

Clashes in north-eastern South Sudan halt UN migration agency's humanitarian work

31 January 2017 – Thousands of people in need of aid in South Sudan's Upper Nile area will have to wait indefinitely, after fighting forced the United Nations migration agency to suspend humanitarian activities in the area.

“Violence in Upper Nile has once again hindered the ability of IOM and other relief agencies to provide assistance to populations seriously in need,” said the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) South Sudan Chief of Mission, William Barriga. “Civilians will undoubtedly suffer as sporadic fighting makes it more difficult for aid workers to deliver services.”

In addition to aid, the agency was in the process of registering people to receive supplies, when clashes between the Government and opposition forces forced everyone to evacuate. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people remained in line when the team was forced to flee.

According to IOM, clashes reached Wau Shilluk on 27 January, just as a 14-person team from the UN agency was about to resume registration. A partner organization, which provides aid, was with UN agency at the time.

Wau Shilluk is located north-eastern South Sudan, across the White Nile River from Malakal town. Malakal was one of South Sudan's largest urban areas before the current crisis and home to more than 33,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are sheltering at the protection of civilians (PoC) site, said IOM.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) yesterday condemned the latest fighting and urged all parties to protect civilians.