

Conflict Alert: Halting South Sudan's Spreading Civil War International Crisis Group 7 July 2014

The war between the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) that began in Juba in December and spread to the three Greater Upper Nile states (Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity) is in danger of escalation, including more atrocities and famine.

[As Crisis Group warned in April](#)

, conflict has broken out in Greater Bahr el Ghazal, and rising tensions threaten to drag in the relatively peaceful Equatorial states. The Security Council, in emergency session, should instruct the UN mission (UNMISS) to use its good offices to prevent further cessation of hostilities violations and violence against civilians; establish an international contact group and arms embargo; and better delineate roles between UNMISS and humanitarians on the ground. Concurrently, the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) must better link its stuttering peace process with communal dialogues inside South Sudan and reach out to excluded constituencies. (...)

Three cessation of hostilities agreements have failed to halt the war, and time is of the essence to expand the current process to address existing and future challenges

The government is borrowing heavily against oil futures to fund the war, its troops are often unpaid, and thousands have deserted. Any transitional government will inherit a bankrupt state. It remains unclear who is funding and arming the opposition and how this outside support may be undermining mediation efforts.

Pursuant to UNMISS' mandate approved in May, a regional force is deploying under its command, focused on protecting civilians, cessation of hostilities monitors in key towns and oil-installation workers, but it will be overwhelmed if war continues to expand. UNMISS, which is still not acting under its protection of civilians mandate to address this, should work with the IGAD monitors to prevent further escalation of violence but step back from efforts to be a substitute for humanitarians and to negotiate their access. Both government and SPLA-IO have asked to discuss these issues with unarmed, non-political humanitarians rather than UNMISS, whose attempt to represent humanitarians has already backfired and has limited access for humanitarians in some famine-prone areas. UNMISS should assist humanitarians only on request and refocus its efforts toward its core mandated tasks, such as protection of civilians.

Peace talks have stalled; the 10 August deadline for a transitional government to be in place is increasingly unrealistic. IGAD must expand its efforts for an inclusive process in Addis by including community leaders and armed groups and launch multiple dialogues in South Sudan.

The cessation of hostilities Monitoring and Verification (MVM) Teams, protected by UNMISS,

should investigate the reports of violations in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Equatorias.

Many recommendations Crisis Group made in its December 2013

[Open Letter to the UN Secretary-General](#)

and its April report,

[A Civil War by Any Other Name](#)

, remain relevant to averting further escalation. In the face of faltering peace talks, more aggressive South Sudanese demands for political reform and fractures within the ruling coalition, the UN Security Council should hold an emergency session to do the following. (...)

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