



PC Update: Grave Concerns for the Lives of Civilians in Kajo-Keji: Appeal for Immediate Ceasefire in Kajo-Keji, Freedom of Movement and Protection of Civilians, Land and Property
24 February 2017

A protection cluster led assessment was carried out in Kajo-Keji on 23 February 2017 by UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA and ARC. In conjunction with previous assessment and reports, the findings and recommendations are as follows:

There are immediate grave concerns for the lives of the remaining civilian population in Kajo-Keji, including; an extremely vulnerable population in the Kajo-Keji town area who do not have the physical capacity and/or financial means to reach the Ugandan border to seek international protection. This is also related to the host community and thousands of IDPs in Liwolo payam; and for host communities living in other rural areas of Kajo-Keji.

Following reported fighting between SPLA & opposition soldiers on 22 January 2017 in Mondikolok (Lire Payam, Kajo-Keji County) resulting in the alleged deaths of seven civilians and a subsequent reported attack on the Mere police station (Lire payam) the following day, a mass exodus of civilians commenced due to fear that there would be a larger scale armed clash between opposition and SPLA forces, resulting in civilian casualties.

Between 22 January and 21 February 2017, 84,640 refugees fled to Uganda, the majority being from Kajo-Keji. The total number of refugees entering Uganda since 1 January 2017 is 115,812, according to UNHCR Uganda.

One month after these incidents, on 23 February, in the immediate Kajo-Keji area, namely Lire and Kangapo 1 payams, there is an estimated remaining vulnerable population of approximately 400 civilians (according to a group of remaining Elder leaders). For the most part, the town is completely vacant, with not a single civilian observed in the immediate surrounding area of the once bustling town, including the central market.

There is very clear evidence of extensive vandalism and looting of vacated houses, shops, church compounds, NGO compounds and the hospital. There are no services whatsoever currently operating in Kajo-Keji due to the security situation and resulting lack of service providers who have all left the area. The remaining vulnerable population, which includes elderly, disabled, women and children, are in urgent need of protection and assistance, including medical. A nutrition assessment is recommended.

In addition to vandalism in the county hospital, The American Refugee Committee's ('ARC') compound has been vandalised and looted with remaining lifesaving medical supplies having to be handed over to the local county authorities for safekeeping until the security situation allows ARC and county medical staff to return. ARC has provided humanitarian services in Kajo-Keji for 25 years. Currently they are providing primary health care services outside Kajo-Keji town in some areas.

In Liwolo payam there are 31,590 IDPs registered by NGO WASH partners in three settlements, in addition to tens of thousands of civilians living in the host community. Some have already fled to Uganda seeking international protection in the refugee settlements. However many remain.



Armed clashes between the SPLA and opposition forces have been reported in Liwolo payam over the last week, with the latest clash occurring approximately 20km from the largest IDP site, Logo.

If there is not an immediate ceasefire there is fear of imminent armed clashes in the host community and in close proximity of the IDP settlements and fear of more violence also resulting civilian deaths, more destruction of property and other human rights violations also in Kajo-Keji town.

Appeal to the government and opposition forces:

The protection cluster is calling on the government and opposition forces for;

- an immediate ceasefire and end to the hostilities and human rights violations in Kajo-Keji;
- ensuring freedom of movement for all civilians and humanitarians in Kajo-Keji town and surrounding areas;
- unhindered access for the humanitarian actors to provide the much needed support to the people affected in the greater Kajo-Kaji area; and
- commencement of an inclusive dialogue to work towards a lasting peace.

to ensure protection of the remaining population and enable the displaced population to return to their homes in Kajo-Keji and to start rebuilding their lives.

The protection cluster is appealing to the government of South Sudan to

- protect all South Sudanese civilians in Kajo-Keji from human rights violations
- protect all civilians, community and humanitarian property from vandalism, looting and destruction.

Recommendations for the UN:

- Establishment of UN humanitarian permanent presence in Kajo-Keji to deliver protection activities and humanitarian response to meet the immediate needs of the remaining vulnerable population
- Establishment of regular patrols by UNMISS to Kajo-Keji and engagement with both sides to help provide stability and facilitate meaningful inclusive dialogue.

There is urgent need to restore humanitarian services in Kajo-Keji and the surrounding areas – especially health services and a nutrition assessment for the vulnerable population is recommended.