



Southern Sudan News Bulletin

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Highlights:

- Thousands flee LRA attacks
- Sudan marks fourth CPA anniversary
- Former SPLA combatants turned into Prison Services Wardens
- Misseriya still in Southern Kordofan
- Planning underway for Tri-State Peace Conference
- Data compilation for essential services in Lakes State completed

Sector I – Juba

Sudan Marks fourth CPA anniversary

On January 9, Sudan marked the fourth anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended 21 years of conflict between northern and southern Sudan in the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal. The ceremony, which was attended by both the President of the Government of National Unity (GONU), Omar Al Bashir, and the First Vice-President of the GONU, Salva Kiir, drew thousands of Sudanese to the city's stadium.

During the celebrations, President Bashir and Vice-President Kiir, who is also president of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), inaugurated the Malakal power plant and water project. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the CPA and pledged to work towards full implementation of the agreement.

Thousands flee LRA attacks

Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees fleeing attacks by Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels have poured into Western Equatoria State, prompting Governor Jemma Nunu Kumba to launch a humanitarian appeal for assistance. The displacement follows a joint military offensive by Ugandan and Congolese forces against the LRA that was launched on 14 December. The IDPs and refugees, most of whom come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), moved into Sudan after LRA attacks on their villages killed hundreds and led to the abduction of women, children and even men.

The UN, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the GoSS have stepped up monitoring and assessment missions to facilitate a rapid humanitarian response to communities and Congolese refugees affected by the violence. Refugees and IDPs

living in areas near the border between northeastern DR Congo and Southern Sudan have been receiving food and other types of assistance since mid-September. Assessments in the Western Equatoria counties of Maridi, Gangura and Yambio and the Central Equatoria counties of Yei and Lainya have been completed, and the findings will be applied to emergency response operations in the future.

Parliament passes land bill

A long-awaited land bill has been passed by the Southern Sudanese Legislative Assembly. Approved on 26 January, the legislation spells out rules and regulations affecting land, natural resources and environmental issues. It requires the signature of GoSS President Kiir to become law.

Sponsors of the bill hope it will help resolve numerous land-related conflicts that continue to claim many lives in Southern Sudan. Other pieces of pending legislation in the regional parliament include bills focusing on government corruption, the media, and the Southern Sudanese police, prison and wildlife services.

Sector II – Wau

Former SPLA combatants reintegrated into the Southern Sudan Prison Services

On 29 December, 414 ex-combatants, including 115 women, were reintegrated as prison wardens in the Northern Bahr el Ghazal state capital of Aweil. The new recruits represent the second group of former SPLA combatants to be reintegrated into the Southern Sudan Prison Services in 2008.

Governor Maj. Gen. Paul Malong Awan expressed hope that the new graduates, who received training on corrections and human rights issues, will use their newly

acquired knowledge to help promote law and order in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.

Gangs continuing to ambush and loot

The Lakes State capital of Rumbek remained generally peaceful during the end-of-year holiday period, thanks in part to an increased presence and patrol activity by state police. The state government has been addressing ongoing issues of insecurity by recruiting and training additional police officers. But despite a commitment by government officials to deploy SPLA units to the area south of the town of Wulu, criminal gangs continue to ambush and loot commercial vehicles traveling between Lakes State and destinations such as Juba and Uganda. Local administrators also complain that the two policemen and three wildlife service officers currently working in the area are insufficient to deal with heavily armed gangs.

Data Compilation of essential services in Lakes State completed

The UNMIS Recovery, Return and Reintegration (RRR) section has finished compiling data for analysis in the areas of water, health and education in Lakes State. RRR believes that the data will provide cumulative support to the state government's own reintegration and recovery planning programs, relevant ministries and service delivery agencies.

Prior to dissemination of the information to key stakeholders, RRR plans to present the compiled data to the returns and reintegration working group for further study and review.

Former child soldiers reunited with their families in Kuajok

UNMIS provided road transport for 17 former child soldiers of the SPLA living in Sector III to the town of Kuajok, where they were reunited with their families.

UNICEF arranged for their travel from Malakal via Rumbek to Wau. However, some of the boys refused to get off the bus upon arrival in Kuajok. Children who were forced to join the military are accustomed to receiving a salary, and the recalcitrant boys apparently were concerned that they would not have any funds to assist them in their reintegration into civilian life.

Warrap State swears in four new County Commissioners

On 22 December, the newly appointed county commissioners for the Greater Tonj area were sworn in by Warrap State Governor Toor Deng Mawien. Deng Ayieny succeeds Yol Mayar Mareng in Tonj North County, John Mayiik Bath replaces Ireneo Yai Mum in Tonj East and Yorniew Kon Bol succeeds Joseph Atem Baak in Tonj South. There are unconfirmed reports that Anei Deng has replaced Awet Aken Atem as Commissioner for Twic County.

Challenges to peace building initiatives in Lakes

Civil Affairs (CA) continued discussions with the Lakes State deputy governor in Rumbek about methods that are being utilized in current, state-led peacebuilding initiatives and interventions and how they might be improved in 2009. The deputy governor expressed his support for approaches that enable stakeholders to participate actively in resolution proceedings. CA agreed to provide technical and logistical support to state government initiatives. Key short-term challenges include resource-based conflicts during the dry season, the statewide civilian disarmament process amid widespread availability of small arms, and localized tensions among various chiefs.

Staff downsizing in Warrap State

Deliberations have begun in Warrap State over reductions in government staffing levels for 2009. On 7 January, a high-level

meeting of state ministers and directors general chaired by Governor Toor Deng Mawien took up the matter in Kuajok. According to an officer at the state Ministry of Social Welfare, the assembled officials decided to dismiss older staff employees as well as workers lacking appropriate credentials or documents. A list of employees who were relieved of their duties has been circulated, and the vacancies will be publicly advertised with an eye towards hiring younger and more qualified personnel.

The downsizing at the state government level is believed to be part of the Public Service Reform Program launched by GoSS President Kiir and his government's Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Human Resource Development in 2008. That program was also included among key recommendations and resolutions adopted by the sixth Governors' Forum last October. Individual state governments have been mandated to implement the reform program. CA will follow up and report on the issue.

Planning underway for Tri-State Peace Conference

A trilateral peace conference among Warrap, Lakes and Unity States was scheduled to take place during the last week of January in the Lakes State town of Yirol. The conference was aiming to bring together about 100 core stakeholders for peace-building efforts in all three states, ranging from their governors and security advisors to SPLM secretaries and traditional leaders. The conference was expected to review all previous peace resolutions and gatherings, including the Wunlit Peace Conference of 1999, and devise conflict resolution mechanisms to solve inter-state disputes, including border tensions. It was also expected to discuss the formation of a tri-state border security force.

Inter-agency assessment mission to Wulu County

On 15 January, an inter-agency mission led by the Humanitarian Coordinator's Support Office visited 1,895 IDPs who had fled to Wulu town and Domoloto *payam* [township] following tribal clashes in the nearby *bomas* [villages] of Wako, Luluny, Majong Madol and Gera.

The mission found that most IDPs were staying in school structures and makeshift shelters. The IDPs were estimated to comprise 132 households in Wulu town and 263 households at Nukta Manga. They are reportedly surviving on small amounts of food they brought with them, while others are surviving thanks to the traditional benevolence of fellow tribesmen.

The executive director of Wulu County reported that the violence was triggered by the theft of 50 head of cattle belonging to an SPLA commander. Reprisals caused the deaths of six people. The situation has now been brought under control, but the IDPs are still reluctant to go back to their villages.

Training held for government officials and organized forces in Warrap

UNMIS Protection of Civilians (POC) organized a training workshop on 15-16 January for Warrap State government ministry officials, SPLA soldiers, and police and prison authorities. The participants were introduced to issues concerning the protection of civilians and the primary role that the government should play to ensure that the rights of civilians, especially the most vulnerable, are respected.

Several concerns related to protection in Warrap State were identified, and participants discussed various activities and interventions they could initiate to promote a safer environment. During the closing ceremony, the director general of the

Warrap State Ministry for Social Welfare urged participants to apply what they had learned and improve the protection of civilians. But he also expressed regret over the state's lack of budgetary resources.

Sector III – Malakal

256 former IDPs return to South Sudan

A barge carrying 256 spontaneous returnees arrived in Bor on 1 January. To provide assistance to the returnees, who together make up 64 families, UNMIS RRR visited the barge in collaboration with the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the Bor office of the World Food Programme (WFP). They conducted a verification exercise on these returnees on 2 January. A total of 232 returnees comprising 48 households were verified.

The returnees will receive food assistance from the WFP. Efforts are also being made by the Jonglei State Ministry of Health to furnish medical and sanitation assistance to those returnees who are going to settle in the counties of Bor, Twic, and Duk and also to those who stayed on the barge and were heading for Juba. RRR in Bor will coordinate and monitor their journey from Bor to Juba.

Misseriya still in Southern Kordofan

Field observations conducted by the UNMIS Civil Affairs section between 21 and 28 December in the vicinity of Bentiu in Unity State about the expected migration of Misseriya herdsmen into the state suggest that these pastoralists have not yet decided to move out of neighboring Southern Kordofan State. The Misseriya have maintained their position along the border between Unity and South Kordofan states near Pariang Junction in Unity. Both SPLA and SAF units have taken up strategic positions on opposite sides of the border.

Although Misseriya nomads are currently roaming the area with their cattle in and around the militarized border, they are reportedly reluctant to cross into Unity State because they have yet to conclude an agreement with local authorities over the terms of migration and grazing rights. With the pastures exhausted and water drying up in the streams and ponds on the northern side of the border where the nomads are located, there is an increasing sense of urgency among the Misseriya traditional leaders to open negotiations with local authorities in Pariang County.

Civilian boat shot in attack

UNMIS POC section met with the Boat Union in Malakal on 30 December to discuss security issues that have hampered the movement of civilians travelling along the Sobat River. According to union members, a boat was fired on by an unknown armed group between Ulang and Doma *payams* on 24 December but no one was injured in the attack. Union members also said that no subsequent incidents have occurred since SPLA troops were deployed in the Sobat River corridor.

POC will monitor the situation and contact local authorities to urge more steps to improve security conditions for civilians moving through the Sobat River corridor.

Ethiopian refugees arrive in Southern Sudan

On 30 December, SSRRC carried out an inter-agency assessment of displaced Ethiopian Anyuak refugees who recently abandoned their homes in the vicinity of Pibor, Jonglei State, and moved to Malakal. They were uprooted from their communities by fighting between their own tribe and the Murle tribe. The displaced Anyuak refugees who first came to Pibor from Ethiopia in 2004 under the protection of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) arrived in Malakal on 22 December. They are currently living in the compound of the local Presbyterian Church.

The assessment identified 104 households made up of 355 individuals. All of the refugees were found to possess WFP ration cards.

The UNMIS RRR section visited the refugees at the Presbyterian Church compound in Malakal. They are mostly youths, children and elderly mothers who are living under trees with their personal belongings. UNHCR is currently organizing emergency assistance that will include food and non-food items. Blankets for children and adults have been recommended on account of the cold weather.

UNMIS visits victims of armed bandits

On 20 December, the UNMIS Human Rights section visited Mayom and Pariang Counties in Unity State to obtain testimonies from villagers who have been victimized by armed bandits. The villagers also fear for their lives if armed clashes erupt between the SPLA and armed Misseriya herdsmen who are heading to Mayom and Pariang Counties in search of green pasture and water points for their cattle. In recent times, the SPLA and residents of these counties have issued warnings that a joint armed force would be assembled to halt any column of Misseriya herdsmen who try to enter Unity State fully armed.

Wanding payam handed over to Nasir County

The administration of Wanding *payam* was officially handed over from Akobo to Luakpiny County on 21 January after a joint visit to the area by commissioners from Akobo and Luakpiny counties. The transfer of jurisdiction is intended to expedite the return of people displaced by hostilities between the Lou and Jikany Nuer ethnic groups that began in 1994.

The Upper Nile State government is expected to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of people to the Wanding area,

and humanitarian organizations will furnish food and other assistance to residents upon their arrival. Over 2,000 people who now live in Ethiopia could come back home under the UNHCR's return program.

Displaced persons return to Nagdiar

The Upper Nile State government assisted the return of people uprooted by clashes between members of the Dinka and Shilluk ethnic groups to their hometown of Nagdiar.

The SSRRC and a number of NGOs will visit the community to discuss the possible resumption of their operations in the area. The UN Resident Coordinator's Support Office is also organizing a mission to Nagdiar to assess the population's humanitarian needs.

Governor requests support to move weapons

UNMIS Civil Affairs in Bor informed the mission's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) officer that Jonglei State Governor Lt. Gen. Kuol Manyang Juuk has requested UNMIS to arrange for the aerial shipment of weapons collected in Pibor and Akobo counties to SPLA headquarters in Bor. The Governor made the request because existing security conditions in much of the state make it difficult to safeguard the overland shipment of the arms.

Search efforts continue for missing children

On 10 January, ten children ranging in age from four to six years old disappeared from the village of Both in the Fashoda County *payam* of Lul. According to the chief of Both village, which is inhabited by Shilluk families, residents panicked and started running in the direction of Malakal and the west bank of Lul *payam* when they heard

gunfire and noticed that the nearby village of Abanim had been set ablaze, allegedly by some Dinka militiamen.

Search efforts are ongoing to locate the six boys and four girls. Women and children from both villages have relocated to the west bank of Lul out of fear of fresh attacks. The UNMIS Child Protection section will ask UNICEF and the Upper Nile State Ministry of Social Development and Welfare to support the continuing search for the children.

This bulletin has been compiled from the following sources: the UN Country Team - Humanitarian Action Report; RCSO Weekly Report; the WFP Emergency Report; and UNMIS Sector I, II and III Weekly Situation Reports.

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