member States to be able to decide, in a timely manner, on the support to be made available to South Sudan prior to the end of the transition period in February 2025.

109. Some of the items listed above are time-bound, if the outcomes of the elections are to be acceptable. There is an emerging consensus among electoral experts focused on South Sudan that critical decisions or events should be agreed upon or established before the beginning of April 2024. Those include the implementation of the transitional security arrangements, the operationalization of the electoral institutions, a determination on the types of elections to be held (presidential, parliamentary and/or others), the participation of refugees, an agreed political code of conduct, a modality for voter registration and the need for and drafting of a permanent constitution.

110. While the adoption of the National Elections Act, the appointment of members of the National Elections Commission, Political Parties Council and National Constitutional Review Commission and the limited deployment of the Necessary

Unified Forces are commendable, conditions do not yet exist for these institutions to fully execute their mandates.

111. I also remain deeply concerned that the ongoing conflict in the Sudan could have far-reaching implications for South Sudan, considering the already fragile economic and humanitarian situation, as the continuous and voluminous influx of refugees and returnees exert added strain on the country's overstretched national and international resources.

112. Resources for international assistance around the world are expected to sharply decrease in 2024, and humanitarian partners will need to prioritize assistance to the most vulnerable. In turn, the Government of South Sudan will need to allocate more resources to meet its responsibility to provide basic services and protect civilians.

113. To date in 2023, four humanitarian workers have lost their lives in the line of duty. I again request that the Government ensure the safety of humanitarian workers dedicated to serving the South Sudanese people and bring the perpetrators of such heinous crimes to justice. All the while, it should guarantee humanitarian partners unfettered access to affected people.

114. At a time of urgent and often competing challenges, I urge the region and the world not to divert attention away from the peace process in South Sudan. Doing so could lead to disastrous consequences for South Sudan and the broader region, which is already in turmoil. I encourage regional and international partners to sustain their engagements on the situation in South Sudan and facilitate a peaceful end to the transitional period, as outlined in the Revitalized Agreement.

115. I express my deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries and commend IGAD and the African Union for their efforts. I thank my Special Representative for South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, for his ongoing support for the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and for his good offices role towards efforts to achieve sustainable peace in South Sudan.

# Map

