



**Situation in Abyei**  
**Statement by Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi**  
**Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan**

**Khartoum - 20 May 2008:** The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Sudan, Mr. Ashraf Jenhagir Qazi, has expressed his grave concern over the renewed hostilities in Abyei between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army which have caused numerous casualties on both sides.

He expressed his deep regret that the resumption of military confrontation since early this morning comes so soon after the parties had met at the level of Ceasefire Joint Military Committee (CJMC) on 18 May 2008. The CJMC, which was chaired by the Acting Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), had reached a number of very important decisions to be implemented immediately and in the medium/long-term in order to de-escalate the crisis.

Fighting in Abyei has displaced between 30-50,000 people southwards towards Agok. Five humanitarian hubs are assisting the displaced population in the 18 host villages in the Agok area. UN and NGO's have deployed to meet needs: a) food distribution has started in two hubs; b) water facilities are being set up in all five hubs; c) shelter materials are arriving and will be distributed as soon as possible, and d) health facilities are established and serving basic care and nutrition supplement needs. The humanitarian hubs also serve to assist separated and street children displaced. UN and NGO agencies are successfully assisting displaced and local population in all sectors by deploying resources and workers to the region, however operations are endangered by insecurity. Aid workers have reported aerial bombing (Antonov) of a position 4 km north of one of the hubs. Continued insecurity is a concern as is weather conditions (the region is prone to heavy rains) and muddy roads. Approximately 600 people have been displaced from Abyei to Muglad. An interagency team is leaving Kadugli Thursday (by road), expecting to arrive in Muglad on Friday to do an assessment of humanitarian needs. The escalation of fighting and reported bombings will further exacerbate the humanitarian needs of the already affected population including the displaced and could hamper the continuation of the humanitarian operation which is being established in Agok.

UNMIS has been in contact with both parties in an effort to arrest further deterioration of the situation, which if not checked could undermine the entire peace process. The SRSG, therefore, appeals to both sides to exercise the utmost restraint and to take immediate steps towards disengaging their respective forces. This would enable the UNMIS to revive the ceasefire monitoring mechanism and pave the way for the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreements pertaining to Abyei.

The recent round of armed hostilities underscores the urgent need for the political leadership of both sides to intensify their joint efforts to address the issues that underlie the current crisis.

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