



## Statement Responding to Recent Atrocities and Violence in South Sudan April 28, 2014

We have all been appalled by the fighting in South Sudan, particularly the recent atrocities committed in Bentiu and the attack on civilians in the UN compound in Bor.

We strongly condemn these vicious attacks against civilians, including at medical and religious institutions. Both parties to the conflict continue to transform it from a political dispute into a conflict of an increasingly ethnic character, with attacks involving one ethnic group triggering attacks against others. In addition, the growing regionalization of the conflict will continue to escalate and extend the war. Unless reversed it will complicate efforts to end the fighting, and the recent attacks in Bentiu, which mark the first targeting of Sudanese groups not previously implicated in the violence, offer a worrying example of the spillover of ethnic violence.

The conflict has seen new and expanding atrocities as urban centers have repeatedly changed hands. Every instance in which Bor, Malakal and Bentiu, among other areas, have changed hands has been accompanied by significant attacks against civilian populations perceived as aligned with the enemy, in clear violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Unless the violence ends now, the planned counter-offensives to take or retake these areas make further atrocities against civilians appear inevitable and imminent.

We call on both sides to the conflict to immediately take the following steps:

- Fully implement the Cessation of Hostilities agreement, with an immediate end to the violence and permitting the full deployment of forces from IGAD provided under the agreement throughout the conflict-affected areas to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is implemented.
- Allow immediate, full, and unimpeded humanitarian access to address on-going needs of civilians who are suffering from the conflict and to prepare for the food insecurity that the population faces as the rainy season begins.
- Allow for immediate access for any investigation by the African Union's Commission of Inquiry and UN human rights officers of the atrocities that have taken place in conflict-affected areas.
- Ensure accountability for the atrocities that have been committed, including through international mechanisms.

Those in the international community concerned with South Sudan's downward spiral into conflict have an important role to play to help stop this senseless killing. We call on the international community to take the following steps to address the urgent civilian protection issues facing the people of South Sudan:

- Troop contributing countries should immediately provide additional well-trained, well-equipped forces to bring the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to its fully authorized strength, including additional air mobility assets that will be critical as the rainy season progresses.
- The UN Security Council should amend the UNMISS mandate to focus on protection of civilians, human rights reporting, support for the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediation process, the deployment of an IGAD deterrent force and logistical support for the African Union (AU) Commission of Inquiry.

- With robust international support, IGAD should urgently deploy a reinforced IGAD Protection and Deterrent security force with a clear mandate as part of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism provided for in the Cessation of Hostilities agreement, in coordination with UNMISS.
- The AU Commission of Inquiry should immediately travel to Bentiu, Bor and other sensitive areas to investigate and gather evidence regarding the atrocities committed there, UNMISS human rights function should be enhanced, with the UN Security Council taking steps to ensure an independent effective investigation of alleged atrocities.
- Accountability mechanisms such as the establishment of mixed or hybrid tribunals or referral to the International Criminal Court should be considered.
- Like-minded countries and international bodies should impose targeted measures against those who have committed war crimes or are obstructing humanitarian access, with a particular focus on freezing personal assets in such countries as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda where many government and opposition officials have located their families and concentrated their assets.

We fully support the longer-term efforts towards peace and reconciliation that are underway in Addis and elsewhere, but believe the steps outlined in this statement regarding immediate civilian protection imperatives must begin now.

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