



# Report on attacks on civilians in southern Unity State, South Sudan

UNMISS | OHCHR

06 September 2022

## INTRODUCTION

On 06 September 2022, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a joint report on the 'Attacks against civilians in southern Unity State, South Sudan' covering the period between February and May 2022, pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2625 (2022). The report contains findings based on investigations conducted by UNMISS Human Rights Division into gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, from the fighting between South Sudanese joint Government forces and their affiliated armed militias/groups and the pro-Riek Machar Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army – In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO (RM)) between 11 February - 31 May 2022 in southern Unity State.

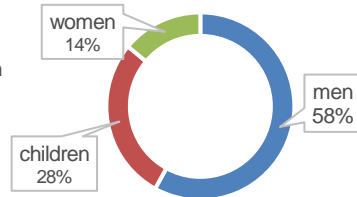
## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES AND VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

### KILLINGS AND INJURIES

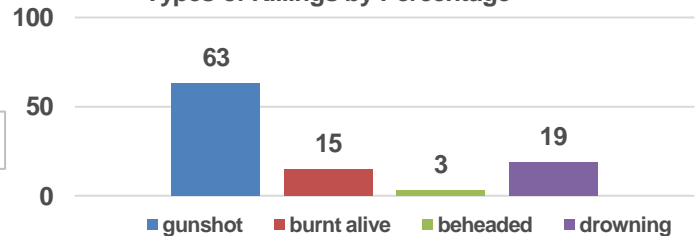
At least **28** villages and settlements in Koch, Leer and Mayendit Counties were impacted by the violence between February and May 2022.

Approximately **173** civilians were killed including, 24 women, 49 children, and 12 others injured, including two women and two children.

#### 173 Civilians Killed



#### Types of Killings by Percentage



All the killings and injuries resulting from these attacks were attributed to the joint Government forces and allied militias/groups from Koch and Mayendit Counties.

### ABDUCTIONS AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**26** women and **11** children were abducted.

Abductees included pregnant and nursing women. Most of the abductees were captured from their villages and settlements while trying to flee or were taken after being found in hiding. Women and children were ordered to carry looted items.

**131** cases of rape or gang rape were documented, including of **18** girls, with one of the victims as young as eight and a nine-year-old gang-raped to death.



“ When Padeah was attacked on 16 February, the attackers took me along with more than 20 other women from my village, including our children. They forced us to carry the food items and other goods they looted from our village. They [the attackers] were beating and lashing us with sticks until we reached Mirmir payam where we were raped several times in front of our children. Most women gave in to the rape because they were afraid that their children (girls) will be raped instead of them.”

\* Rape survivor from Padeah

### FORCED DISPLACEMENT

An estimated **44,000** civilians were forcibly displaced from various locations in southern Unity State.

Approximately **3,000** people sought refuge in the IDP sites in Rubkona and Bentiu in northern Unity State.

### ATTACKS ON HUMANITARIAN FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL

Civilian objects, including private property, humanitarian facilities, and supplies designated as lifesaving assistance and support for vulnerable populations were pillaged and/or burnt in at least nine locations.

**2** aid workers were killed and **1** other injured.

## ALLEGED PERPETRATORS

The investigations identified that the following key actors may bear the greatest responsibility for violations committed during this period.

Joint Government Forces

Haak Nuer Militia, known as “Tahrir”

\* SPLM/A-IO (RM) under the command of the Division 4B

Government-aligned Jagai Nuer armed militia

Defected SPLM/A-IO (RM) officers

4 county officials in Koch and Mayendit

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Attacks were consistently premeditated and carried out with a degree of organization mainly by the joint Government forces and allied militias/groups in Koch, Leer and Mayendit. The high number of armed elements and proliferation of firearms in the area, political rivalry, exploitation of historical ethnic tensions and climate crises have combined with other contextual factors to create an environment in which human rights violations are committed with impunity.

UNMISS and OHCHR call on the Government of South Sudan to address the persistent lack of accountability for perpetrators of crimes under international and national law, which is critical for the resolution of the protracted conflict in Unity State and sustainable peace in South Sudan. The Government of South Sudan is duty-bound under international human rights law to take adequate measures to protect civilians, to investigate allegations of violations independently, impartially, promptly, and thoroughly, and hold the alleged perpetrators accountable within fair trials.

\* UN Security Council resolution 2625 (2022) gives UNMISS the mandate to monitor, investigate and report on violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights. This resolution is the latest extension of the UNMISS mandate.

\* HRD received information about the alleged involvement of the SPLM/A-IO (RM) and its allied forces in the killing and injuring of an undetermined number of civilians, as well as raping and abducting an undetermined number of women and girls. HRD interviewed numerous local sources in Koch County, to verify these allegations. However, the information could not be corroborated.