



PRESS RELEASE

Amidst a decrease in violence against civilians in South Sudan, a surge in conflict-related sexual violence

Juba, 10 May 2022: Despite an overall decrease in violence against civilians in South Sudan, cases of conflict related sexual violence more than doubled, compared to the same period last year, according to the latest report on civilian casualties by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

From January to March 2022, UNMISS documented 63 cases of conflict-related sexual violence - up from 28 compared to the same time last year. Overall, 173 incidents impacted a total of 754 civilian victims, reflecting a 32 percent decrease of incidents and roughly the same number of civilian victims, compared to the same quarter in 2021.

According to UNMISS, civil defense groups and militias accounted for the majority of violence against civilians (64 percent), followed by conventional parties to the conflict (34 percent). The majority of violence was associated with inter- or intra-communal forms of conflict, particularly in Jonglei, Eastern Equatoria, and Warrap states.

The report, compiled by UNMISS' Human Rights Division, observes that intercommunal violence, particularly cattle-related conflict, was concentrated in areas where communities compete for scarce resources exacerbated by climate change. The 2021 floods, the worst in decades, have further contributed to food insecurity and disruption of livelihoods.

UNMISS continued its extensive activities to prevent and respond to conflict hotspots throughout the reporting period. From January to March 2022, the Mission maintained six temporary operating bases in conflict hotspots, and conducted 1,002 short distance patrols, 75 long distance patrols and 93 air patrols. UNMISS' Human Rights Division participated in 216 patrols and 31 deployments to monitor violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Concurrently, the Mission is engaging in political and community consultations at the local, state and national level to advance durable political solutions to conflicts.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Haysom, also indicated that UNMISS will step up its efforts on tackling conflict-related sexual violence, "which continues to be one of the most traumatic features of the conflict in South Sudan," he said at a 14 April press conference. UNMISS already supports efforts to promote protection, rule of law and accountability, through the rapid deployment of temporary operating bases, support to mobile courts, and by delivering specialized training on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

With violence surging in several parts of the country, UNMISS urges the Government of South Sudan to investigate human rights violations and abuses and to hold all perpetrators to account.

The Mission further encourages swift and full implementation of the 3 April agreement on a unified command and control structure, and graduation and deployment of the necessary unified forces, to enable South Sudan's security sector to carry out the government's primary responsibility to protect civilians.

Contact: UNMISS Spokesperson, Linda Tom at toml@un.org or unmiss-spokesperson@un.org