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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

South Sudan's civil war and its toll on the civilian population

The ongoing conflict between forces of President Salva Kiir, former Vice President Riek Machar and multiple independent warring parties already took the lives of tens of thousands of people and displaced millions since the civil war started in 2013. The manmade famine is currently threatening the lives of almost six million people. Moreover, despite agreeing to the “Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan” (ARCSS) in August 2015, the warring parties regularly engage in various human rights abuses – especially against women, children, and elderly people.

According to recent data of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the number of internally displaced people has risen to about 2 million people. More than 1.92 million people fled South Sudan for shelter in one of its neighboring countries. The refugee camp Bidi Bidi in northern Uganda is currently the largest shelter for displaced persons in the world. Projects for people in South Sudan and Uganda urgently need financial reinforcements to improve the local situation and support Uganda’s welcoming refugee policy.

The protection of South Sudanese civilians from hunger and violence must be at the center of international attention. Unfortunately, assaults of domestic and foreign humanitarian activists occur on a regular basis and restrict the delivery of aid. Since the outbreak of the civil war in 2013, at least 82 aid workers were killed. On 25 March 2017, six aid workers were murdered in an ambush on their convoy. All conflict parties must ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and their access to conflict areas. Against the background of the worst cholera outbreak in several years, it is critical to provide access to clean drinking water to slow down the spreading of the infectious disease. Moreover, the unavailability of healthcare in many parts of the country has led to a dramatic increase of Malaria cases during the rainy season.

Furthermore, the freedom of press and expression is severely restricted. Foreign and especially domestic journalists can face arbitrary punishment, as the detention of Adil Faris Mayat, the meanwhile former director of South Sudan television, in July 2017 once again showed. Press freedom is fundamental to establishing an inclusive society, which going forward is necessary to achieve sustainable peace in South Sudan. Unfortunately, among others, the news webpages of Sudan Tribune and Radio Tamazuj have been shut down by the South Sudanese government.

The blocking of news websites and the continuing fighting contradict President Salva Kiir’s call for a National Dialogue as well as his declaration of a unilateral ceasefire.

It is a matter of urgency to exert pressure on the African Union Commission to establish a hybrid court. The conflict parties agreed in Chapter 5.3 of the “Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan” (ARCSS) to implement a hybrid court that shall be established through the African Union Commission to prosecute violations of international law and applicable South Sudanese law. Once established, the hybrid court will be able to not only prosecute current and prior offenses, but also reduce future atrocities by guaranteeing judicial prosecution to the conflict parties. Unfortunately, the deadline to implement the hybrid court until April 2017 has passed without any measurable progress in that matter and the impunity in South Sudan continues. There can be no sustainable peace without justice.

Moreover, it is critical to establish an UN arms embargo on the war torn country. In relation with its GDP, South Sudan is one of the states with the highest military and security spending in the world. New imports of weaponry must stop immediately to no longer fuel the conflict.

Furthermore, efforts to extent anti-corruption and money laundering campaigns need to be increased. Especially, people who committed crimes against humanity should not be allowed to travel without restrictions

and to freely move their assets to other countries. Therefore, it is essential to impose network sanctions upon a target.

Society of Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council to:

- Urge the South Sudanese government to unblock various news webpages and to obey the freedom of the media,
 - Call upon the South Sudanese government and all conflict parties to provide access for humanitarian workers,
 - Exert pressure on the African Union to establish a hybrid court and to end impunity,
 - Exert pressure on the Security Council to implement an arms embargo and to establish targeted travel restrictions and financial network sanctions against individuals who committed large-scale human rights abuses.
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