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LWF JOINS CALL TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS IN SOUTH SUDAN

A Callous Disregard for Civilian Life

JUBA, South Sudan/GENEVA, 29 April 2014 – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has joined 50 non-governmental organizations in expressing concern over the recent escalation of violence in South Sudan, which has resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis.

“We strongly condemn all attacks that have taken place during this conflict,” the NGOs said in a 26 April statement from Juba, South Sudan, which was signed by the LWF.

“Civilians have been targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, others indiscriminately killed, and many subjected to unspeakable grave human rights abuses including rape,” added the statement, which urged a cessation of violence and increased humanitarian assistance.

The NGOs say the basic needs of civilians caught up in the conflict are “growing by the hour” and that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases must be reinforced so that civilians are protected.

LWF Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights Ralston Deffenbaugh noted that the people of South Sudan suffered 50 years of civil war during which millions were killed or displaced. The hope brought by the 2005 peace accord and the 2011 transition to independence has been brutally dashed, Deffenbaugh said.

“The leaders of the armed factions in South Sudan should put down their weapons immediately, resolve their differences peacefully, and treat their fellow citizens, their fellow human beings, with dignity and respect,” Deffenbaugh said and called for those around the world who have influence on the armed factions to urge them to cease the violence immediately.

There has been widespread violence against civilians since December 2013 and the NGOs say that attacks on the UN peacekeeping base at Bor on 17 April and at Bentiu 15-18 April indicate a “serious deepening of the conflict and callous disregard for civilian life and international humanitarian law.”

An estimated one million people have been forced from their homes and 90,000 people are being sheltered by UNMISS bases around the country.

The LWF continues to support the internally displaced persons in South Sudan and South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. An estimated 3.2 million people are at risk of extreme food insecurity due to the conflict and NGOs working in South Sudan estimate that the number will rise.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay, is visiting South Sudan 28-29 April to discuss the worsening crisis. She will meet with government and opposition officials following last week's discussions on South Sudan in the UN Security Council.

[Read the statement in its entirety](#) / [More on the LWF response to the South Sudan crisis](#)

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