FALTERING PEACE PROCESS MAY DEEPEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN
WITH ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE NGOS EXPRESS RENEWED FEARS FOR CIVILIANS

Juba, South Sudan — Ongoing violence in South Sudan speaks to a continued deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the country. Aid agencies call for urgent action to improve protection of civilians, and urge all parties to the conflict to respect their commitments to ensuring humanitarian assistance can reach people in need.

Fighting and violence against civilians, despite commitments by both parties to implement a ceasefire, has continued since the signing of the Compromise Peace Agreement on August 26. In the most recent violence in southern Unity state, thousands of families may be affected, many of whom have been sheltering in hiding places for months without access to humanitarian assistance and unable to move safely to less conflict-affected areas.

According to a September report issued by the Protection Cluster, it was estimated that between April and September, at least 1,000 civilians were killed, 1,300 women and girls were raped, and 1,600 women and children were abducted in Leer, Mayendit and Koch counties.

“The situation for civilians is desperate and getting worse as fighting persists,” the NGO Forum said. “The parties to the conflict must immediately adhere to their commitments in the peace agreement, as well as their obligations under international humanitarian law in respect to the protection of civilians.”

The escalation of violence and its spread to Western Equatoria State has resulted in a new wave of displacement and civilian asset loss.

“The parties to the conflict must take steps to keep armed combatants from threatening, intimidating and abusing civilians,” the Forum said.

The most recent escalation in violence is only the newest setback for the people of South Sudan and the NGOs aiming to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance. In a survey conducted by the South Sudan NGO Forum in June 2015, NGOs reported that the estimated value of humanitarian goods and assets looted, or lost due to conflict, between January and June 2015 was $3,457,592. During the same reporting period, NGOs estimated that 1,560 working days were lost due to suspension of humanitarian activities as a result of active hostilities.
“This conflict is driving up the cost of delivering assistance and risking the lives of thousands of people in need,” the NGO Forum said.

The lack of reliable access to many locations, particularly southern Unity, continues to hamper aid operations meaning the people caught in the midst of this conflict cannot access the assistance they need and are cut off from medical supplies, food and shelter.

“The signatories of the peace agreement agreed to protect civilians and ensure the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need,” the NGO Forum said.

NGOs call on all to live up to their commitments, grant the necessary assurances humanitarians need to reach people in need, and prevent the spread of conflict to other less affected areas. NGOs also urge the international community to redouble its efforts to support implementation of the peace agreement while ensuring that UNMISS can adequately execute its protection mandate especially in the areas where civilians face the greatest protection risks.

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