



Report on Conflict-related sexual violence in northern Unity

UNMISS | OHCHR report from September to December 2018

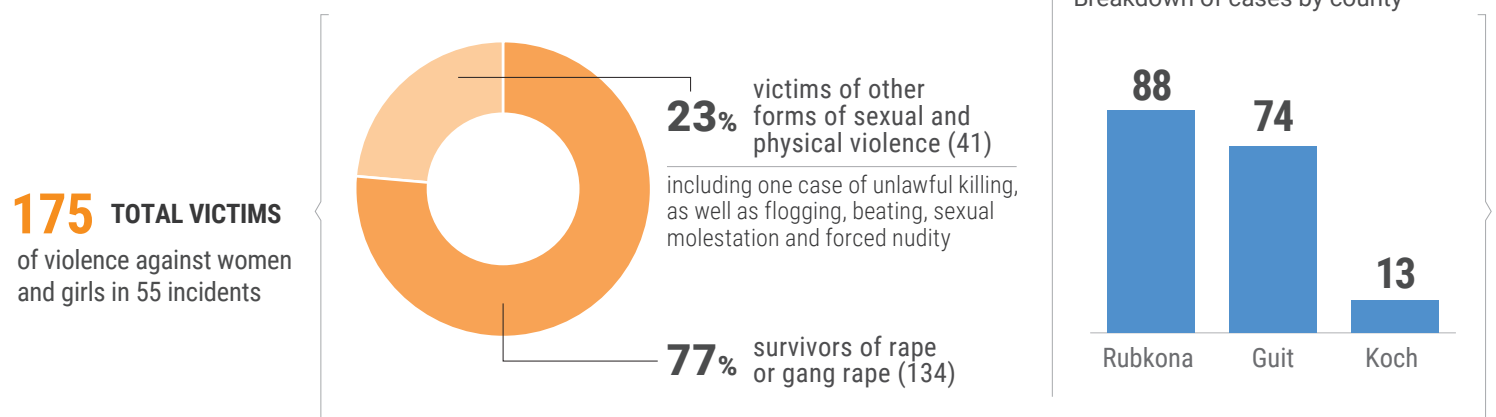
February 2019

INTRODUCTION

This report is jointly published by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2406 (2018). The report is the result of an investigation conducted by UNMISS Human Rights Division (UNMISS HRD) into allegations of conflict-related sexual violence committed between September and December 2018 in northern Unity.

HRD employed the standard of proof of “reasonable grounds to believe” in making factual determinations about the violations, incidents, and patterns of conduct of the perpetrators. Unless specifically stated, all information in the report has been verified using several independent, credible and reliable sources, in accordance with OHCHR’s human rights monitoring and investigation methodology.

SCALE AND SCOPE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ¹



¹ The figures in this section are likely under-representative of the full scale of sexual violence, given the difficulties encountered in accessing some survivors.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASE IN ATTACKS AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NORTHERN UNITY

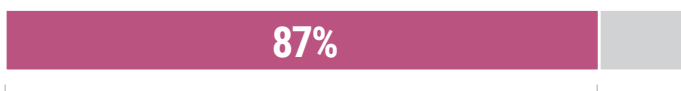
- Large number of fighters on “standby” mode following the signing of the R-ARCSS
- Impunity and the normalization of violence against women and girls
- Women and girls having to travel long distances through high-risk areas in search of food and other essential commodities

PROFILE OF VICTIMS



MODUS OPERANDI

- Targeted in similar or common locations, including specific points along main roads known to be places where travelers rest, near military barracks or checkpoints, or in areas where women and girls frequently travel to collect firewood or sand
- Survivors of sexual violence brutally beaten with rifle butts, sticks, small firearems and cable wires



- 87% of women and girls who were raped were assaulted by more than one perpetrator

A thirty-year-old survivor from Koch County recounted:

“We women do not have a choice. There is no alternative for us. If we go by the main road, we are raped. If we go by the bush, we are raped. I was raped among others in the same area repeatedly on three different occasions. We avoided the road because we heard horrible stories that women and girls are grabbed while passing through and are raped, but the same happened to us. There is no escape - we are all raped.”



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ALLEGED PERPETRATORS

As a result of its investigation, UNMISS HRD has reasonable grounds to believe these attacks were carried out primarily by armed elements of the **pro-Taban Deng Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO (TD))** and the **Government's South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF)**. A few cases were committed by elements of the **pro-Riek Machar SPLA-IO (SPLA-IO (RM))**. **Youth militias** affiliated with SPLA-IO (TD) are believed to have been involved in the perpetration of a significant number of cases as well.

RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH SUDAN

- **Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare** led a national-level committee to investigate the allegations of sexual violence in northern Unity. On 19 December, she presented the findings of her mission to the President of South Sudan, concluding that these allegations were *"unfounded and baseless."*¹
- **President Kiir** issued Republican Order no. 25/2018, establishing a second national committee to investigate the allegations and provide recommendations to prevent the recurrence of sexual violence in the affected area.

RESPONSE OF UNMISS

- Immediately engaged with political leaders and security services.
- Operating a mobile court in hotspots, such as Bentiu and Malakal, to help address the issue of impunity, and is planning to work with local judicial authorities to support such mobile courts in prosecuting crimes more widely across the country.
- Launched a human rights investigation to establish the facts and identify alleged perpetrators.
- Increased peacekeeping patrols and cleared foliage from roads to make it more difficult for attackers to conceal their presence.

UNMISS AND OHCHR

Urge the committee established by President Kiir under Republican Order no. 25/2018 to carry out a prompt, independent, impartial and thorough investigation into allegations of sexual and other forms of violence committed between September and December 2018 and identify individuals that may bear responsibility for these attacks.

Urge the parties to hold those responsible for CRSV to account through criminal prosecution, including individuals in positions of command and control.

Call upon the Government of South Sudan to ensure that humanitarian organizations providing services to survivors can conduct their work without fear of reprisal and with unobstructed access to victims.

¹ As reported on social media by the South Sudan Presidential Press Unit (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/PPUJ1/posts/>) and reported in print and online media (see, e.g., <https://www.nyamile.com/2018/12/20/government-team-claims-bentiu-rape-cases-unfounded-and-baseless/>).