



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit, Public Information Office

PRESS STATEMENT

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UNMISS CALLS FOR ACTION TO SAFEGUARD PEACE PROCESS IN JONGLEI STATE

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) calls on all South Sudanese institutions and actors engaged in stabilizing Jonglei state to take immediate action to safeguard recent gains in the peace process, stem human rights violations in Pibor County and hold perpetrators to account.

There have been significant improvements in the security situation in Jonglei state since the inter-communal violence there claimed the lives of hundreds of citizens at the beginning of this year. Commendable efforts have been made to increase the security and protection of people and their property. However, UNMISS is concerned by the recent increase in serious human rights violations allegedly committed by some undisciplined elements within the South Sudanese Army (SPLA) in Pibor County. These troops are deployed to assist the government's civilian disarmament programme there, as part of the overall peace process.

Between 15 July and 20 August, UNMISS monitoring teams reported alleged violations including one killing, 27 allegations of torture or ill-treatment, such as beatings, and simulated drowning in some cases, 12 rapes, six attempted rapes and eight abductions. The majority of the victims are women, and in some cases children. Communities in Pibor County have expressed their fear about the vulnerability of the population.

Further fuelling tension is the reported murder of an SPLA soldier in Pibor on 16 August. UNMISS personnel are investigating this and all other reports of serious human rights abuses in the county and urging that those responsible be held accountable.

“The gains of the peace process in Jonglei must not be undermined by these recent incidents,” said Hilde F. Johnson, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to South Sudan who called for the Government to take action against the perpetrators.

UNMISS has raised its concerns with the SPLA, calling for the abuses in Pibor County to be stemmed. UNMISS recognizes that some steps have been taken to strengthen investigations, with some arrests in recent rape cases and some older cases going to trial. The SPLA has advised UNMISS that it has ordered senior commanders and Military Intelligence to conduct investigations, as well as recalling certain patrols allegedly involved in criminal incidents.

UNMISS now calls for a decisive effort to prevent human rights violations and hold perpetrators accountable. Failure to identify those suspected of human rights abuses, carry out full investigations in all cases, and demonstrate that justice is being done for the victims, will undermine the confidence and collaboration of local communities in the disarmament process, and risks derailing the peace process.

It is important now for the Government, with support from the international community, to ensure that there is a viable All Jonglei Peace Conference implementation project in place. All the initial work in stabilizing the security situation needs to be consolidated and built upon. UNMISS is committed to working with all partners, government and international, to support the implementation of the resolutions agreed during the May 2012 All Jonglei Peace Conference in order to bring stability and lasting peace to Jonglei and South Sudan.

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