



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit

Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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First Protection of Civilians site successfully closed in South Sudan as families choose to return home

The first Protection of Civilians site has been successfully closed in South Sudan after internally displaced families expressed the desire and confidence to return to their former homes.

The site, next to the United Nations base in Melut in the Upper Nile region, had provided sanctuary to hundreds of families since the civil war broke out four years ago.

Over the past week, these families have been returned to their homes with the assistance of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and UNHCR, in partnership with other humanitarian agencies.

Of the 562 recently registered, most chose to settle in Melut town given the improved security situation there. Approximately 255 were relocated elsewhere with some choosing to shift to the Malakal site because of personal protection needs while others moved home to Renk, Ulang, Maban and Wau.

There has been significant consultation with the community and humanitarian agencies about the relocation process and ensuring the families continue to receive assistance when they return to their former communities.

“It’s gratifying to finally see people feel safe enough to go home. There is conflict across much of South Sudan where people fear for their lives. But in some areas, like Melut, we are able to help people out of the camps back to their communities,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS, David Shearer.





The protection of civilians is primarily the South Sudan government’s responsibility but, in many cases, people have fled from government security forces. UNMISS provides sanctuary to almost 210,000 internally displaced people at seven locations across South Sudan. These camps are a last resort and exist only to shelter people who genuinely fear for their lives.

“We will look at every camp individually to see if the conditions allow people to return home voluntarily and safely. Where these conditions exist we will try to assist people back,” said David Shearer. “Camps are not a long term solution and certainly not the right place to bring up children or live with dignity.”

The closure of the site at Melut will enable the peacekeeping troops based there to shift their focus from guarding the camp to increasing patrols in the surrounding area. Extending their protective presence into other communities will save lives and build confidence so that, over time, more people will feel safe enough to return home.

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