



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media Relations and Spokesperson Unit
Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

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UN Peacekeeping Mission Head insists on “zero tolerance approach” to militarization of South Sudan’s displaced people camps

The Head of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has insisted that the mission maintains a “zero tolerance approach” to the militarization of camps for people displaced by conflict and that the camps remain civilian in nature.

David Shearer, who is also the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, was speaking in Bentiu in the north of the country, where some 115,000 people are currently living in the Mission’s largest Protection of Civilians site or POC.

Last month, 22 armed men in civilian clothes were taken into custody by Mongolian peacekeepers, after they tried to break into the camp to seek shelter from fighting.

“The only way to keep women and children safe in this camp and others is to make sure they do not become militarized,” Mr Shearer said.

UNMISS currently protects some 218,000 people in seven POC sites across the country where people have fled due to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan.

“Undoubtedly, UNMISS has saved tens of thousands of lives by providing these sanctuaries from violence, but ultimately,” Mr Shearer added “we need to find a longer-term solution so that these people can return home and live productive lives.”

“Only those people in imminent danger and whose lives are at risk should be sheltering in these sites,” the UNMISS Head said.

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UN Police Officers are working with community groups in the POC sites to ensure that military groups are unable to find refuge there.

“UNMISS is stepping up peacekeeping patrols outside many of its POC sites to build confidence for local people to return home,” said David Shearer. “That needs to go hand in hand with the efforts of humanitarian agencies to provide targeted assistance to surrounding communities to support that return.”

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