



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit, Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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UNMISS calls on South Sudan authorities to safeguard civilians in Jonglei

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan calls upon the country's authorities to take all necessary steps to protect civilians during military operations in Jonglei State. All communities and state bodies in Jonglei need to take urgent measures to prevent the mobilization of armed youth to carry out retaliatory attacks that would trigger another deadly cycle of inter-communal violence.

UNMISS welcomes the efforts the Government of South Sudan and community leaders have made for peace and stability in Jonglei, and the outreach made to militia leader David Yau Yau. Recognizing the legitimate right of any country to take measures against insurgencies threatening stability, UNMISS underscores that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) must make every effort to abide by its obligations under national and international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians.

"It is vital that the SPLA does its utmost to distinguish between combatants and civilians," said Hilde F. Johnson, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in South Sudan. "People who are not taking any active part in hostilities must not be harmed," she said, "Women, children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable and need protection."

The South Sudanese government and military leaders have assured UNMISS that they will strive to abide by their international obligations in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.

The situation in Jonglei is complicated by reports of mobilization of armed youth. UNMISS urges the South Sudanese authorities to take immediate action to deter and prevent a further escalation of the violence.

The Government of South Sudan has the primary responsibility to protect the civilian population, and to make sure that human rights are respected in accordance with the Transitional Constitution and international law.

As part of its protection mandate, UNMISS has increased its military deployment in all communities in Jonglei, including in Bor, Pibor, Gumuruk, Akobo and Yuai, with UNMISS troops conducting expanded patrols to deter violence and assist with early warning in relation to threats against civilians. UNMISS also has additional forces on

stand-by for rapid deployment to Jonglei when necessary. Integrated teams will continue to engage in early warning and undertake monitoring. It is vital that UNMISS is granted freedom of movement by all parties to carry out this mandate.

The Mission will also follow up on any reports of hostilities affecting civilians adversely or violations of human rights, and calls on the Government of South Sudan to investigate such incidents and hold the perpetrators to account.

In recent weeks UNMISS has provided safety on several occasions to thousands of civilians fleeing imminent threats in Pibor and Gumuruk. UNMISS has worked extensively with the peace processes in the state and urges the resumption of peace initiatives as soon as possible. It calls on the communities and the State to work towards a comprehensive plan to end the violence in Jonglei.

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