



Report on Indiscriminate Attacks Against Civilians in Southern Unity, South Sudan

INTRODUCTION

The joint report published by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2406 (2018) highlights cases of indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Southern Unity, South Sudan. The violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law described in this report are the result of military offensives led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and associated forces against pro-Riek Machar SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO (RM)) in April and May 2018.

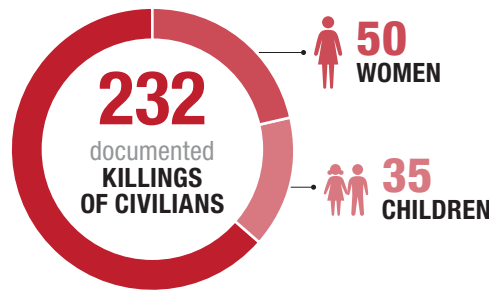
They include unlawful killings of civilians, rape, abductions and sexual slavery of women and girls, unlawful destruction of property and pillage, forced displacement and attacks on humanitarian actors and facilities.

The report shows the overall deterioration of the human rights situation in Southern Unity including in Leer and Mayendit counties where there has been a recent spike in violence. It describes the plight of civilians in South Sudan and the horrific violations they endure. The report mainly attributes responsibility for violations to the SPLA, SPLA-IO (TD) and one County Commissioner, and underlines the strategic nature of Unity, which is an SPLA-IO (RM) stronghold and the home area of the SPLA-IO (RM).

HRD employed reasonable grounds to believe standard of proof in making factual determinations on violations, incidents, and patterns of conduct. Information presented in this report was gathered in accordance with the human rights monitoring and investigations methodology developed by OHCHR.

THE VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW INCLUDE:

UNLAWFUL KILLING OF CIVILIANS:



25 WOMEN WERE HANGED | **32 CIVILIANS BURNED ALIVE**

The tally of victims is expected to be higher as Human Rights Division has not been able to determine the number of civilians killed during the shelling of civilians hiding in the swamps, or those who drowned while fleeing the violence.

Modus operandi: Armed with Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Kalashnikov Machine Guns (generally referred to as PKM) and Kalashnikov rifles (AK 47), SPLA soldiers and associated forces, entered the villages by foot, often supported by one or two armored vehicles, and reportedly deliberately killed civilians. In some instances, the presence of pick-up vehicles mounted with a machine-gun was also reported. Overall, HRD documented that at least 40 villages or settlements were attacked in the reporting period.

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

According to information gathered, rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence were committed against women and girls by the SPLA and associated forces.

The patterns of conduct and the scale of rape and other forms of sexual violence indicate that it was used as a weapon of war.

AT LEAST 120 GIRLS AND WOMEN WERE RAPED OR GANG-RAPED
by one or multiple armed elements



including pregnant and lactating mothers, and girls as young as four-year-old

However, the actual number of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence is likely to be much greater due to underreporting for fear of reprisals and the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence.

Accounts by survivors and witnesses indicate that rape was used by the attackers to exercise power over their victims, impose extreme humiliation, destroy their dignity and to fracture families and the community through the stigma and shame attached to survivors. For instance, on 11 May, in Touchriak in Leer County, women were stripped of their clothes and subjected to forced nudity before being gang-raped. Young girls were not spared either as illustrated in the gang-rape of a six-year-old girl by eight soldiers who pulled her out of hiding in Jaguar village of Mayendit County on 21 April. According to witnesses, the soldiers continued to rape the girl even after she became unconscious and left her bleeding on the ground.

UNLAWFUL DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY AND PILLAGE:

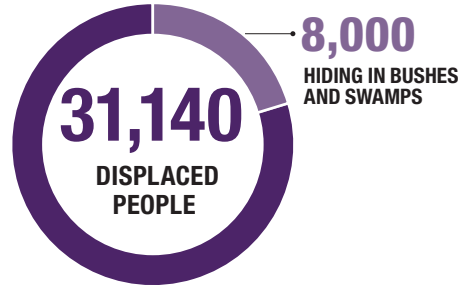
AT LEAST 40 ATTACKED VILLAGES

Modus operandi: SPLA and associated forces adopted a scorched-earth strategy: the deliberate destruction of villages not justified by military necessity, accompanied by pillage.



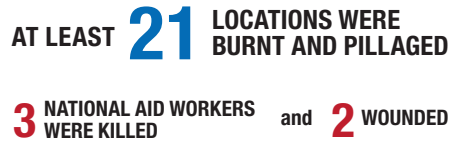
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FORCED DISPLACEMENT:



The method of warfare used by SPLA and associated forces indicates a strategy to deliberately displace civilians seen as supportive of the SPLA-IO (RM). **Witness testimonies indicate that the attackers' intent was to use a scorched earth approach.**

ATTACKS ON HUMANITARIAN ACTORS AND FACILITIES:



Humanitarian actors operating in southern Unity were not spared during the offensive. **In at least 21 locations, the forces vandalized, destroyed and plundered schools and health facilities, including clinics run by humanitarian organizations.** Equipment, supplies and drugs were stolen or burnt. Humanitarian compounds and facilities, clearly marked and fenced, were ransacked and plundered.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIOLATIONS

PERPETRATORS: SPLA government forces, aligned with the SPLA-IO led by Taban Deng Gai (TD) and youth militia.

There are reasons to believe that 3 officials are amongst those who appear to have authority over those committing the violations documented in this report: The Gany County commissioner (former Koch County Commissioner), one SPLA-IO (TD) commander (Lieutenant General) and former Major General of SPLA-IO (RM) and one SPLA commander (colonel) from the SPLA Division IV in Bentiu. The Gany County commissioner was reportedly removed from his position.

The report recommends that the Government investigate all allegations of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed during the Southern Unity operations, and prosecute anyone who bears responsibility. If the Government is unable or unwilling, other accountability mechanisms should be involved, including the Hybrid Court for South Sudan.

SOME OF THE VILLAGES ATTACKED IN SOUTHERN UNITY

