

Statement by Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan on attacks on civilians and aid workers

Juba, 16 February 2022: I strongly condemn the continued violence across the country that affects the safety of civilians and humanitarian workers, constrains humanitarian access, and disrupts the delivery of aid and services to vulnerable people.

On 10 February, a nurse working with an international aid organization was killed and several civilians, including aid workers, were injured in Agok town due to sub-national violence in Twic County, Warrap State, and the Abyei Administrative Area. Some 70,000 people have been displaced by the fighting; and humanitarian operations, including healthcare, have been temporarily suspended.

Also on 10 February, an aid worker was killed by crossfire during fighting in MirMir in Unity State. Additionally, a women and girls friendly centre was reportedly looted, a health and nutrition facility temporarily closed, and the access route to up to 500,000 people in need in Unity State has been jeopardized. Also in Unity State, on 12 February, a clearly marked humanitarian vehicle came under fire on its way to a health facility, resulting in the grave injury of three health workers.

These appalling acts of violence against civilians and humanitarians must stop. Every day, people in South Sudan are struggling to survive and violence has no place in a country determined to move forward towards peace. Attacks against civilians and humanitarians and their assets, along with the destruction and looting of aid supplies intended for the most vulnerable are unacceptable. They also severely impact our ability to deliver assistance.

Humanitarians are committed to alleviating the suffering of people affected by violence, food insecurity, climate and health crises among other crises in South Sudan. They risk their lives every day to provide much-needed aid to vulnerable people, who have been tested by multiple shocks year on year, but are forging on with resilience. We need a safe environment to operate so that we can focus on what matters most: helping people in need in South Sudan.

I want to express my condolences to the families of the aid workers who were killed in Agok and MirMir while in the service of the most vulnerable. My thoughts are also with the injured health workers and I wish them a speedy and full recovery.

Attacks against civilians and humanitarian assets constitute a grave violation of international humanitarian law. The humanitarian community urges all parties to the conflict to respect international law and protect civilians and humanitarian personnel and assets; and calls on authorities to conduct a full investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Background: Repeated violence and threats against humanitarians and their assets have resulted in the relocation of humanitarian workers and the suspension of lifesaving activities in South Sudan. A total of 322 humanitarian workers were relocated in 2021 alone due to violence against them. Since 2013, 130 humanitarian workers were killed, while delivering humanitarian aid and services, the vast majority of whom are South Sudanese.

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