

# Peacekeepers in South Sudan working to strengthen protection of civilians – UN chief

19 April 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan has done “significant work” to more effectively protect civilians and respond in case of a crisis, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has said in a letter to the President of the UN Security Council.

The letter summarizes the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba in July 2016 and the actions of the UN Mission, known as UNMISS.

“[Significant work has been undertaken](#) over the last five months to enhance the ability of UNMISS to protect civilians, better plan and prepare its response to crisis situations and increase staff safety and security,” the Secretary-General wrote in the letter to Ambassador Nikki Haley, the Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN, in her capacity as President of the Security Council for April.

In particular, Mr. Guterres noted the establishment of a weapons-free zone around the Protection of Civilians (POC) sites and UN House in Juba, which he said “has contributed to a significant drop in reported crime and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.”

In addition, UNMISS peacekeepers are conducting dismounted patrols within the area throughout the day and night, as well as cordon-and-search operations within the POC sites to disrupt arms trafficking.

The observations in the letter are based on an independent follow-up mission last month led by Major General (retired) Patrick Cammaert. He was looking into how the UN handled its response to fighting that occurred between 8 and 12 July 2016 between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). Hundreds of people were killed and more than 200 raped during that time period.

Among other observations, the letter noted a “positive change” in the operations and posture of military and police components as a result of corrective actions taken by UNMISS as well as troop and police contributing countries.

The Departments of UN Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support have also made “important changes” in more thoroughly training and monitoring performance of peacekeepers.

Mr. Guterres noted that “while much has been achieved, more needs to be done to raise and sustain the performance bar,” including through ongoing reviews and revise strategies.