

**Forum:** United Nations Security Council

**Issue:** Addressing the humanitarian and political crisis in South Sudan in the aftermath of the civil war

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## Introduction

Since achieving independence in 2011, South Sudan has witnessed one of the most dire political and humanitarian crises in the contemporary world. Whereas optimism had filled local and foreign circles at the prospect of a new state, it was quickly superseded by domestic conflict, ethnic rivalry, and weak state institutions. The December 2013 civil war not only brought about the destruction of the country's infrastructure and the displacement of millions of civilians, but also locked in a politics of violence and political suspicion that continue to dog the nation to this day. To this day, South Sudan continues to grapple with the inheritance of the war in the form of ongoing human rights abuses, famine, and governance.

The South Sudan conflict is not a local issue alone—it is a regional one of international character on international peace and security. The internally displaced millions, militias' dispersal, and collapse of law and order had spillover effects across borders, challenging the mandates and abilities of international humanitarian and peacekeeping agencies. The UNSC has been persistently involved in the attempts to settle this issue in tracks of peacekeeping operations, selective goal sanctions, and diplomatic approach of peace processes. Nevertheless, lasting peace remains elusive to us.

This United Nations Security Council, this committee, convened at IELMUN 2025 and aims to rethink and improve the action of the international community in stabilizing the fragile peace of South Sudan and addressing the deteriorating humanitarian crisis. The delegates will debate effective ways to stabilize the region, bring to justice the masterminds behind the crisis, and offer a stable political future for the people of South Sudan. This report provides an overview of the background history, previous international interventions, and possible options for ending the crisis.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs are individuals or groups forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, or disasters, but who remain within their country's borders. Unlike refugees, they do not cross international frontiers and are under the protection of their own government. South Sudan has over 2 million IDPs, many of whom live in camps or informal settlements with limited humanitarian assistance.

### Power-sharing Government

A power-sharing government is a transitional political system where rival factions, often former enemies, agree to jointly govern in order to prevent renewed conflict. In South Sudan, this arrangement includes allocating cabinet positions, military leadership, and regional authority among key political figures to reduce tension and build trust.

### UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan)

Established in 2011, UNMISS is the United Nations peacekeeping mission mandated to protect civilians, monitor human rights, and support the implementation of the peace process in South Sudan. The mission plays a crucial role in providing humanitarian access and maintaining relative stability in conflict-prone areas.

## Background Information

The political and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is deeper than the break-up from the Republic of Sudan in 2011, dating back to colonial history of exploitation, marginalization, ethnic politics, and rule. To make sense of the current crisis is not merely to learn about South Sudan's recent past after independence but its volatile past relationship with the Republic of Sudan and the result of two long civil wars.

### Colonial and Post-Colonial Divisions

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was dissolved in 1956, and Sudan gained independence. Decolonization was followed, however, by a very polarized society. The Arab and Muslim north dominated politics and economy, and the south, a largely Christian and animist black African area, remained underdeveloped and politically excluded. These divisions subsequently assumed the form of military confrontation, beginning the First Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972), which concluded with the Addis Ababa Agreement. While south autonomy was granted by the agreement, it was weakly implemented and subsequently violated, preconditioning war in the future.

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) began when Sharia law was imposed by the Sudan government on the whole country and southern autonomy was abolished. The war was marked with brutal guerrilla warfare, mass killing of civilians, and child combatants. John Garang ushered the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) onto the stage as the main southern rebellion against the central

government. The war lasted for more than two decades and cost over two million lives and displaced millions.

### The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Independence

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) ended the war in 2005. It paved the way for a future referendum on southern independence. The CPA provisionally granted six years of southern autonomy under the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and addressed the modalities of sharing of power and wealth. At the top of the CPA was the recognition of the SPLM as a political party and the integration of its army with a national army.

There was eagerly anticipated referendum, which was conducted in January 2011, when the electorates in the south voted nearly 99% to break away from Sudan. South Sudan became independent on the 9th of July 2011 and was the newest state in the world. It was celebrated globally as a victory for diplomacy and self-determination. But the foundation of the new state was extremely fragile. With no government, institutions, or infrastructure, the country was in shambles. The country was dependent on oil—over 95% of the government budget was based on oil—and had a contested border with Sudan, specifically the oil-bearing region of Abyei.

### Political Rivalries and the Spark of Civil War

In the early years of independence were characterized by increasing animosities between the SPLM leaders, Dinka President Salva Kiir and his vice president Riek Machar, an ethnic Nuer. The SPLM leaders generally differed on the issue of political reforms, election timings, as well as focusing powers in the office of the administration of President Kiir, which heightened tensions between the two presidents. President Kiir dismissed his entire cabinet, including Machar, in July 2013. It finally came to a head on 15 December 2013 when fighting in the capital city of Juba broke out between Dinka and Nuer ethnicities who belonged to the presidential guard.

The consequence was sheer ethnic civil war as government forces and Machar's opposition, the SPLM-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO), perpetrated senseless violence. The civilians suffered the most: massacre, rape, forced displacement, and child conscription were the order of the day. Ethnically driven massacres and crimes against humanity stunned the world. UNMISS, originally deployed to assist the new state, had to re-prioritize civilian protection. Its bases were also converted into Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites that provided refuge to over 200,000 people at the conflict's peak.

### Peace Initiatives and Continued Turmoil

In 2015, in IGAD-mediated negotiations, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed. It demanded a government of national unity in which Machar was reinstated vice president. Implementation was, however, slow and characterized by suspicion. There was also heavy fighting again in Juba in July 2016, and Machar was again compelled into exile. This renewed fighting and further splintered, with various armed groups being formed throughout the country.

A second peace deal "The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS)" was brokered in 2018, once more mediated by IGAD and supported by the African Union and the United Nations. The deal made provisions for another power-sharing government, reform on security sector, and the creation of an integrated national army. The transitional government was eventually established in February 2020, and Kiir and Machar returned to office. But cohesion is fragile, and movement toward implementing key provisions "constitutional reform and military integration, for instance" has been sluggish and patchy.

### The Humanitarian Crisis

Decades of conflict and political instability have set off one of the globe's most terrible humanitarian crises. Over 9 million individuals—nearly two-fifths of the populace—require humanitarian aid as of 2024. Nearly 2 million are internally displaced, and a further 2.3 million exist as refugees in bordering nations such as Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Food insecurity is rampant; famine officially did indeed happen in some areas of the nation back in 2017, and millions of individuals continue to suffer hunger levels that are within the emergency phase due to conflict, economic collapse, and climatic shocks in the form of droughts and floods.

Health care is extremely limited, with less than half the population having access to primary health care. Cholera and malaria epidemics have been able to spread easily in crowded displacement camps. The education system has been seriously compromised, with many schools closed due to insecurity or taken over for military purposes. Gender violence, including rape as a weapon of war, is common and largely unpunished.

Despite the level of international assistance, access to the victim population is always obstructed by violence and bureaucracy perpetrated by the government. Humanitarian personnel also get attacked, and South Sudan is one of the most unstable nations in the world to be an aid worker.

### Institutional Weaknesses and Corruption

The government of South Sudan is opaque, has weak rule of law, and is marked by deep-seated corruption. Public funds, especially funds from the sale of oil, will generally be looted. A UN report in 2020 documented allegations of leaders and political elites looting hundreds of millions of dollars. Unaccountability has been undermining public trust and subjecting the country to cycles of grievance and violence. The justice system is also essentially non-functional throughout most of the country, further consolidating impunity.

The transitional justice institutions required by R-ARCSS—Hybrid Court for South Sudan, the Commission on Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing (CTRH), and the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA)—are still to be operationalized. The government has been least interested in cooperation with international accountability institutions due to fear of trial of the highest leaders who participated in the war.

### Regional and International Dimensions

The South Sudan crisis has overflowed into the entire subregion with particular consequences for refugee flows and cross-border security threats. Uganda and Sudan, while hosting enormous refugee populations and at times sponsoring rival groups in South Sudan for strategic purposes, have not acted beyond that. IGAD and the African Union have been key mediators, but are limited by subregional rivalry and uneven member state engagement.

The United Nations Security Council has issued travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargos to the individuals who are obstructing peace processes. The US, the UK, and the EU have also imposed targeted sanctions. The flow of weapons into South Sudan, nevertheless, continues unabated, and there is no enforcement.

UNMISS, with over 17,000 peacekeepers, has provided a degree of stability and security but with the weakness of political and logistic challenges. To some states, the mission is perceived as an incursion into sovereignty, and the tension between the government of South Sudan and the UN persists.

### Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations (UN)

Since the dawn of independence for South Sudan, the UN has been so engaged internationally for it. The UN would annualize and initiate military operations under UNSC Resolution 1996 to 1) maintain peace and 2) build capacity. Since the outbreak of a civil war in 2013, its mandate has been amended to include protection of civilians, monitoring human rights, and supporting the implementation of peace agreements. AD-UNMISS maintains the PoC sites in the country and issues regular reports on conflict-related violations. The UN's humanitarian relief interventions have also supported an effort to establish transitional justice mechanisms.

#### Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

Being in the Horn of Africa, IGAD has been at the forefront of peace negotiations in South Sudan. It mediated between parties in 2015 for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) and in 2018 for the Revitalized Agreement (R-ARCSS). While IGAD mediation has been fundamental, divisions between its member states, some of whom have supported rebel groups to the conflict, have also diluted it.

#### African Union (AU)

The AU has promoted IGAD-facilitated mediation and pushed for African-led initiatives to end the war. It has also proposed the setting up of a Hybrid Court for South Sudan to address accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moves towards the creation of the court have, however, been derailed by political resistance in South Sudan. The AU also deploys envoys and peacebuilding support through its Peace and Security Council.

#### United States of America (USA)

America has been the largest donor to South Sudan and a top ally of its independence. Washington provided enormous humanitarian assistance and supported peacebuilding. The U.S., nonetheless, has grown more vocal in condemning the government of South Sudan, issuing targeted sanctions on leaders who have hindered peace and human rights abuses. It has further supported weapons embargos in the UNSC.

#### Sudan (Republic of the Sudan)

Sudan possesses long historical, economic, and security ties with South Sudan. Despite their divorce in 2011, disagreements over transit charges for oil, border marking, and Abyei status have kept the strained relations alive. Sudan has played the role of a broker at times between groups in South Sudan but has also been accused of deploying armed forces for political purposes. Its internal struggle since 2023 has only added to the complexities of seeking influence in the region.

#### Uganda

Uganda has received more than one million South Sudanese refugees and has actively participated in South Sudanese peace negotiations since many times. President Yoweri Museveni has also supplied the military to

Salva Kiir's regime in the past, particularly at the onset of the civil war. The support has been criticized as compromising neutrality in peace talks, but Uganda is still a powerful voice in regional diplomacy.

### Ethiopia

Ethiopia has been the central host in IGAD's framework, hosting different rounds of negotiations. It also hosted South Sudanese refugees and was interested in stabilizing its western border. Ethiopia's contribution has depended on the internal political environment but continues to be a vital actor in regional diplomacy.

### European Union (EU)

The EU has also offered high levels of peacebuilding funding, education, and humanitarian assistance, and reform of governance to South Sudan. The EU is with the AU in calling for transitional justice and has punished the individuals standing in the way of peace. The EU demands a multilateral effort together and enforces human rights as a central feature of its engagement.

### China

China also has strategic interests in South Sudan's oil industry, the economic jugular of the South Sudanese economy. China employs economic clout to act diplomatically but occasionally for non-interference and state sovereignty. China has also sent peacekeeping forces to UNMISS and provided development aid, particularly infrastructure.

### International Humanitarian Organizations (e.g., ICRC, MSF, WFP)

A number of NGOs and international humanitarian agencies operate in South Sudan to provide essential services such as distribution of food, health, shelter, and education. World Food Programme (WFP), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) are some of the busiest ones. Security, logistics, and funding are usually hindrances to their operations but a lifeline to millions of civilians.

## Timeline of Events

1956	<b>Sudan gains independence; tensions rise between the north and south.</b>
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1955–1972	First Sudanese Civil War. Ends with the Addis Ababa Agreement granting limited autonomy to the south.
1983–2005	Second Civil War begins due to revoked autonomy and Sharia law. Over 2 million deaths.
2005	<b>Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed, setting up a future independence referendum.</b>
January 2011	<b>South Sudan votes overwhelmingly for independence.</b>
July 9, 2011	<b>South Sudan becomes independent. Salva Kiir becomes President.</b>
2012	<b>Oil disputes and border clashes occur between Sudan and South Sudan.</b>
July 2013	<b>President Kiir dismisses his cabinet, including VP Machar, deepening political tension.</b>
December 2013	<b>Civil war erupts in Juba; conflict spreads along ethnic lines.</b>
2014	<b>UNMISS shifts focus to civilian protection; thousands take shelter in UN bases.</b>
August 2015	<b>Peace agreement (ARCSS) signed but later collapses.</b>
July 2016	<b>Fighting resumes in Juba; Machar flees again.</b>
2017	<b>Famine is declared in parts of the country.</b>



September 2018	<b>Revitalized peace agreement (R-ARCSS) is signed.</b>
February 2020	<b>Transitional unity government is formed with Kiir and Machar.</b>
2021–2023	<b>Local violence continues; peace deal implementation is slow.</b>
April 2023	<b>Transitional period is extended; elections are delayed.</b>
2024	<b>Humanitarian needs reach record highs; over 9 million need aid.</b>

### Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- [UN Security Council Resolution 1996 \(2011\)](#)

- 8 July 2011
- This resolution established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) immediately after independence. Its initial mandate focused on peace consolidation, state-building, and support for the development of governance institutions.

- [UN Security Council Resolution 2155 \(2014\)](#)

- 27 May 2014
- Adopted in response to the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, this resolution redefined UNMISS's mandate to focus on the protection of civilians, monitoring human rights, and facilitating humanitarian assistance under Chapter VII authority.

- [UN Security Council Resolution 2428 \(2018\)](#)

- 13 July 2018
- Imposed a comprehensive arms embargo on South Sudan and renewed targeted sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) against individuals undermining peace or committing serious human rights violations.

- [Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan \(R-ARCSS\)](#)
- 12 September 2018
- Signed by: Government of South Sudan, SPLM-IO, and other opposition groups under IGAD mediation
- A major peace accord outlining power-sharing arrangements, security sector reforms, and the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, including the Hybrid Court, Truth Commission, and Reparation Authority.

### Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Since the intensification of civil war in South Sudan in December 2013, regional and international actors have made several diplomatic and institutional efforts for peace restoration, preventing the future atrocities, and laying the foundation for sustainable governance. The initial response was by IGAD-the body that immediately initiated peace talks between the two warring sides: largely the government led by incumbent President Salva Kiir and the opposition led by former Vice President Riek Machar himself. The talks were eventually sealed in the agreement to sign the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) on 17 August 2015. The ARCSS formed the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), security arrangements regarding demilitarizing Juba, power-sharing, economic reform, and transitional justice provisions.

However, despite the massive regional and international backing, including by the African Union (AU), United Nations, European Union, and Troika (US, UK, Norway) the ARCSS processes and implementation were loath to begin. Mistrust over security arrangements and disagreement over forms of the state were some of the key issues that derailed the agreement. Such suspensions set the occasion for renewed serious clashes between government forces and opposition forces in July 2016 very soon after Machar had returned to Juba. Machar once again escaped outside the country, and war extended, splintering into several frontlines and creating new armies. The failure of ARCSS brought home the fragility of elite-level deals along with the need for broader national accord and stronger implementation frameworks.

Following this breakdown, IGAD, with more involvement from states like Sudan and Uganda, revived peace negotiations between 2017 and 2018. This renewal of negotiations led to the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in Addis Ababa on 12 September

2018. The new agreement essentially maintained some of the fundamental provisions of the first ARCSS while also strengthening it by correcting its weaknesses. It also entailed the inclusion of other opposition groups, resolutions on the unification of one national army, governance reforms, and a wider implementation matrix. But more importantly, it reinvigorated the commitments on the transitional justice mechanisms, namely Hybrid Court for South Sudan, Truth, Reconciliation and Healing Commission, and Compensation and Reparation Authority, to be strengthened by the African Union.

Thus, by the provisions of the R-ARCSS, the process was actively launched in February 2020 with the reinstatement of Machar as First Vice President and the formation of a new cabinet. The process was, however, derailed by a succession of setbacks and standoffs. Disagreements regarding the allocation of states, forces integration, and the formulation of a permanent constitution are still to be addressed. The 2022 elections were postponed to 2024, and further to the end of 2025, an action that has questioned political will and legitimacy. The 2014 AU Commission of Inquiry Report, which advocated for accountability via a hybrid court, is yet to be completely addressed by the South Sudanese government, which has battled foreign judicial hearings. Impunity therefore continues, especially regarding sexual violence and attacks on civilians.

The United Nations has also helped indirectly these peace processes on a continuous basis through UNMISS by offering space for local peace negotiations, ceasefire monitoring, and running Protection of Civilians (PoC) facilities. The UN Security Council, in turn, has placed targeted sanctions and weapons embargoes under resolutions such as S/RES/2428 (2018) as an attempt to discredit spoilers and pressure leaders towards implementation. The external donors, such as Norway, the EU, and the United States, have contributed money and logistical aid to the peace process. Despite their efforts, the country still maintains deeply rooted political cleavages, weak institutions, and a chronic humanitarian catastrophe.

In total, although pacts have been inked and hope has periodically revived, these efforts have ultimately failed to shift the underlying patterns of exclusion, militarization, and power. The series of failures attests to the limits of elite-based peace models and the need to engage civil society, customary leadership, women's groups, and youth in a more inclusive, accountable, and locally owned peacebuilding process.

## Possible Solutions

To address the growing humanitarian and political crisis in South Sudan, a multi-dimensional and holistic process needs to be undertaken which not only rectifies the immediate problem but also lays the ground for durable stability. Politically, fulfilling the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) fully and clearly should be maintained at the forefront. Annapurna Yadav. The caretaker government should ensure a firm commitment towards an election timeline to conduct free, fair, and

credible elections. The international community like the United Nations, African Union, and IGAD should closely monitor this process through technical assistance and deploying electoral observers to avoid violence or rigging. Besides elections, grassroots institutional mechanisms have to be empowered by decentralization reform as well as citizen-based administrative systems, especially within the historically disadvantaged regions of low state presence.

At the humanitarian level, greater access to aid should be given priority. The state needs to eliminate bureaucratic barriers to humanitarian actors, and the UN and NGOs need to have guaranteed safe and unhindered access to internally displaced persons and populations at risk of famine. Climate-resilient agriculture, local food production, and clean water and sanitation infrastructure can bring in savings from reduced dependence on external assistance and help tackle the structural causes of hunger. Concurrently, education and psychosocial support interventions should be increased to youth—particularly former child soldiers and internally displaced children—by means of mobile learning centres and trauma-informed care. These interventions can be an integral element of reconciliation and social reintegration.

Legally, justice and accountability ought to be the foundation pillars of any sustained peace. The South Sudan Hybrid Court, as has been proposed in the peace agreement and demanded by the African Union, should be established as soon as possible to deal with war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, and crimes against humanity. For this, there must be a national Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing Commission with extensive civil society participation to help restore trust among communities and establish a shared history of the war. Parallel to this, the foreign legal experts must be brought in to assist in rebuilding South Sudan's justice system, through open hiring, anti-corruption training, and investment in infrastructure to renovate the courts and restore rule of law.

Regionally, regional cooperation among South Sudan and other neighbor countries—mainly Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya—should be intensified to secure borders, exchange intelligence, and fight cross-border threats such as arms trafficking and refugee flows. IGAD's guarantor function of the peace agreement should be ensured through guaranteed funding, and its Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMVM) should be enhanced to carry out real-time reporting, air-monitoring, and guarantees of protection to civilians. Lastly, the future of South Sudan depends on transition from elite-oriented peace deals to local ownership-based, transparent, and accountable governance and steadfast international support.

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