

14 December 2016

**Civil Society Statement to the UN Human Rights Council regarding South Sudan
Delivered by: Human Rights Watch**

Tomorrow marks a terrible anniversary for South Sudan. On December 15, 2013, fighting in Juba ignited a brutal conflict that has torn the country apart, leaving millions of South Sudanese in dire need. Today the country stands on a precipice.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations we urge the UN Human Rights Council to use its full powers to help end three years of appalling atrocities against civilians, including journalists and humanitarian workers and as well as human rights activists, before the situation deteriorates even further.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement, the warring parties continue to kill, rape and displace communities with impunity. Many of these acts constitute war crimes. They may amount to crimes against humanity. These crimes have generated a humanitarian and human rights crisis of appalling proportions.

Ongoing attacks on humanitarian aid workers, human rights activists and journalists and the regular obstruction of humanitarian access make it difficult to protect civilians or address the immense needs of communities.

We are deeply frustrated that there have been few consequences for and little accountability of the perpetrators. This impunity permits South Sudan's political and military leaders to continue committing violations against civilians, to censor, detain and arbitrarily deport journalists; to attack and expel aid workers; and to threaten local human rights activists.

The situation in South Sudan requires bold and decisive action. We urge the Human Rights Council in this Special Session to:

- Support a strengthened mandate and capacity of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan to investigate serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law and identify alleged perpetrators, with a special focus on sexual and gender based crimes.
- Request that the report of the UN Commission is transmitted to the UN Security Council for consideration and further action.
- Urge that all states encourage further concrete action to prevent a further escalation of violence and conflict, and to deter and address these on-going violations of international human rights and humanitarian law at the UN Security Council, including sanctions and the imposition of a comprehensive arms embargo.
- Urge the African Union to take immediate steps to establish the hybrid court for South Sudan provided for in the 2015 peace agreement.

This is not the time for continued half-hearted measures. All states have the responsibility to support measures to end the nightmare that South Sudan's civilians have been brutally subjected to over the past three years, and ensure that there is accountability for the crimes under international law committed since December 2013.

Thank you.

1. Amnesty International
2. Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia
3. Defend Defenders
4. Human Rights Watch
5. Humanity United
6. International Commission of Jurists
7. International Refugee Rights Initiative
8. International Service for Human Rights
9. National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
10. Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network
11. South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network