



# United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit  
Communications & Public Information Office

## PRESS RELEASE

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### UNMISS condemns the continued targeting of civilians in Bentiu

The Human Rights Division of the UN Mission in South Sudan has issued a report concerning allegations that opposition forces killed at least 11 civilians and committed other serious human rights abuses during an attack in the Unity State capital of Bentiu last October. UNMISS human rights officers also received testimony from multiple sources alleging that opposition forces abducted and raped female residents of Bentiu after government troops withdrew from some parts of the city during the afternoon of 29 October 2014.

The Mission's Human Rights Division compiled a list of 14 names of women who were allegedly kidnapped by opposition forces during their five-hour occupation of Bentiu. According to several witnesses, two women and a six-month-old baby were killed in their homes by opposition forces near a Catholic church in the Dere neighborhood of Bentiu.

"Reports of such gross human rights abuses are all too common in the current conflict and involve all sides," stated the report. According to its preliminary findings, "(opposition) forces committed gross human rights abuses and serious violations of international humanitarian law which may amount to war crimes."

UNMISS human rights officers conducted 21 interviews with victims, witnesses and other sources in the aftermath of the 29 October attack by opposition forces against Bentiu and the adjacent town of Rubkona. The fighting followed persistent rumors of an imminent assault by opposition forces against the Unity State capital, which had changed hands on four previous occasions between the outbreak of the crisis in December 2013 and May of this year.

UNMISS human rights officers visited the opposition-controlled town of Nhialdiu on 24 November to investigate these and other allegations. Local authorities affiliated with the armed opposition denied accusations that opposition forces targeted or kidnapped any civilians and suggested that the deceased civilians may have been caught in crossfire. They also said the women who were seen leaving Bentiu had accompanied opposition forces of their own free will because their husbands had joined the armed opposition.

"This report is a timely reminder of the fighting that has continued in Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei states in spite of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement that both warring parties signed nearly a year ago," said Ellen Margrethe Loej, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in

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South Sudan. “I strongly condemn the targeting of unarmed civilians in the ongoing fighting and call on both parties to exercise restraint and respect the rights of non-combatants.”

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