

# UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE



## UN Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect on the Situation in Abyei Region of Sudan

(New York - 16 March 2011) Francis Deng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, and Edward Luck, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, have expressed grave concern at the increase of tensions in Abyei, where recent violence between the Missireya Arabs and the Ngok-Dinka ethnic groups and their allies has left more than 100 people dead and caused the displacement of at least 20,000 residents, many of whom had only recently returned from the North.

Reports that the Popular Defense Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) have been deploying into the region have heightened concerns. "Given the perception that the SAF supports the Missireya Arabs and the SPLA supports the Ngok-Dinka, a stand-off between the two armies is very dangerous", they warned, "and could easily trigger further ethnic-based violence in Abyei. We urge both parties to refrain from any actions that could put the lives of civilians in danger and risk a return to full scale hostilities."

According to the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the Ngok-Dinka are dual citizens of the North and the South during the interim period before the stipulated referendum in the area. Deng and Luck reminded the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) of their responsibility to protect all persons in Abyei, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. "The parties have a shared responsibility towards these populations and must protect them. We call on both parties to initiate a thorough and impartial investigation into the recent incidents of violence in Abyei and to hold those responsible accountable in order to discourage further acts of violence, including forced displacement, which is a crime against humanity."

The two Special Advisers urged both parties to ensure the free, unhindered and expeditious movement of the peacekeepers and staff of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) so that the Mission can discharge its mandate, including for the protection of civilians, internally displaced persons, and other vulnerable groups.

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