

Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in South Sudan condemns incidents against humanitarian workers and activities in Renk, Upper Nile

(Juba, 23 October 2020) The Humanitarian Coordinator *ad interim* in South Sudan, Mohamed Ag Ayoya, has condemned incidents against humanitarian workers and their activities in Renk, Upper Nile.

Tensions between local youth and humanitarian organizations have been building up in Renk in recent weeks. On 12 October, the Renk Youth Association demanded that humanitarian organizations re-assigned jobs from current staff from certain backgrounds to local people. When the demands were not met, the youth then insisted that all humanitarian activities be suspended and aid workers leave Renk immediately without their assets.

Following an increase in threats against humanitarians and attacks against office, accommodation and warehouse locations, almost 30 aid workers have relocated to the closest UN Mission in South Sudan base for their safety.

“Humanitarian workers are in Upper Nile to deliver lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable people, including women, children and older persons. Intimidating them and forcing humanitarian activities to suspend result in delays of this much-needed assistance to the most vulnerable people, and is unacceptable,” the humanitarian official said.

Mr. Ayoya acknowledged the constructive role played by the national authorities, including the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, who have advocated for the immediate institution of safety for humanitarian workers and resumption of their programmes. “We are working together with national and local authorities, humanitarian organizations and the youth to find a solution to have the needs of crisis-affected people served. This needs to be resolved immediately” the Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. stated.

Humanitarians in Upper Nile continue to experience frequent access issues, primarily due to operational interference and bureaucratic impediments. These issues are often related to employment opportunities, also seen in other parts of South Sudan. Recently, bureaucratic impediments in Upper Nile led to the suspension of humanitarian activities and relocation of humanitarian workers in Malakal and Melut counties.

Note to editors

For the latest information on humanitarian access in South Sudan, see the third quarterly access snapshot here: <https://bit.ly/2TbxoG8>

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