

STATEMENT

South Sudan Humanitarian Country Team Statement on the Situation in Akobo, Jonglei State

Juba, 9 March 2026 – The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in South Sudan is deeply concerned by the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) order issued on 6 March 2026 directing civilians, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to vacate Akobo County ahead of planned military operations.

Akobo is currently hosting an estimated 270,000 people, including vulnerable, displaced and host communities who depend on humanitarian assistance for survival. More than half are women and children. Any military action in or around such a densely populated area would expose civilians to grave danger and risk triggering a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Akobo County. We have already seen substantial cross border flows of people into Ethiopia and received reports of looting in Akobo town.

The HCT reiterates that civilians must never be targeted or forcibly displaced. Any movement must be voluntary, safe and dignified, in full adherence to international humanitarian law, which strictly prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Since the escalation of conflict in December 2025, Akobo County has become a critical refuge for people fleeing violence across Jonglei State. Humanitarian partners have recently scaled up life-saving assistance for both displaced and host communities. The disruption to this humanitarian lifeline is already placing thousands at immediate risk.

The HCT calls on all stakeholders to uphold commitments made during the recent visit of the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Tom Fletcher, to ensure the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, supplies and infrastructure, and to guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access across the country.

We urge all parties to refrain from military operations in populated areas and resolve differences through dialogue. The people of South Sudan need peace.

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