

Background information

Conflict-related sexual violence and impunity in South Sudan

Despite hundreds of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) cases documented by the United Nations, Amnesty International and others over the past decade, prosecutions of alleged perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict remain rare and impunity widespread. Since January 2020, only a handful of CRSV cases committed by state security agents against civilians have been charged in military or civilian courts, which only scratches the surface of the magnitude of the cases. To date, no alleged perpetrators of CRSV have been charged with war crimes or torture. South Sudan has not included these crimes in its legal framework under international law.

A new report by Amnesty International, *If You Don't Cooperate, I'll Gun You Down: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Impunity in South Sudan*, highlights how CRSV persists in the country and how weapons can be used to facilitate sexual violence. It also demonstrates that two parts of an action plan drafted to combat CRSV in the country and adopted by the government in January 2021 have not yet been fully implemented.

Amnesty International conducted its research amid fighting between government forces and the National Salvation Front in Central Equatoria State in February and March 2022.

CRSV survivors told Amnesty International that they were raped by a variety of perpetrators, including government soldiers, a member of the National Security Service (NSS), members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) - the main armed opposition group, the National Salvation Front (NAS), a non-state armed group that has refused to sign the 2018 peace agreement, armed men, "rebels" and unarmed men, including teenagers

Three survivors said they were abducted and subjected to forced labour or used as sex slaves for two to four years.

Angelina* told Amnesty International that in February 2022, government soldiers came to her house at night and told her to come outside. When she did, they raped her. "When the first one finished, the second one started. When the second one finished, the first one came back," she said.

Nine CRSV survivors told Amnesty International that their perpetrators raped them at gunpoint and threatened to kill them or their relatives with their weapons if they did not comply. Gloria*, who was raped at gunpoint in 2016, said she encountered five armed men: "The soldier asked me [...] decide [...] either I will have sexual intercourse with you or I will kill you and all your children."

In another incident documented by Amnesty International, Elizabeth*, a survivor of conflict-related sexual violence, said government soldiers shot her husband after forcing him to watch them rape her. She said seven armed government soldiers raped her in 2019.

"South Sudanese authorities must urgently address these cases of conflict-related sexual violence. Their response must be guided by the medical, psychological and socio-economic needs of the survivors. They must also address the root causes of the violence and involve survivors in decision-making on matters that affect them," said Deprese Muchena, Amnesty International's Eastern and Southern Africa Director.

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