

NGOs condemn attacks on civilians in South Sudan and emphasize a need for urgent humanitarian assistance 26 April 2014 The undersigned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) express deep concern at the serious escalation in violence in South Sudan, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and is exacerbating an already profound humanitarian crisis. We strongly condemn all attacks that have taken place against civilians during this conflict, most recently at the UN peacekeeping base in Bor on 17th April and in the town of Bentiu on 15th-18th April. Civilians have been targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, others indiscriminately killed, and many subjected to unspeakable grave human rights abuses including rape.

Widespread violence against civilians has reportedly been committed since December 2013, but recent events display a serious deepening of the conflict and callous disregard for civilian life and international humanitarian law. So far an estimated 1 million people have been forced from their homes; of these over 90,000 people are sheltering in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases across the country. Thousands of people have fled to the UN peacekeeping base in Bentiu for fear of reprisal attacks in the past week. Many areas outside the main towns remain inaccessible due to security conditions, and it is feared that the number of people affected by the violence and in need of humanitarian assistance could be significantly higher. It is estimated that 3.2 million are at risk of extreme food insecurity, a number that will only rise in coming months. NGOs call on all armed actors to uphold their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law, refrain from targeting civilians, respect the sanctity of civilian spaces, and permit immediate and unconditional humanitarian access to civilians in areas they control.

The most basic needs of civilians in this conflict are growing by the hour. Already strained living conditions for those displaced inside UNMISS bases and outside in remote locations will deteriorate further if more civilians are subjected to violence and forced to flee. UNMISS peacekeepers play a critical role in saving lives. They must be reinforced with immediate and adequate peacekeeping capacities, and existing funding shortfalls need to be addressed. They must be also allowed to take robust action to provide protection to civilians in need. The humanitarian community needs all the support it can get to reduce needless suffering. The international community must rise to the challenge by increasing funding for the humanitarian response and urging all parties to the conflict to immediately stop violence against civilians and allow the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in dire need.

But this conflict will not end through these efforts alone. All parties to the conflict must immediately commit to respecting the cessation of hostilities agreement without exception, resume genuine talks in Addis Ababa and work towards a negotiated, inclusive political settlement.

The NGO community in South Sudan remains steadfast in its commitment to providing humanitarian assistance, wherever needed, in an impartial, neutral and independent manner. The people of South Sudan more than ever deserve our concerted attention and efforts; inaction is not an option.

Click

[here](#)

to read the statement online and see the signatories.