

UN calls for protection of civilians sheltering in South Sudan's Upper Nile area

1 May 2017 – A senior United Nations humanitarian official in South Sudan today demanded that parties to the conflict uphold their responsibilities to protect thousands of Shilluk civilians sheltering in and around Aburoc, following the resumption of the government offensive and clashes along the West Bank of the Nile River last week.

“Civilians in Aburoc are living in fear, not knowing what each day will bring,” [said](#) the Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for the country, Serge Tissot, in a press release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“I call on the Government to respect the civilian nature of these settlements and ensure they are not subject to attacks, and call on the opposition forces to ensure that areas highly populated by civilians are, and remain, demilitarized,” he added.

According to OCHA, thousands of civilians have arrived into Aburoc in recent days. Many have walked for days on foot and are arriving exhausted and weak. Thousands are reportedly now moving toward Sudan out of fear of potential future attacks. Prices are exorbitant and transport is inadequate, so many people are having no choice but to walk.

On 23 and 24 April, humanitarian organizations relocated staff from Kodok and Aburoc amidst the spread of conflict on the Nile's West Bank. Several courageous local staff remain in the community and are doing all they can to assist people in need. However, key humanitarian assets were looted by opposition forces and other actors in recent days.

“I demand the immediate return of all looted humanitarian assets in Aburoc, which are absolutely vital to life-saving humanitarian action,” said Mr. Tissot.

Humanitarians are exploring all feasible options to provide assistance to those fleeing the fighting but are facing major challenges, including lack of fuel in the area.

An interagency team visited Aburoc on 29 April to see the situation first-hand and the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) recently released funds that will support the scale-up of emergency operations in locations where civilians are arriving.

“This operation is the true definition of life-saving,” said Mr. Tissot. “I therefore call on both parties to ensure immediate, free and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians, wherever they may flee, including for

trucks to safely access the river and carry water to locations where [internally displaced persons] are sheltering.”