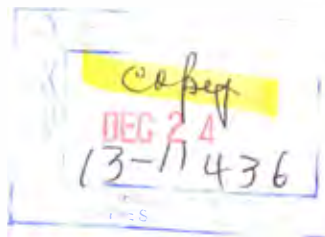


ACTION *Mr. Feltman (email)*

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International **Crisis Group**  
WORKING TO PREVENT  
CONFLICT WORLDWIDE



Brussels, 24 December 2013

## OPEN LETTER TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Dear Secretary-General,

✓ I am writing concerning the situation in South Sudan. Like you, we have been following the country's descent into civil conflict with growing dismay and concern. Crisis Group has been greatly encouraged by the calls you have been making for a decisive international response to this critical development.

It is the position of Crisis Group that the current violence in South Sudan could both broaden and deepen, with greater ethnic underpinnings, indeed that it is arguably already doing so. The consequences for the country are extremely serious and could turn catastrophic. The fighting also has taken on regional implications, including through the presence of Ugandan military in South Sudan and Sudan's interests in oil producing areas reportedly controlled by the armed opposition. The international community, which has been a true friend of South Sudan both prior to and in the first years of its independence, has a responsibility to prevent the worst from happening.

✓ With credible reports of mass killings and other human right **violations** by state and non-state armed actors alike, urgent, decisive and effective exercise of UNMISS' protection of civilians mandate is paramount. With this in mind, we welcome the Security Council's imminent passage of a resolution that emphasises the need to protect civilians and strengthens UNMISS' capacities. We feel that UNMISS, using its existing forces until additional troops arrive, should take a number of immediate, specific steps to prioritise protection of civilians, above all other mandated tasks, including by:

- moving military personnel and assets and key civilian staff (including human rights officers) to areas where they will have the greatest impact on the protection of civilians, irrespective of prior mission plans;
- ensuring that the perimeter of UNMISS' bases where civilians are sheltering are consistently monitored and defended, while continuing to utilize UNPOL within the bases;
- patrolling in the areas surrounding bases and in other areas where civilians are present and may be under threat;
- ensuring that UNMISS' political engagement directly addresses the overriding immediate goal of ensuring civilian protection; an impartial stance towards all armed actors is imperative;
- providing increased clarity on rules of engagement for troops;
- planning for extending protection to civilians taking shelter to areas beyond UNMISS bases, such as churches and other community focal points;

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- ensuring UNMISS is able to facilitate humanitarian access and that UNMISS troops and staff do not continue to operate under greater restrictions than UN humanitarian agencies;
- raising SOFA violations with the government and treating resolution of SOFA violations as a mission priority;
- ensuring that human rights monitoring and public reporting is prioritised and that information from the human rights division is utilised in protection threat assessments and decisions about troop movements;
- ensuring that the Human Rights Division is supported within the mission, including through the effective use of personnel with forensic capabilities; and,
- publicly warning and naming individuals suspected of carrying out attacks on civilians that they will be held accountable.

At this stage, in addition to the protection of civilians, we welcome your call for an urgent ceasefire, with strong messages that individuals, and their leaders, who violate basic humanitarian principles will be held accountable for their actions. I would urge, further, that talks begin about implementing an effective arms embargo on all parties to the conflict not involved in good-faith negotiations towards a ceasefire and political settlement. The Security Council should consider the establishment of a sanctions committee both for violation of this arms embargo and against individuals who participate in or are complicit in atrocities.

Only once peace has been restored, can attention effectively turn to the longer-term, no less important task of repairing the damage done, including healing the divisions between and within the SPLM, SPLA and South Sudan's diverse communities. We welcome the high-level visit of IGAD foreign ministers to Juba on 19-20 December as well as IGAD's communiqué of 22 December and echo its call for a cessation of hostilities, the start of unconditional dialogue and the full and immediate protection of civilians. We reiterate our proposal in our statement of 18 December that they remain fully engaged and empowered in this process, with the Security Council supporting an immediate role for IGAD both in pursuing a ceasefire and, subsequently, facilitating peace talks aimed at restoring a unified South Sudan government that truly represents the diversity of the country.

Sincerely,



**Louise Arbour**  
**President & CEO**