



PRESS RELEASE

UNMISS Human Rights Brief: Civilians continue to bear the brunt of violence in South Sudan

Juba, 26 September 2023 – Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the violence in South Sudan, according to the latest Human Rights Brief from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Between April and June 2023, the Mission documented 222 incidents of violence against civilians (including 128 children), whereby 395 civilians were killed, 281 injured, 166 abducted, and 29 were subjected to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

Compared to the previous quarter (Jan-Mar 2023), this marks a 14 per cent increase in violent incidents (194 to 222) and a five per cent decrease in civilians harmed (from 920 to 871). While the number of civilians killed decreased by two per cent (from 405 to 395), the number of people injured increased by 20 per cent (from 235 to 281). The number of abductions decreased from 266 to 166, while the number of victims subjected to CRSV increased from 14 to 29.

Incidents perpetrated by community-based militias and/or civil defense groups commonly referred to as intercommunal violence accounted for majority of the victims (87 per cent). Geographically, Warrap State was the most affected by the chronic violence and accounted for 34 per cent of all civilian victims, followed by Jonglei, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria and Central Equatoria States.

“Ordinary civilians in South Sudan pay dearly for these acts of violence. It is critical to strengthen justice and accountability systems for such crimes” said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in South Sudan.

Meanwhile, over the reporting period, UNMISS documented at least 20 individuals affected by undue restrictions of fundamental freedoms, including through continuous censorship, harassment, arbitrary arrests, detention, and ill-treatment of individuals expressing critical or divergent views by security forces, which negatively impacted civic and political space.

SRSO Haysom further stated that UNMISS will continue to provide technical assistance and advocacy for a conducive environment for the exercise of civic and political freedoms as prerequisite for free, fair, and credible elections in 2024. The Mission collaborated with the South Sudan Human Rights Commission and CSOs for the 12th National Human Rights Forum in Juba, under the theme “Right to Freedom of Expression and Assembly”. Also, at the Third Quarterly Meeting with CSOs, UNMISS engaged over 163 representatives on enhancing civic and political space in the current political context of South Sudan.

As the country prepares for elections, it is imperative for the Transitional Government, with the support of other stakeholders, to take credible steps towards strengthening systems for justice and accountability, protecting affected communities, as well as expand civic and political space. Ultimately, this can only be achieved with the full participation of all stakeholders and parties to the conflict who must demonstrate clear political will and work together to build the foundation for a just, prosperous, and peaceful South Sudan.

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