Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan condemns localized violence and looting of health facilities in Leer, Unity State

(Juba, 7 December 2021) The Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim (a.i.) in South Sudan, Mr. Matthew Hollingworth, strongly condemns the violence in Leer, Unity State, which led to the injury and death of numerous civilians, the destruction of civilian assets and the looting of humanitarian commodities. He calls on authorities to make every effort to protect communities, humanitarian personnel and assets across the country.

“People struggle every day to survive in South Sudan and violence of this nature has no place in a country determined to move forward on a path towards peace. Attacks against civilians, looting of aid intended to support the most vulnerable is unacceptable. This behaviour must stop,” said Mr. Hollingworth.

Reports indicate that on 1 December, armed youth and men from Mayendit and Leer clashed in Leer, Unity State, and that fighting continued over several days. According to initial reports, one humanitarian aid worker, from a non-governmental organization working to support the community with nutrition services, was killed during the violence.

Health and nutrition facilities in Gandor, Guat, Luol and Padeah were reportedly looted, affecting people’s access to much-needed nutrition and health services. As a result of the violence, more than 3,600 children supported by these facilities will not receive timely access to nutrition and health services. An estimated $80,000 worth of supplies were looted from two facilities in Gandor and Luol, which otherwise would have provided three-months of health and nutrition supplies to some 14,000 people in need in the area. Humanitarian organizations are still assessing the extent of the looting and the full magnitude of the incident, which total loss and impact on people due to disruption of services, has not yet been fully verified.

Since March 2021, there has been an increase in the number of incidents of violence by young men across South Sudan. Aid workers have been attacked and assets looted in Greater Tonj and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), disrupting humanitarian operations and affecting delivery of humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable. In May, more than one million dollars’ worth of humanitarian supplies and assets were looted and destroyed during armed attacks in Gumuruk, GPAA, which would have supported an estimated 130,000 people.

“South Sudanese citizens deserve to live in dignity, without fear. Acts of violence and looting must stop immediately and the perpetrators brought to justice,” the Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. concluded.

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