

THE ABIEMNON MASSACRE

INACTION AND IMPUNITY IN SOUTH SUDAN

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Cover photo: *A home destroyed in the massacre in Abiemnom town, South Sudan. Photograph taken by an Amnesty International researcher in 2026.*

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GLOSSARY

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
CHRSS	UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDP / IDPS	Internally displaced person / persons
IGP	Inspector General of Police
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MONBATT	Mongolian Battalion
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PoC	Protection of Civilian (sites)
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM/A-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition
SRSG	Special Representative of the UN Secretary General
SSNPS	South Sudan National Police Service
SSPDF	South Sudan People's Defence Forces
TOB	Temporary Operating Base
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
USG	Under-Secretary-General

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the early morning of 1 March 2026, a large group, estimated to be between 1,000 and 1,500 strong, of armed Nuer men from Mayom County in South Sudan's Unity State, stormed Abiemnom town, in the Ruweng Administrative Area, killing and injuring security personnel as well as town residents, raiding and ransacking parts of the hospital and shops, and burning homes and sections of the market. The attack lasted around four hours. The local government authorities reported 213 deaths. According to local government authorities, at least 109 people were injured.

This report documents killings, including execution-style killings and deaths, that occurred as people fled the violence, and describes the widespread harm the attackers caused. It further documents the destruction and theft of public and private property, as well as the large-scale displacement caused by the attack, which forced many into dire humanitarian conditions.

The report establishes the failure of the South Sudanese government to protect the right to life and bodily integrity of the victims, investigate the attack, and offer remedies to the victims. The report also raises serious questions about the UN's peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, which could have taken stronger anticipatory or preventive action in the days leading up to 1 March 2026 and has yet to publish any report dedicated to the Abiemnom massacre.

The findings are based primarily on research carried out between 18 March and 16 April 2026 in South Sudan, including visits to Abiemnom town and nearby localities, as well as visits to South Sudan's capital, Juba, between 20 and 30 March 2026. Eighty-two people were interviewed for this research. Amnesty International researchers conducted 76 in-person interviews with survivors of the massacre. Six additional interviews with religious leaders, medical professionals and analysts were conducted remotely between March and July 2026. Amnesty International researchers also reviewed dozens of reports and statements by relevant authorities and UN actors, as well as local and international media reports and social media reports. The organization also analysed satellite imagery and other open-source videos and images to corroborate information obtained from testimonies.

Amnesty International found that government authorities and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) were aware of numerous warning signs of a possible imminent attack on Abiemnom town in the days and weeks prior to 1 March 2026. Unity State authorities acknowledged receiving intelligence about a potential threat, while community leaders reported that residents of Mayom had warned relatives in Abiemnom that young men were mobilizing and weapons and ammunition were being assembled. Survivors sought refuge near the UNMISS Temporary Operating Base (TOB) one to two weeks before the attack, and local leaders stated that UNMISS had been informed of the impending threat. UNMISS itself confirmed that tensions had been high since mid-February and that, since 27 February 2026, violence had escalated over the preceding 48 hours, and around 1,000 civilians had sought protection outside the TOB on 28 February 2026. These warnings gave both state authorities and UNMISS two weeks to take preventive measures.

The attack followed a similar pattern to an April 2025 assault on Abiemnom by armed men from Mayom, which killed dozens of people, injured others and resulted in the burning of homes. Amnesty International finds that, given this recent precedent, both UNMISS and state authorities could reasonably have anticipated that hundreds, if not thousands, of people would again seek protection in the event of another large-scale attack.

Governments are obliged to protect people within their territory from human rights abuses by non-state actors, notably by taking reasonable steps to prevent such abuses. South Sudan is bound by protections of

the rights to life and security of person, which includes protection against bodily or mental injury, under international human rights law. Amnesty International found that, despite the ample warnings that the attack on Abiemnom was imminent, the government failed to undertake adequate preparation, including sufficient deployment of additional security forces to prevent the attack and protect the residents, thereby failing in their obligation to protect the people. Given that state authorities had prior intelligence and community leaders in Abiemnom were aware of the mobilization, the police in Mayom County should have acted to prevent the attack.

States are also required to ensure independent and impartial investigations of serious abuses, bring perpetrators to justice, and provide victims with access to remedies and reparations. On 2 March 2026, the government stated that security agencies had been instructed to restore order, investigate the attack and hold those responsible accountable. However, Amnesty International found no evidence of any ongoing investigation. At the time of writing, there was no indication that suspects had been arrested or that meaningful investigative steps had been taken, nor was there any publicly available information on investigations into the failure of Mayom County police to prevent the attack, despite prior intelligence and local awareness of the mobilization of attackers. This violates survivors' right to an effective remedy.

On 28 September 2026, Amnesty International sent letters outlining the report's preliminary findings and requesting responses to the allegations to the Inspector General of Police of the South Sudan National Police Service and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, with copies to relevant authorities in their offices. At the time of publication, no responses had been received. A separate letter summarizing the report's findings and seeking a response was sent to the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in South Sudan who heads UNMISS, with copies to relevant offices. In its response on 8 October 2026, UNMISS explains the steps taken before, during and after the March 2026 attack on Abiemnom, highlighting its efforts to prevent violence through dialogue, engagement with authorities, requests for additional security deployments from the army and the establishment of a temporary protection area for civilians.

Prior to the attack, UNMISS engaged authorities at various levels and the Mongolian military peacekeepers used dykes to establish a Temporary Protective Area close to the base to strengthen security for those seeking refuge. UNMISS briefly opened the gates of its TOB at the start of the attack. According to the mission, it sheltered more than 1,000 civilians in its TOB when clashes were ongoing on 1 March 2026. After the attack, UNMISS temporarily deployed 40 personnel from the Formed Police Unit to strengthen its protection efforts and boost community confidence. An eyewitness told Amnesty International that UNMISS brought a big truck (likely an armoured personnel carrier) outside the base from 1-2 March 2026, expanded their barbed wire and put a poster saying, "protection of civilians", measures indicative of a contingency plan that peacekeeping missions are required to have. However, despite UNMISS's prior knowledge of the possibility of an imminent attack, there is no indication from information provided by survivors of the massacre that UNMISS took all concrete measures available to it to try to deter or prevent the attack. Amnesty International believes that, at minimum, UNMISS ought to have sent the 40 personnel from the Formed Police Unit – which were apparently available – as reinforcements prior to the attack, instead of after. The apparent failure of UNMISS to take stronger anticipatory or preventive action in the days leading up to 1 March 2026, when tensions were clearly observable, raises serious questions about the mission's performance.

Amnesty International calls on the South Sudanese authorities to conduct an independent, impartial and thorough investigation into the Abiemnom attack, and to make the findings of the investigation public. The organization also calls on the authorities to hold the perpetrators of the attack to account. Amnesty International calls on UNMISS to investigate and provide a transparent account of the events leading up to the attack, as well as the measures it took to fulfil its protection of civilians mandate in the days and weeks prior to the attack. It also calls on the Member States of the United Nations to contribute fully to the UN peacekeeping budget, in a timely manner, to cover the costs of UNMISS and all peacekeeping operations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The report is based primarily on research carried out between 18 March and 16 April 2026 in South Sudan, including visits to Abiemnom town and nearby localities between 25 and 30 March 2026.[1] A total of 82 people were interviewed for this research. Amnesty International researchers conducted 76 in-person interviews with eyewitnesses who survived the massacre, including local authorities, a religious leader, a community leader, and medical and humanitarian workers in Abiemnom, Abyei town, Juoljok in Abyei Administrative Area and South Sudan's capital, Juba. Of the 76 survivors, 55 were women, two were 17-year-old girls, and 19 were men; ten of the survivors were injured in the attack. Six additional interviews with religious leaders, medical professionals and analysts were conducted remotely between March and July 2026.

All interviews with survivors and witnesses were conducted individually in safe locations. Most interviews took place in displacement sites where survivors were sheltering, and in some cases in the medical facilities where they were receiving treatment. Most interviews were conducted in Dinka, with interpretation into English. Some were conducted in Arabic and English. Amnesty International researchers informed all interviewees about the nature and purpose of the research, the risks involved and how the information would be used. Interviewees were given a choice about whether they wanted to participate. Oral consent for the publication of the information was obtained in all cases. Interviewees were told they could, at any time, end the interview, take a break or choose not to answer specific questions. Amnesty International took precautions to try to avoid re-traumatization by pausing and asking interviewees if they wanted to stop when detecting signs of distress. The researchers tried to end interviews on more forward-looking topics and asked survivors what measures they needed to be taken for them to recover and rebuild their lives. The views and needs expressed by survivors informed Amnesty International's recommendations. No financial or other incentives were offered to anyone for speaking with Amnesty International.

Amnesty International researchers reviewed dozens of reports and statements by relevant authorities, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS), as well as local and international media reports. The organization also analysed satellite imagery and other open-source videos and images to corroborate information obtained from testimonies.

On 17 June 2026, Amnesty International wrote to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) of the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Chief of Defence Forces of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) to seek information about the circumstances of the massacre and any measures the authorities had taken to prevent the massacre, investigate the attack and hold the perpetrators accountable. No responses were received.

The organization also wrote to the Force Commander of UNMISS, which has a Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Abiemnom, and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in South Sudan on 17 June 2026, with a copy to the UN Office of the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Peace Operations on 2 July 2026, to request details about any specific measures taken to protect the residents, in line with its protection of civilians mandate. Aside from an acknowledgement of receipt from the Office of the USG for

[1] Abiemnom is also, at times, spelt as "Abiemnhom". In this report, Amnesty International will spell it as "Abiemnom" as this is consistent with the spelling used by the Ministry of Information, Communication, Technology and Postal Services (MoICTPS). MoICTPS, "Government statement on Abiemnom deadly incident", 2 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1230242765956548&set=a.230793615901473

Peace Operations, no responses were received. On 21 August 2026, Amnesty International sought a virtual meeting with the UNMISS SRSG. UNMISS responded, requesting questions in writing ahead of a virtual meeting. Amnesty International sent the requested questions in another letter to the SRSG with a copy to the Director of the Human Rights Division and the Office of the USG for Peace Operations on 4 September 2026. This letter included questions about the UN's response during and prior to the attack, including whether written contingency plans had been in place. Amnesty International did not receive a response to its second request for information.

On 28 September 2026, Amnesty International sent letters summarizing the report's preliminary findings and requesting a response to the IGP of the SSNPS and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, with copies to relevant authorities in Unity State and the Ruweng Administrative Area. Amnesty International also sent letters summarizing the report's findings and seeking a response to the UNMISS SRSG with copies to the UNMISS Force Commander, Director of the UNMISS Human Rights Division and the UN USG for Peace Operations. Amnesty International received a response from UNMISS on 8 October 2026. UNMISS's answers are reflected in the report. No response had been received at the time of publication from the South Sudanese authorities.

Amnesty International consulted a subject matter expert on peacekeeping and protection of civilians with experience working in South Sudan; they conducted an external review of the report.

Amnesty International withheld the names and other identifying details of interviewees, as well as of the victims who died, to protect identities of interviewees for security and confidentiality reasons. In all cases, survivors' and victims' names are replaced by pseudonyms.

Amnesty International thanks all those who accepted to be interviewed, notably survivors and witnesses who shared their painful accounts in difficult circumstances and, for some, despite personal risk.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 CHRONIC FAILURE TO PROTECT CIVILIANS

The territory now known as South Sudan has, in its contemporary history, been marked by decades of different types of violence, including non-international armed conflicts, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence, and high levels of violent crime.

The first and second Sudanese civil wars from 1955 to 1972 and from 1985 to 2005, respectively, were characterized by repeated violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.[2] After a decades-long liberation struggle, South Sudan became an independent state on 9 July 2011. Within three years, in December 2013, an armed confrontation between soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir Mayardit and then Vice President Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon started at the military barracks in the capital city, Juba, and escalated into a full-blown non-international armed conflict. The ruling Sudan's People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) split, Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon formed the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) and violence quickly spread to other areas of the country.[3] Peace agreements signed in 2015 and 2018 have failed to bring an end to the armed conflict and to crimes under international law and human rights violations and abuses committed in its context, committed by government and opposition forces and their allied militias.[4] The armed conflict, which has continued in

[2] See, for example, Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 1999 – Sudan*, 1 January 1999, https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/amnesty/1999/en/24024; Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 1996 – Sudan*, 1 January 1996, https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/amnesty/1996/en/15078

[3] Amnesty International, *Nowhere Safe: Civilians Under Attack in South Sudan* (Index: AFR 65/003/2014), 8 May 2014, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR65/003/2014/en/

[4] Amnesty International, *"Their Voices Stopped": Mass Killing in a Shipping Container in Leer* (Index AFR 65/3598/2016), 10 March 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/3598/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"We Are Still Running": War Crimes in Leer, South Sudan* (Index AFR 65/4486/2016), 28 July 2016 https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/4486/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"We Did Not Believe We Would Survive": Killings, Rape and Lootings in Juba* (Index AFR 65/5028/2016), 24 October 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5028/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"It Was As If My Village Was Swept By a Flood": Mass Displacement of the Shilluk Population from the West Bank of the White Nile* (Index AFR 65/6538/2017), 21 June 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6538/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"If Men Are Caught, They Are Killed, If Women Are Caught, They Are Raped" – Atrocities in Equatoria Region Turn Country's Breadbasket into a Killing Field* (Index AFR 65/6612/2017), 4 July 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6612/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"Do Not Remain Silent": Survivors of Sexual Violence in South Sudan Call for Justice and Reparations* (Index AFR 65/6469/2017), 24 July 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6469/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"Anything That Was Breathing Was Killed" – War Crimes in Leer and Mayendit, South Sudan* (Index AFR 65/8801/2018), 18 September 2018, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/8801/2018/en/; Amnesty International, "South Sudan: UN arms embargo must be maintained after surge in violence against civilians in 2020", 30 November 2020, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/south-sudan-un-arms-embargo-must-be-maintained-after-surge-in-violence-against-civilians-in-2020-2/; Amnesty International, "South Sudan: Survivors describe killings, mass displacement and terror amid fighting in Western Equatoria", 9 December 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/south-sudan-survivors-describe-killings-mass-displacement-and-terror-amid-fighting-in-western-equatoria/; Amnesty International, *"If you don't cooperate, I'll gun you down": Conflict-related sexual violence and impunity in South Sudan* (Index AFR 65/5569/2022), 18 May 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5569/2022/en/; Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS), *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan*, 31 January 2023, UN Doc. A/HRC/52/26; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 29 February 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/55/26; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 21 February 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/27; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 27 February 2026, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/25.

varying degrees of intensity since 2013,[5] escalated dramatically once again in early 2025.[6] It continues at the time of writing.

Since independence in 2011, a consistent finding across UN, African Union and human rights non-governmental organization reporting has been that the Government of South Sudan has repeatedly failed to protect civilians from armed conflict, inter-communal violence and abuses committed by its own security forces.[7]

In an environment where state authorities frequently fail to protect civilians, UNMISS has become an important civilian protection actor. Whilst UNMISS is credited with protecting tens of thousands of lives when the armed conflict broke out in December 2013 and the mission opened its gates to people, establishing protection of civilian (PoC) sites,[8] it has a track record of poor performance in other large-scale and violent incidents. For instance, in February 2016, violence erupted between internally displaced persons (IDPs) of different ethnic groups in a PoC site in Malakal, Upper Nile State.[9] Attackers in army uniforms, likely fighters belonging to the Padang Dinka militia, took active part in fighting and in burning the camp.[10] A report by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that, despite a strong UNMISS military presence at the PoC site, UNMISS failed to protect people living at the PoC site.[11] Recognizing constraints UNMISS faced, a report by the Center for Civilians in Conflict raised serious concerns about "UNMISS's response, including how it recognized and responded to warning signs; handled perimeter breaches both prior to and during the attack; and ultimately deployed and responded as events unfolded on February 17 and 18."[12] According to a UN University report, UNMISS was unresponsive to government attacks on the PoC sites,[13] on a World Food Programme warehouse, and on humanitarian workers and a journalist at the Terrain Hotel in Juba during the

[5] See footnote 4.

[6] Amnesty International, "UN Human Rights Council must continue scrutiny of deteriorating human rights situation in South Sudan" (Index AFR 65/0771/2026), 17 March 2026, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/0771/2026/en/; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 27 February 2026, UN Doc. A/HRC/61/25; CHRSS, "South Sudan: UN Commission urges AU and UN Security Council to act decisively as crisis deepens, demanding urgent action and renewed commitment to peace, accountability and a credible transition", 13 October 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/south-sudan-un-commission-urges-au-and-un-security-council-act-decisively

[7] Amnesty International, *Nowhere Safe: Civilians Under Attack in South Sudan* (Index: AFR 65/003/2014), 8 May 2014, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR65/003/2014/en/; Amnesty International, *"Their Voices Stopped": Mass Killing in a Shipping Container in Leer* (Index: AFR 65/3598/2016), 10 March 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/3598/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"We Are Still Running": War Crimes in Leer, South Sudan* (Index: AFR 65/4486/2016), 28 July 2016 https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/4486/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"We Did Not Believe We Would Survive": Killings, Rape and Lootings in Juba* (Index: AFR 65/5028/2016), 24 October 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5028/2016/en/; Amnesty International, *"It Was As If My Village Was Swept By a Flood": Mass Displacement of the Shilluk Population from the West Bank of the White Nile* (Index: AFR 65/6538/2017), 21 June 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6538/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"If Men Are Caught, They Are Killed, If Women Are Caught, They Are Raped" – Atrocities in Equatoria Region Turn Country's Breadbasket into a Killing Field* (Index: AFR 65/6612/2017), 4 July 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6612/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"Do Not Remain Silent": Survivors of Sexual Violence in South Sudan Call for Justice and Reparations* (Index: AFR 65/6469/2017), 24 July 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/6469/2017/en/; Amnesty International, *"Anything That Was Breathing Was Killed" – War Crimes in Leer and Mayendit, South Sudan* (Index: AFR 65/8801/2018), 18 September 2018, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/8801/2018/en/; Amnesty International, "South Sudan: UN arms embargo must be maintained after surge in violence against civilians in 2020", 30 November 2020, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/south-sudan-un-arms-embargo-must-be-maintained-after-surge-in-violence-against-civilians-in-2020-2/; Amnesty International, "South Sudan: Survivors describe killings, mass displacement and terror amid fighting in Western Equatoria", 9 December 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/south-sudan-survivors-describe-killings-mass-displacement-and-terror-amid-fighting-in-western-equatoria/; Amnesty International, *"If you don't cooperate, I'll gun you down": Conflict-related sexual violence and impunity in South Sudan* (Index: AFR 65/5569/2022), 18 May 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5569/2022/en/; African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS), Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, 15 October 2014, www.peaceau.org/uploads/auciss.final.report.pdf. For all reports by Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS) from 2017-2026, see https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-h-south-sudan/index; For reports by UNMISS and OHCHR, see UNMISS, Human Rights Reports, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/human-rights-reports (accessed on 22 September 2026). For reports by Human Rights Watch, see Human Rights Watch, South Sudan, https://www.hrw.org/africa/south-sudan (accessed on 22 September 2026).

[8] International Organization for Migration (IOM), "If we leave, we are killed": Lessons learned from South Sudan Protection of Civilian Sites 2013–2016, 3 May 2016, https://www.iom.int/news/if-we-leave-we-are-killed-lessons-learned-south-sudan-protection-civilian-sites-2013-2016

[9] Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), *A Refuge in Flames: The February 17-18 Violence in Malakal PoC*, April 2016, https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ViolenceMalakalPOC_HighResSingle.pdf; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *MSF internal review of the February 2016 attack on the Malakal Protection of Civilians Site and the post-event situation*, June 2016, https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/malakal_report_210616_pc.pdf

[10] CIVIC, *A Refuge in Flames: The February 17-18 Violence in Malakal PoC*, April 2016, https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ViolenceMalakalPOC_HighResSingle.pdf

[11] MSF, *MSF internal review of the February 2016 attack on the Malakal Protection of Civilians Site and the post-event situation*, June 2016, https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/malakal_report_210616_pc.pdf

[12] CIVIC, *A Refuge in Flames: The February 17-18 Violence in Malakal PoC*, April 2016, https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ViolenceMalakalPOC_HighResSingle.pdf, p. 6.

[13] Nuer civilians at the UN's protection of civilians sites in Juba were at times caught in the midst of crossfire between the armed opposition's forces and the government's forces, but evidence also indicates that some of these sites were deliberately targeted by government soldiers. Amnesty International, *"We Did Not Believe We Would Survive": Killings, Rape and Lootings in Juba* (Index: AFR 65/5028/2016), 24 October 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5028/2016/en/, p. 12.

fighting that erupted in the capital city in July 2016.[14] Later that year, a special investigation into UNMISS's response to the July 2016 violence in Juba found that "a lack of leadership on the part of key senior mission personnel had culminated in a chaotic and ineffective response to the violence."[15]

3.2 RUWENG ADMINISTRATIVE AREA AND MAYOM COUNTY

Much like other parts of South Sudan, the Ruweng Administrative Area and neighbouring areas have a long history of inter-communal tensions and cycles of violence, typically involving mobilization of armed men from the ethnic groups and sections, cattle-raiding, and retaliatory attacks, driven by legacies of the civil wars, unresolved grievances, economic interests and long-standing competing land claims (including oil-rich territory), and enabled by unresolved administrative boundaries, weak state authority and deeply entrenched impunity.[16]

The recent history of violence in the Ruweng Administrative Area and neighbouring areas should be understood in the broader political and armed conflict dynamics. In October 2015, President Salva Kiir Mayardit decreed that the country be split into 28 states, and in January 2017, into 32 states. Both decrees created Ruweng State, composed of Abiemnom and Pariang counties: areas primarily inhabited by the Padang Dinka. This placed the oil fields of Unity State (inhabited mainly by Nuer groups), as well as parts of Rubkona County (including a bridge critical for trade with Sudan and several Nuer villages), in an area inhabited primarily by Dinka.[17] In February 2020, President Salva Kiir Mayardit returned the country to ten states (with their previous counties) plus the two previously established administrative areas of Abyei and Pibor, and created Ruweng Administrative Area.[18] Oil-rich Ruweng area (including Abiemnom County) has been claimed by Nuer and Dinka communities alike and was the theatre of heavy fighting in the earlier years of the 2013 armed conflict.[19]

The Ruweng Administrative Area, mostly inhabited by Padang Dinka communities, is close to Bul Nuer areas of western Unity State (Mayom County), as well as Dinka sections in Warrap State and Abyei Administrative Area. Cross-border clashes between communities from Ruweng Administrative Area and Unity State, particularly Bul Nuer communities, occur frequently and often escalate from cattle-related disputes and raids into large-scale attacks by armed men, commonly organized into community-based militias. These

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[14] Charles T. Hunt, "Case Study 3: Waiting for Peace: A Review of UNMISS' Political Strategy in South Sudan", in United Nations University's Centre for Policy Research and Stimson, *The Political Practice of Peacekeeping: How Strategies for Peace Operations are Developed and Implemented,* 11 September 2020, https://unu.edu/cpr/project/political-practice-peacekeeping-how-strategies-peace-operations-are-developed-and, p. 75; Amnesty International, *"We Did Not Believe We Would Survive": Killings, Rape and Lootings in Juba* (Index: AFR 65/5028/2016), 24 October 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/5028/2016/en/

[15] UN Security Council, *Executive summary of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba in 2016 and the response by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan,* 1 November 2016, UN Doc. S/2016/924, para. 7.

[16] Small Arms Survey (SAS), *The Body Count: Controlling Populations in Unity State*, August 2023, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/body-count-controlling-populations-unity-state; SAS, *Manhiem's Mission: Power and Violence in Warrap State,* October 2023, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org//sites/default/files/resources/Situation%20Update_Manhiems_Mission_Web.pdf, pp. 6-7; SAS, "Mapping Actors and Alliances Project in South Sudan Update – Ruweng Administrative Area", 21 October 2021, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/HSBA-MAAPSS-Update8-October2021-RAA.pdf; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *"They killed them while we were running": Escalating violence in South Sudan*, May 2026, https://www.msf-me.org/media-centre/news-and-stories/they-killed-them-while-we-were-running, p. 14; UNMISS, "UNMISS intensifies patrols to help protect civilians and calls for calm in Unity and Ruweng Administrative Area", 24 June 2024, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/news/unmiss-intensifies-patrols-to-help-protect-civilians-and-calls-for-calm-in-unity; The Conversation, "Crisis in Abyei: South Sudan must act and stop violence between Dinka groups", 5 March 2024, https://theconversation.com/crisis-in-abyei-south-sudan-must-act-and-stop-violence-between-dinka-groups-224409?fbclid=IwAR1LY089jT_rMn1d1mWbwkoI6rjYdHHY3turO8KloyJWfbs6P2U_JynwT_A. See, for an example of competing land claims, Simon Tor De Deng, Facebook post (and comments), 27 April 2026, https://www.facebook.com/groups/526957180739462/posts/25861253923549772/

[17] SAS, *Mapping Actors and Alliances Project in South Sudan Update – Ruweng Administrative Area*, 21 October 2021, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/HSBA-MAAPSS-Update8-October2021-RAA.pdf; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan*, 21 February 2019, UN Doc. A/HRC/40/CRP.1, paras. 599-605. The country's constitution, in Article 161(1), determines that South Sudan's territory is composed of ten states. President Kiir, in October 2015, decreed the country to be split into 28 states, and in January 2017, into 32 states. Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011, Article 161(1); Establishment Order Number 36/2015 for the Creation of 28 States in the Decentralized Governance System in the Republic of South Sudan.

[18] The Sudd Institute, *The Return to Ten States in South Sudan: Does it Restore Peace?*, 20 February 2020, https://docs.southsudanngoforum.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/5e4fc6fae031b_TheReturnToTenStatesInSouthSudan_Full.pdf

[19] Aljazeera, *South Sudan's Machar rejects President Kiir's peace offer,* 16 February 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/16/south-sudans-machar-rejects-president-kiirs-peace-offer; The Sudd Institute, *The Return to Ten States in South Sudan: Does it Restore Peace?*, 20 February 2020, https://docs.southsudanngoforum.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/5e4fc6fae031b_TheReturnToTenStatesInSouthSudan_Full.pdf; SAS, *The Body Count: Controlling Populations in Unity State*, August 2023, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/body-count-controlling-populations-unity-state

groups typically operate semi-autonomously, influenced, but not fully controlled, by political elites and senior leaders from their communities.[20] At times, these community-based groups and local grievances and/or interests are manipulated to serve local or national-level political interests of community leaders. The militia (or militarized network or armed men largely from cattle-keeping communities) composed mainly of Bul Nuer men from Mayom County is called the *Terchuong*.[21]

The *Terchuong* militia was reportedly created by political leaders, including long-serving Governor of Unity State Joseph Nguen Monytuil from Mayom County, in 2013-2014 to help the government fight SPLM/A-IO forces and their allied militias.[22] In July 2024, then Governor of Unity State, Riek Bim Top, said that he disbanded the *Terchuong* to restore security in the area and stop cattle-raiding,[23] though it is unclear how effective this was and whether any concrete measures were taken. The UN reported that "the *Terchuong* armed youth were screened for subsequent disarmament, demobilization and possible integration into the South Sudan People's Defence Forces",[24] but there is no evidence that the *Terchuong* militia members were ever disarmed. Three weeks after the 1 March 2026 attack on Abiemnom, President Kiir dismissed Governor Riek Bim Top and reappointed Joseph Nguen Monytuil.[25]

On 2 April 2025, armed men from Mayom County attacked Abiemnom town, killing between a reported 27 and 29 people (including women and children), injuring between 12 and 17, and burning homes.[26] Two months later, UNMISS reported that 52 people were killed in the same attack.[27] The immediate trigger appears to have been a livestock dispute.[28] Nine inhabitants of Abiemnom, and two analysts familiar with the area, told Amnesty International that no one has been held to account for the crimes committed during the April 2025 attack,[29] creating an environment where such criminal behaviour is left unpunished and likely contributing to the 1 March 2026 massacre.

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[20] Small Arms Survey (SAS), *Manhiem's Mission: Power and Violence in Warrap State,* October 2023, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org//sites/default/files/resources/Situation%20Update_Manhiems_Mission_Web.pdf

[21] Radio Tamazuj, "Terchuong: Politically connected militia in controversy", 25 May 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/terchuong-politically-connected-militia-in-controversy

[22] Radio Tamazuj, "Terchuong: Politically connected militia in controversy", 25 May 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/terchuong-politically-connected-militia-in-controversy; SAS, *The Body Count: Controlling Populations in Unity State*, August 2023, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/body-count-controlling-populations-unity-state

[23] Radio Tamazuj, "Unity Governor disbands Terchuong militia group", 29 July 2024, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/unity-governor-disbands-terchuong-militia-group; Eyeradio, "Unity State governor disbands notorious Terchuong militia", 25 July 2024, Unity State governor disbands notorious Terchuong militia group - Eye Radio; Sudans Post, "Mayom-based notorious Terchuong militia disbanded", 29 July 2024, Mayom-based notorious Terchuong militia disbanded - Sudans Post

[24] UNSG, Report: Situation in South Sudan, 25 October 2024, UN Doc. S/2024/776, para. 24.

[25] Radio Tamazuj, "Juba: Kiir replaces Unity governor", 23 March 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/kiir-replaces-unity-governor

[26] Sudans Post, "Investigation – Who is behind the Abiemnom Massacre?" 23 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/who-is-behind-the-abiemnom-massacre/; Sudans Post, "Armed youth from Unity State seize control of Abiemnom", 2 April 2025, https://www.sudanspost.com/armed-youth-from-unity-state-seize-control-of-abiemnom/' Sudans Post, "Abiemnom attack leaves 27 dead, 17 wounded as youth withdraw", 3 April 2025, https://www.sudanspost.com/abiemnom-attack-leaves-27-dead-17-wounded-as-youth-withdraw/; Eyeradio, "Clashes between armed youth in Mayom and Abiemnom leave over 30 dead", 3 April 2025, https://www.eyeradio.org/clashes-between-armed-youth-in-mayom-and-abiemnom-leave-over-30-dead/; Radio Tamazuj, "29 killed in Abiemnhom County attack – Officials", 3 April 2025, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/29-killed-in-abiemnhom-county-attack-officials. Note that a community leader present in Abiemnom in April 2025 told Amnesty International that the death toll of the 2025 attack was around 50 people killed. Interview in person with community leader, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area. Amnesty International has not independently verified a death toll for the April 2025 attack.

[27] UNMISS, "Mongolian peacekeepers overcome dire conditions to protect civilians in conflict-prone Abiemnhom", 3 June 2025, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/mongolian-peacekeepers-overcome-dire-conditions-protect-civilians-conflict-prone

[28] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 25 and 29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area; Sudans Post, "Armed youth from Unity State seize control of Abiemnom", 2 April 2025, https://www.sudanspost.com/armed-youth-from-unity-state-seize-control-of-abiemnom/; Radio Tamazuj, "Armed youth overrun Abiemnhom county headquarters – Official", 2 April 2025, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/armed-youth-overrun-abiemnhom-county-headquarters-official; Sudans Post, "Abiemnom attack leaves 27 dead, 17 wounded as youth withdraw", 3 April 2025, https://www.sudanspost.com/abiemnom-attack-leaves-27-dead-17-wounded-as-youth-withdraw/; Radio Tamazuj, "29 killed in Abiemnhom County attack – Officials", 3 April 2025, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/29-killed-in-abiemnhom-county-attack-officials

[29] Interviews conducted separately in person with nine people who live in Abiemnom, 2529 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area; Interviews conducted separately by voice call with two conflict analysts, 3 and 5 June 2026.



Map of South Sudan showing Mayom County in Unity State and Abiemnom town in Ruweng Administrative Area

4. THE MASSACRE

4.1 OVERVIEW OF EVENTS

On Sunday, 1 March 2026, at around 4am – 4.30am, residents of Abiemnom town in Abiemnom County in north-west Ruweng Administrative Area in the north of South Sudan on the border of Sudan and of the disputed Abyei region, woke up to the sounds of heavy gunfire.[30] A large group of armed men stormed the town, killing and injuring security personnel, as well as town residents, raiding and ransacking part of the hospital and shops, and burning several homes and parts of the market. UNMISS estimated the number of attackers involved in the assault to be between 1,000 and 1,500.[31] While the exact number of attackers is unknown, they were a sufficient number to attack the town from multiple directions at once, and to kill a reported 76 uniformed security forces stationed in and around the town.[32] The attack lasted around four hours, coming to an end around 8am. The attackers faced no resistance as they left the town. The local government authorities recorded a death toll of 213.[33] This attack on Abiemnom town is the largest documented massacre in South Sudan since 2020.[34]

Survivors identified the attackers by their language, tribal facial scarring and sex as being men from the Nuer ethnic group.[35] Undisputed and consistent accounts of several survivors and personnel working for an NGO interviewed by Amnesty International, as well as media (citing local officials and attackers), INGO and UN reports,[36] find that the group of attackers hailed from Mayom County in Unity State.[37] Survivors described

[30] Most survivors interviewed told Amnesty International that they were woken up by the sound of gunfire. Interviews conducted separately in person with survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area; UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA

[31] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.

[32] Interviews conducted separately in person with 16 survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative rea; The Juba Times, Facebook post, 21 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H3CbLtk9h/?mibextid=wwXIfr

[33] Ajak-Kuac TV's post, Facebook post, 21 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=913963771504013&id=100086711963267&mibextid=wwXIfr&rdid=K7OyVs5AXFZV4fRS#

[34] Between February and November 2020, allied Dinka and Nuer militias and Murle militias in central and southern Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPPA) engaged in major waves of attacks and retaliation attacks. These included, but were not limited to, Lou Nuer/Dinka Bor militia members' attack on the Murle in Likuangole village in the GPPA in February 2020; a Murle counterattack on the Lou Nuer in Pieri town and its environs in Uror County, Jonglei State in May 2020; another attack by the Lou Nuer/Dinka Bor militia members on the Murle in Likuangole village in May 2020; and attacks by allied Gawar Nuer from Ayod County and Dinka Bor from Twic East, Duk and Bor on Gumuruk village in Pibor County, in June, July and August 2020. Several hundreds of town residents were killed, hundreds were abducted, women and girls were subjected to sexual violence, homes and civilian infrastructure were burned and destroyed and civilian property, including cattle, was looted. CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 4 February 2021, A/HRC/46/53, paras. 32-40; CHRSS, *Detailed findings of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan,* 18 February 2021, A/HRC/46/CRP.2, paras. 90-115.

[35] Interviews conducted separately in person with17 survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

[36] UNMISS, "Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians January – March 2026", 30 June 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/quarterly_brief_on_violence_affecting_civilians_january_-_march_2026.pdf; Sudans Post, "Investigation – Who is behind the Abiemnom massacre?", 23 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/who-is-behind-the-abiemnom-massacre/; Al Jazeera, "Nearly 170 people killed in attack in South Sudan's Ruweng, officials say", 2 March 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/2/nearly-170-people-killed-in-attack-in-south-sudans-ruweng-officials-says; IOM, "Displacement Tracking Matrix – South Sudan: Event tracking report (Abiemnhom conflict) 4-9 March 2026", March 2026, https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-event-tracking-report-abiemnhom-conflict-101-04-09-march-2026; UNSG, Report: Situation in South Sudan, 13 April 2026, UN Doc. S/2026/316, paras. 29 and 57.

[37] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area and an interview conducted by voice call with a medical professional, 27 March 2026.

the armed men in mostly civilian clothes, some in all black clothes, others in sports attire, some with mis-matched police and army uniforms, and others in full green and various shades of green uniforms.[38] In South Sudan, identifying someone as being a member of a particular armed force by uniform is not always precise because forces keep their uniforms when they defect, and uniforms are easily procured.[39] Survivors said that the attackers carried rifles, machine guns and spears.[40] UNMISS reported the use of grenades.[41]

Responsibility for the attack on Abiemnom has been contested. The Padang community, Ruweng Administrative Area authorities and Unity State officials accused the SPLM/A-IO.[42] The SPLM/A-IO has denied responsibility.[43] Ruweng Administrative Area community leaders dispute the involvement of the SPLM/A-IO, stating that the attackers were armed men from Mayom County and members of the *Terchuong* militia, supported by senior political and military officials from Unity State, including local officials from Mayom County.[44] President Kiir's reappointment of Joseph Nguen Monytuil as Governor of Unity State fuelled further speculation that the *Terchuong* were responsible for the Abiemnom massacre.[45] UNMISS attributed the attack to "Bul Nuer armed elements from Mayom County, specifically the Terchuong militia."[46]

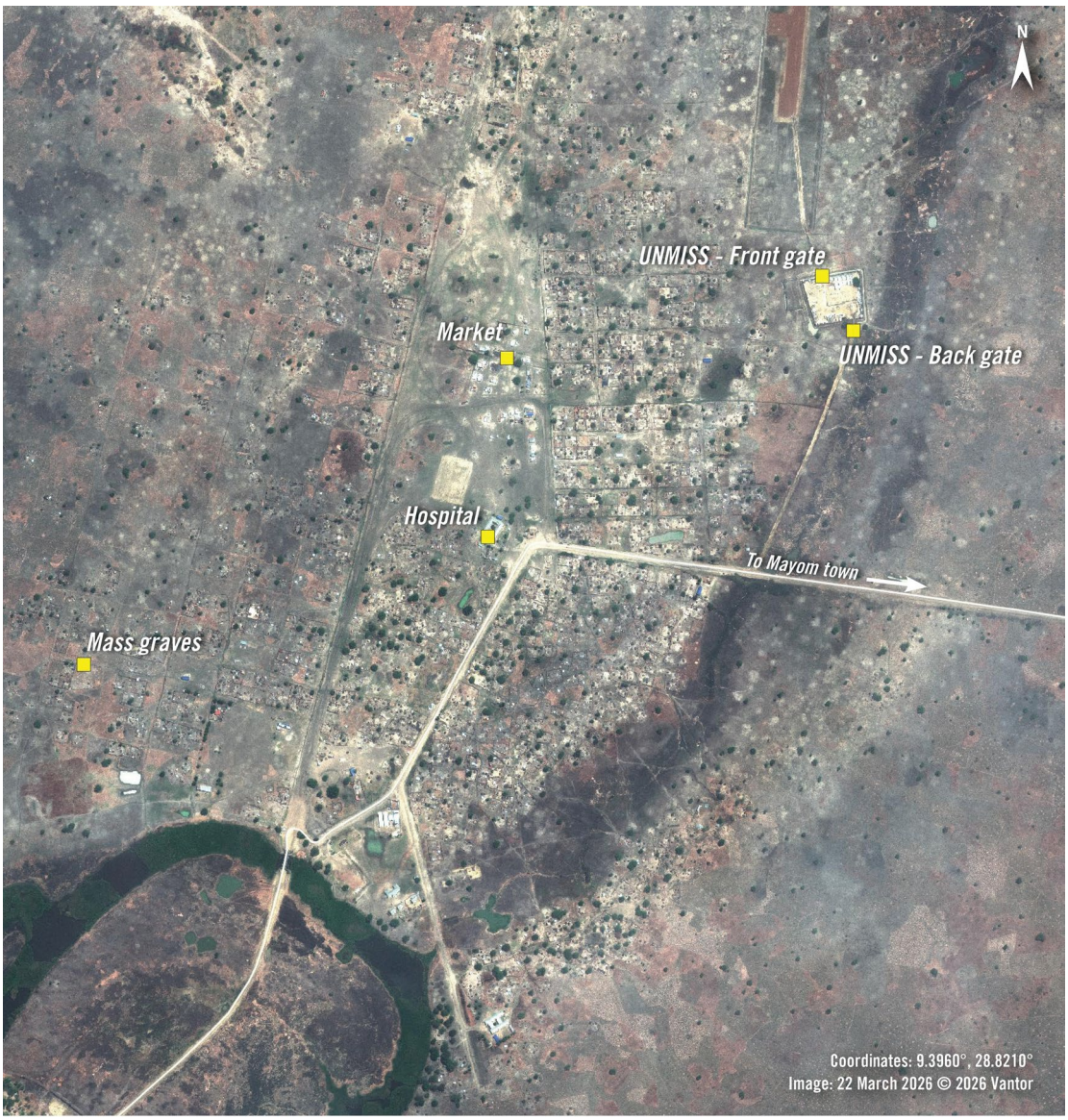
The massacre was well coordinated and was executed swiftly, suggesting this was planned in advance and coordinated by an individual, or a group of individuals, with the ability to mobilize, arm and command a large group of men. By speaking with survivors who were in different neighbourhoods in the town when the attack started, Amnesty International was able to determine that the attack was carried out by a large group of armed men and believes that the attack either came from multiple directions, or that the attackers quickly spread throughout the town.[47] According to survivors, the attackers arrived and left on foot,[48] covering a distance of around 45 kilometres each way between Mayom and Abiemnom.

The immediate trigger for the attack is reportedly the unresolved killing of several, and alleged burning of two, young men from Mayom County in Abiemnom County in February 2026.[49]

Based on the verifiable information available to it, Amnesty International considers this massacre part of inter-communal conflict dynamics in the area rather than the non-international armed conflict that erupted in December 2013. Whilst the massacre cannot be seen independently of the broader armed conflict environment, in which local grievances are often combined with broader political struggles and interests and community-based militias are often employed by national elites as proxies in attacks,[50] the evidence available to Amnesty International does not show that the attack on Abiemnom had nexus to the armed conflict in South Sudan. Rather, based on the available information, the attack was carried out by locally mobilized armed men, responding to local triggers and pursuing community objectives, including revenge and livestock disputes, that targeted a rival community.

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[38] Interviews conducted separately in person with almost all survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[39] Radio Tamazuj, "NSS to arrest, prosecute for illegal use of security uniforms", 9 June 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/nss-to-arrest-prosecute-for-illegal-use-of-security-uniforms
[40] Most survivors said that attackers carried firearms and three said that some carried spears. Interviews conducted separately in person with survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[41] UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA
[42] Sudans Post, "Investigation – Who is behind the Abiemnom Massacre?" 23 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/who-is-behind-the-abiemnom-massacre/
[43] Sudans Post, "SPLA-IO denies involvement in Abiemnom attack, says gov't politicizing violence", 1 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/spla-io-denies-involvement-in-abiemnom-attack-says-govt-politicizing-violence/
[44] Sudans Post, "Investigation – Who is behind the Abiemnom Massacre?" 23 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/who-is-behind-the-abiemnom-massacre/
[45] Interviews conducted separately by voice call with two conflict analysts, 3-5 June 2026; Radio Tamazuj, "Terchuong: Politically connected militia in controversy", 25 May 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/terchuong-politically-connected-militia-in-controversy
[46] UNMISS, "Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians January – March 2026", 30 June 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/quarterly_brief_on_violence_affecting_civilians_january_-_march_2026.pdf
[47] Interviews conducted separately in person with eleven survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[48] Interviews conducted separately in person with ten survivors, 25-19 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[49] On 13 February, the Commissioner of Mayom County called for a thorough investigation into the reported killing of two boys from Mayom County allegedly by armed youth from Abiemnom County. Mayom County Commissioner's Office, Press release, 13 February 2026 (posted on 19 February 2026), https://www.facebook.com/groups/526957180739462/permalink/25181598894848615/ Sudans Post, "Investigation – Who is behind the Abiemnom Massacre?" 23 March 2026, https://www.sudanspost.com/who-is-behind-the-abiemnom-massacre/; UNMISS, "Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians January – March 2026", 30 June 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/quarterly_brief_on_violence_affecting_civilians_january_-_march_2026.pdf
[50] Amnesty International, "South Sudan's conflicts are not just between communities", 30 March 2023, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/violent-conflicts-in-south-sudan-almost-always-involve-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-and-crimes-under-international-law/



Map showing locations in Abiemnom town mentioned in this report.

4.2 EARLY WARNING SIGNS

South Sudanese authorities and UNMISS officials knew that an imminent attack on Abiemnom was sufficiently likely, making them obligated to take steps to prevent it and protect the population. In a media article, the Unity State Minister of Information acknowledges that the authorities had "received prior intelligence regarding a potential threat to Abiemnom County".[51] In the statement shared with Amnesty International, UNMISS confirms that they were aware of increasingly heightening tensions since 14 February 2026.[52] Two Abiemnom community leaders told Amnesty International that, in mid- to late-February, people in Mayom town started warning their relatives and friends in Abiemnom town that an attack on Abiemnom was imminent because they could see young men mobilizing and firearms and ammunition being organized.[53] In response to Amnesty International's letter, UNMISS stated that it started urging state and local authorities to take preventive action in mid-February when tensions heightened following the "reported killing of two Bul Nuer individuals by suspected armed elements from Abiemnom in Panthiok, on the border

[51] Radio Tamazuj, "Death toll in Abiemnhom attack rises to 120, officials say", 2 March 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/death-toll-in-abiemnhom-attack-rises-to-120-officials-say
[52] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[53] Interview conducted separately in person with two survivors, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area; Interview by video call with medical professional, 06 July 2026.

with Mayom."[54] According to UNMISS, around that same time, the mission raised "the importance of deploying additional security forces in Abiemnom to deter conflict with the SSPDF leadership in Unity State."[55] In addition, a local leader from Abiemnom who was present in the town before and during the attack told Amnesty International that the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission officer had told UNMISS about an imminent attack.[56] Evidently, UNMISS took these warnings – as well as rumours of a possible retaliatory attack – seriously enough to allow concerned town residents, including local authorities, to shelter close to the base in the days and weeks prior to the attack.[57]

In a press release issued on 1 March 2026, UNMISS explained that tensions had been high in Abiemnom since 27 February 2026, that it was "alarmed by surging violence in Abiemnom, Ruweng Administrative Area, in the past 48 hours,"[58] and that, on 28 February 2026, "some 1,000 civilians sought protection outside the UNMISS base."[59] In the statement shared with Amnesty International, UNMISS said that "between 1,000 and 1,500 residents were seeking protection at the TOB each evening and returning to the town in the morning."[60] Survivors told Amnesty International that they had sought the safety of the UNMISS TOB around one or two weeks prior to the attack.[61]

These early warning signs gave the authorities and UNMISS two weeks to prepare a response.

There is a pattern of inter-communal violence in Ruweng and state authorities and UNMISS should have learned lessons from the April 2025 attack, which has similarities to the March 2026 attack. Both followed smaller, violent incidents that triggered revenge attacks. Given the high levels of revenge attacks between communities in South Sudan, government forces and UNMISS would have been alive to the possibility that a large-scale attack could happen, especially when the warnings described above started and when people started sleeping near the UNMISS TOB. In its response to Amnesty International's letter, UNMISS indeed confirms that the mission and government authorities were aware that an attack was likely. Nine Abiemnom residents cited the attack and killings of April 2025, and the impunity which followed, as evidence of heightened risk of recurrence that required concrete measures to be resolved.[62] Following the April 2025 attack, UNMISS wrote that the UNMISS TOB was established in Abiemnom in August 2024 "to help deter persistent cattle-raiding and revenge attacks,"[63] suggesting that UNMISS considers cattle disputes and other incidents that would trigger revenge attacks necessary to deter and would have protocols to identify early warning signs. In addition, UNMISS's decision to maintain the TOB in Abiemnom at a time when the peacekeeping mission was undergoing cuts suggests that it was aware of it being a high-risk area for civilians. In fact, in its response to Amnesty International's letter, UNMISS writes that it "assesses the Mayom-Abiemnhom corridor as among the highest-risk areas in its operating environment."[64] In 2025, at least 800 people sought shelter near the UNMISS TOB.[65] Based on this, state authorities and UNMISS could have anticipated that hundreds, if not thousands, of people would try to do so again in the next attack.

4.3 KILLINGS

Amnesty International documented a pattern of attackers deliberately shooting and killing town residents, mostly men, as well as random shooting that resulted in the deaths and injuries of town residents, many of

[54] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[55] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[56] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[57] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 26-27 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area; UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[58] UNMISS, "Press Release - UNMISS alarmed by rising violence in Abiemnom, calls for urgent restoration of calm", 1 March 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/press-release-unmiss-alarmed-rising-violence-abiemnom-calls-urgent?fbclid=IwY2xjawR44H5leHRuA2FlbQIxMABzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeurxb5wPf9BIj8uY29nYcOtq__Md8aqnWyr101oUvkCL_9b02mMCieJYUrsI_aem_3dehW0Q3jzWUpH1GDlI3Xg
[59] UNMISS, "Press Release - UNMISS alarmed by rising violence in Abiemnom, calls for urgent restoration of calm", 1 March 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/press-release-unmiss-alarmed-rising-violence-abiemnom-calls-urgent?fbclid=IwY2xjawR44H5leHRuA2FlbQIxMABzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeurxb5wPf9BIj8uY29nYcOtq__Md8aqnWyr101oUvkCL_9b02mMCieJYUrsI_aem_3dehW0Q3jzWUpH1GDlI3Xg
[60] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[61] Interviews conducted separately in person with five survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[62] Interviews conducted separately in person with nine residents of Abiemnom town, 25 – 29 March 2026, Abyei and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[63] UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers from Mongolia protect hundreds of civilians following violence in Abiemnhom", 10 April 2025, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/unmiss-peacekeepers-mongolia-protect-hundreds-civilians-following-violence-abiemnhom
[64] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[65] UNMISS, "Mongolian peacekeepers overcome dire conditions to protect civilians in conflict-prone Abiemnhom", 3 June 2025, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/mongolian-peacekeepers-overcome-dire-conditions-protect-civilians-conflict-prone; UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers from Mongolia protect hundreds of civilians following violence in Abiemnhom", 10 April 2025, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/unmiss-peacekeepers-mongolia-protect-hundreds-civilians-following-violence-abiemnhom

them women and children. Town residents were shot in and around their homes, courtyards and while fleeing or trying to hide in the bush or near the UNMISS TOB. Some were deliberately targeted and shot at close range, including after they had been captured, shot, injured and fallen; and others were killed by bullets fired from afar, in what appears to have been indiscriminate shooting in the direction of fleeing residents. The attackers would have known that, in that setting, such random shooting of firearms would kill and injure residents, and, by their actions and the high death toll, that appears to have been their intention. Survivors told Amnesty International that government security forces stationed in Abiemnom, including soldiers, police and wildlife service members, as well as armed town residents, tried to repel the attack in its early stages by firing their weapons, but were quickly outnumbered.[66] Survivors told Amnesty International that some security forces fled and scores were killed as they tried to repel the attackers.[67]

The day after the attack, media houses citing local officials and the Minister of Information, Communication, Technology and Postal Services reported that at least 169 people had been killed, of whom 90 were unarmed town residents, including women, children and older persons, and 79 were government security forces, including soldiers and police.[68] As of 21 March 2026, 43 people were missing.[69]

On 3 March 2026, MSF reported that, of the 84 patients with gunshot wounds that they received, including women and children, several patients, including a pregnant woman, passed away.[70] More bodies were found in and around Abiemnom in the days after the massacre. Some residents had fled their homes and hidden in the grasslands in the area surrounding the town, but were pursued and killed there.[71] Two survivors told Amnesty International that they saw burned bodies in the town.[72]

The final death toll compiled by local authorities at the end of March was 213, of which 130 were town residents, including women and children, and 76 were members of the security forces, including the police, army and wildlife service, and seven were foreigners.[73] A local town leader who participated in establishing the death toll in Abiemnom town told Amnesty International that, after being collected, the dead were placed in one location and counted.[74] A religious leader, who was present in Abiemnom during the attack and when authorities were collecting, counting and burying the bodies, told Amnesty International that the bodies of some attackers were also buried.[75] He was unable to give an exact number. It is unclear whether these are included in the government's death toll. It is also unclear how the authorities categorized the deceased armed residents who tried to repel the attack in their death toll.

The majority of the bodies were buried in two mass graves dug next to each other on the outskirts of the town. The religious leader told Amnesty International that it was only possible to bury the dead when Abyei authorities sent an excavator to dig the graves the day after the attack.[76] Other bodies were buried near their homesteads or in other locations around the town.[77]

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[66] Interviews conducted separately in person with 15 survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[67] Interviews conducted separately in person with eight survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[68] Al Jazeera, "Nearly 170 people killed in attack in South Sudan's Ruweng, officials say", 2 March 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/2/nearly-170-people-killed-in-attack-in-south-sudans-ruweng-officials-says; Eyeradio, "Ruweng confirms 169 killed in Abiemnhom attack, including 79 soldiers", 2 March 2026, https://www.eyeradio.org/ruweng-confirms-169-killed-in-abiemnhom-attack-including-79-soldiers/; Sudan Times, "Death toll rises to 169 after armed youth attack in South Sudan", 2 March 2026, https://thesudantimes.com/sudan/death-toll-rises-to-169-after-armed-youth-attack-in-south-sudan/; MoICTPS, "Government statement on Abiemnom deadly incident", 2 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1230242765956548&set=a.230793615901473
[69] The Juba Times, Facebook post, 21 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H3CbLtk9h/?mibextid=wwXIfr
[70] MSF, https://www.msf-me.org/media-centre/news-and-stories/they-killed-them-while-we-were-running MSF, "South Sudan: Mass casualty in Abiemnhom Town", 2 March 2026, https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/south-sudan-mass-causality-in-abiemnhom-town/; MSF, *"They killed them while we were running": Escalating violence in South Sudan*, May 2026, https://www.msf-me.org/media-centre/news-and-stories/they-killed-them-while-we-were-running, p. 14.
[71] Interviews conducted separately in person with five survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[72] Interviews conducted separately in person with two survivors, 25 and 27 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[73] The Juba Times, Facebook post, 21 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H3CbLtk9h/?mibextid=wwXIfr
[74] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[75] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[76] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[77] Interviews conducted separately in person with six survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.



Bodies in the mass grave in Abiemnom posted on Ajak-Kuac TV's Facebook page on 2 March 2026.[78]



Mass graves in Abiemnom town, taken by Amnesty International on 28 March 2026.

4.3.1 EXECUTION-STYLE KILLINGS

Fourteen survivors told Amnesty International that they witnessed attackers deliberately shoot and kill town residents in execution-style killings. Attackers shot residents at close range either in their hiding places or after dragging or chasing them from these places, including by setting hiding places on fire, and killing them. Attackers also shot residents at close range, killing them, after capturing residents or while residents lay injured on the ground and unable to flee.[79]

"Adut", a 20-year-old woman, told Amnesty International that she was sleeping at home with her mother, sister and four brothers, aged between four and ten years old, as well as her 15-year-old cousin, **"Kuol"**. Her

[78] Ajak-Kuac TV, Facebook post, 2 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=899331596300564&id=100086711963267&mibextid=wwXIfr&rdid=oujGQ6Yqr9Nrvy1M#

[79] Interviews conducted separately in person with fourteen survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

neighbours, five women and their seven children, were hiding with them after attackers had set a nearby house ablaze and they sought safety in **"Adut's"** house. She told Amnesty International:

> **"Four attackers came into our *tukul* [hut], at about 6am, it was already light, and they pulled my cousin, 'Kuol' from under the bed and shot him in the head and killed him on the spot. All the women and children were crying and screaming and [the attackers] left. 'Kuol' was like my brother."**
>
> "Adut" – a 20-year-old woman who survived the massacre.[80]

"Nyandeng" – a 47-year-old mother of seven who survived the massacre – lived with her son, a teacher, his wife, **"Nyalet"**, and their two children, aged 20 months and five years. She told Amnesty International that they were sleeping when the attack started. The women and children were separated from **"Nyandeng's"** son as they were running, trying to escape the gunfire. **"Nyandeng"** told Amnesty International that a group of attackers robbed them and then shot and killed her daughter-in-law. She said:

> **"The attackers [who were burning *tukuls*] caught us and made us sit on the ground and told us to hand over money and phones. We gave what we had and then they shot my daughter-in-law, 'Nyalet', in the back of the head, killing her. She was holding her youngest child and I was holding the other boy. They saw their mother being killed."**
>
> "Nyandeng" – a 47-year-old mother of seven who survived the massacre.[81]



***"Nyangdeng"** cradling **"Nyalet's"** youngest son, who **"Nyalet"** was holding when she was shot and killed.*

[80] Interview in person with survivor, 27 March 2026, Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[81] Interview in person with survivor, 29 March 2026, Abyei Town, Abyei Administrative Area.

"Adhieu", a woman who survived the massacre, said she was hiding from the gunfire in a house near the hospital with three other women. From their hiding place, she saw attackers shoot a 25-year-old student, **"Ring"**, in the head. He had been hiding in another house that was close to them. She learned later that he died.[82]

"Abuk", a 60-year-old mother of eight children told Amnesty International how she saw attackers shoot and kill her 30-year-old son at the home where they had hidden as they were trying to run away from the attack.

> **"When the attack first started, my son 'Mabior' went out to try to defend the town, but he quickly returned home because he had no ammunition for his rifle. We tried to run away, but there were attackers everywhere and so we hid in a *tukul* near our home. This *tukul* was empty because those who lived there had also run away… Four attackers came into the *tukul*, but there were more outside. They pulled 'Mabior', from under the bed and immediately shot him dead… They shot him in the head and in the chest from very close, took his rifle and left. He was 30 years old and helped me with farming."**
>
> "Abuk" – a 60-year-old woman who survived the massacre.[83]

"Abuk" also told Amnesty International that attackers killed her 24-year-old nephew and high school student, **"Mawut",** as he and **"Abuk's"** other son, **"Ajak"**, aged 19, were running away.[84] **"Ajak"** showed Amnesty International his injuries – gunshot wounds to the lower right flank and right wrist – outside the hospital where he was being treated and recalled the deliberate killing of his cousin:

> **"I was asleep at home with my mother and my siblings and my cousin, 'Mawut', and we were woken up by shooting and ran away. Me and 'Mawut' were trying to hide in houses here and there. When we were coming out of a house to run on further, we found some attackers at the gate, and they shot at us and killed 'Mawut' and injured me. One of the bullets shattered the bone just above my right wrist and the other bullet went into my right side and remained inside my abdomen until I could reach the hospital in Abyei. There were many attackers, all over the place."**
>
> "Ajak" – a 20-year-old man who survived the massacre.[85]



***"Ajak"** showing his injuries to Amnesty International at a displacement site in March 2026.*

Some survivors told Amnesty International that the attackers set houses on fire to force those hiding inside to come out and then shot them.[86]

> **"The attackers set fire to the tukul where my 82-year-old father was sleeping and also to the one where I was and another next to it. I ran out and managed to save myself, but my**

[82] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[83] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[84] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[85] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[86] Interviews conducted separately in person with five survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

> **father was shot in the leg as he ran out and fell down and then the attackers went near him and shot him in the head."**
>
> "Nyakim" – a 50-year-old survivor, daughter of "Malual".[87]

"Nyibol", a 35-year-old survivor, told Amnesty International that her husband's brother, **"Bol"**, was hiding in a hut with another man named **"Majok"**. She said that **"Bol"** was killed and **"Majok"** was injured. She was not sure whether **"Majok"** survived.

> **"I was hiding in a *tukul* in Block 13 near where 'Bol' and 'Majok' were hiding, and I saw some of the attackers set that *tukul* on fire and when 'Bol' and 'Majok' ran out of the *tukul* as it was in flame, the attackers shot them."**
>
> "Nyibol" – a 35-year-old survivor of the massacre.[88]

4.3.2 KILLINGS WHILE PEOPLE WERE FLEEING

Many survivors described running away with others, including relatives, and seeing them get shot and fall, or, from their hiding places, seeing running people get shot and fall.[89] Survivors also described seeing dead bodies scattered throughout town as they fled for safety.[90]

"Nyagouth", a 48-year-old woman who saw attackers shoot her daughter dead, told Amnesty International:

> **"My daughter, 'Awut', was shot dead by the attackers… When the shooting started, we were sleeping. My son-in-law ran away and then we saw that the *tukul* was burning and so we grabbed the children and ran out. We were only about 30 or 40 metres from the house when my daughter was hit by a bullet in her [upper] back. The bullet came out from her chest. She collapsed and died… She was carrying both her children when she was shot and fell. There were many attackers around shooting in all directions; I don't know which one shot her. They were near… I could not do anything for my daughter; I could not bury her. I had to save the children."**
>
> "Nyagouth" – a 48-year-old woman survivor whose daughter was shot dead as they tried to run to safety.[91]

"Awut" was 19 years old and had two children, aged 18 months and four years.[92] **"Aluel"**, a neighbour, told Amnesty International that she saw **"Awut's"** lifeless body later that day among the bodies which were collected for burial.[93]

"Akuol", who was hiding in the same house as her mother-in-law, told Amnesty International about her relative's death:

> **"We ran and entered a house where we hid. [A stray bullet] hit my mother-in-law in her upper back through the window. She died in the house."**
>
> "Akuol" – a woman who survived the massacre.[94]

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[87] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[88] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[89] Interviews conducted separately in person with 24 survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[90] Interviews conducted separately in person with nine survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[91] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[92] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[93] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[94] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.

Children were also victims. For instance, **"Akuol"**, a 28-year-old mother of two told Amnesty International that her 10-year-old daughter, **"Ayen"**, was shot and killed as **"Akuol"** was trying to flee from the fighting with **"Ayen"** and her other young daughter.[95] She recalled:

> **"When the shooting started, we ran away and hid in a *tukul,* but it was set on fire, so we looked for another *tukul*. There were some armed youths nearby who were fighting with the attackers and the attackers were shooting in our direction and they killed my 10-year-old daughter, 'Ayen'."**
>
> "Akuol" – a 28-year-old mother of two who survived the massacre.[96]



*Photo of a younger **"Ayen"** who was 10 years old when she was killed in the Abiemnom massacre.*

Seven of the killings reported to Amnesty International took place outside the rear gates of the UNMISS TOB, close to the airstrip, on the eastern edge of the town, because many residents ran to the base hoping that the UNMISS peacekeepers would protect them.[97] Some of these killings took place right outside the gate, others up to 30-40 metres from the gate. A local town leader told Amnesty International: "In the morning, [town residents] trying to run to UNMISS found the Nuer groups standing there and [shooting at them]."[98]

4.3.3 SHOOTING TO KILL AND CAUSING WIDESPREAD HARM AND INJURIES

Testimonies describing attackers' behaviour indicate that the aim of the attackers was to cause as much damage as possible. As a result, the attack left many residents injured. Amnesty International found a pattern of reports of attackers injuring town residents after they either deliberately shot at residents, or residents were struck by stray bullets. According to local authorities, at least 109 people were injured.[99] Patients were treated in primarily the Ministry of Health Hospital in Abyei town, which is supported by MSF, and in Mother Theresa Hospital in Turalei, Twic County, in Warrap State, about a four-hour drive from Abiemnom town. Based on survivors' testimonies, reports by MSF and an interview with a medical professional treating patients, the overwhelming number of injuries, including fractures, were caused by gunshots – many of them severe enough to require surgery.[100] MSF reported that the youngest injured victim was four years old and was shot in the hip.[101]

"Umar", a 20-year-old trader from Sudan who had been living in Abiemnom since 2017, told Amnesty International:

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[95] Interview in person with survivor, 27 March 2026, Juol Jok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[96] Interview in person with survivor, 27 March 2026, Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[97] Interviews conducted separately in person with seven survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[98] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[99] The Juba Times, Facebook post, 21 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H3CbLtk9h/?mibextid=wwXIfr
[100] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *"They killed them while we were running": Escalating violence in South Sudan*, May 2026, https://www.msf-me.org/media-centre/news-and-stories/they-killed-them-while-we-were-running, p. 14; MSF, "South Sudan: Mass casualty in Abiemnhom Town", 2 March 2026, https://prezly.msf.org.uk/south-sudan-mass-causality-in-abiemnhom-town; Interview by voice call with medical professional, 27 March 2026; Interviews conducted separately in person with 36 survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[101] MSF, *"They killed them while we were running": Escalating violence in South Sudan*, May 2026, https://www.msf-me.org/media-centre/news-and-stories/they-killed-them-while-we-were-running, p. 14.

> **"I was sleeping inside my shop in the market. I woke up and tried to get out of my shop, but there were too many bullets being shot… [The attacker] shot the padlock, entered [my shop] and shot me."**
>
> "Umar" – a 20-year-old Sudanese trader who survived the massacre.[102]

Once the shooting stopped, **"Umar"** was taken to UNMISS and from there to Abyei for medical treatment. He showed Amnesty International his bandaged injuries: "The bullet entered through my hip and exited through my buttocks."[103]

"Nhial", a 37-year-old man, was sleeping at home when he was woken up by gunshots. He said:

> **"I went to check which direction it came from, but it was everywhere. The whole area was occupied… I tried running east, but it was difficult to reach UNMISS. I tried many different directions. I was running [when I got shot]. I ran to the bush. It was difficult to reach the hospital because I was dizzy from the bleeding."**
>
> "Nhial" – a 37-year-old man who survived the massacre.[104]

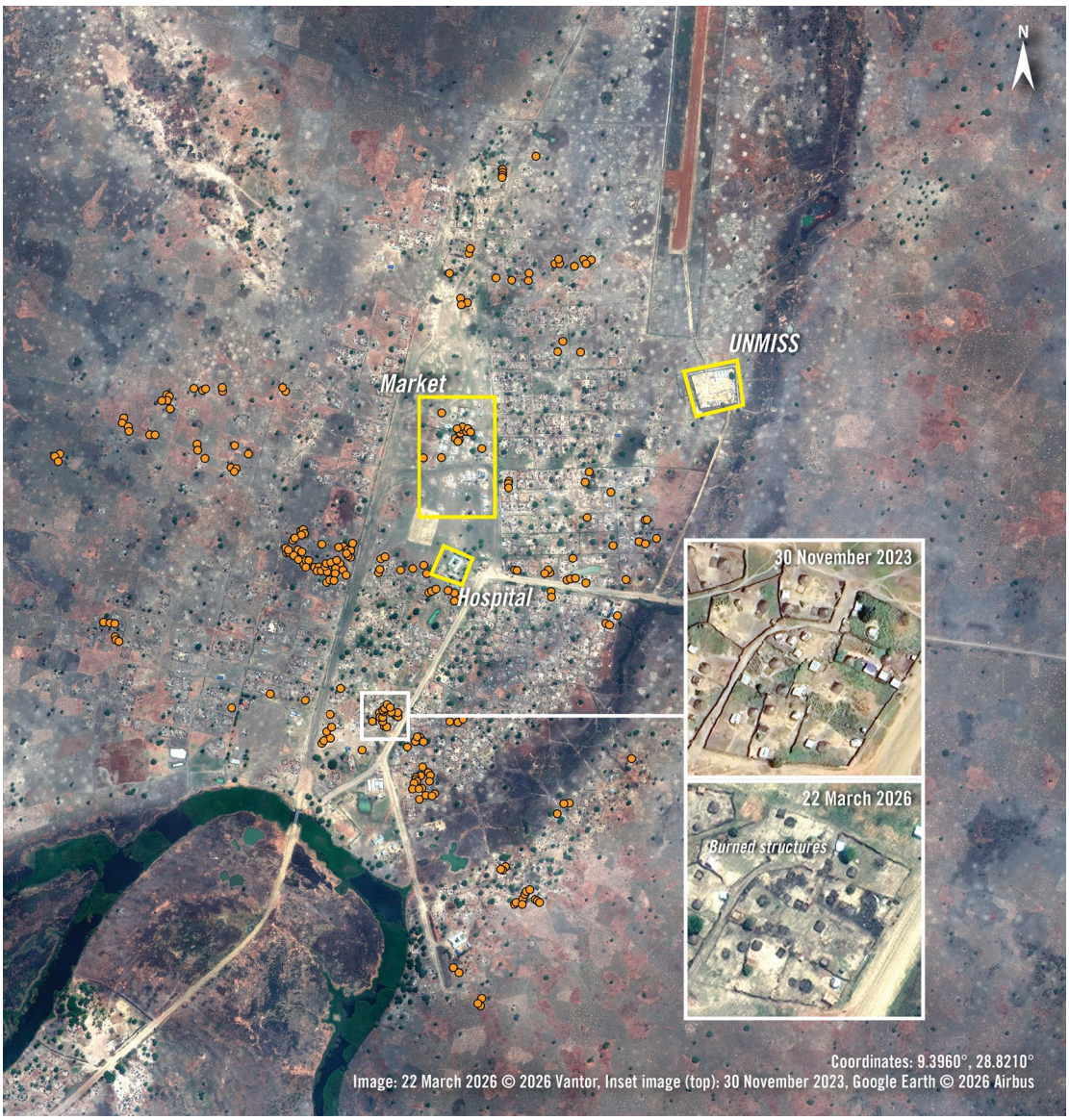
"Nhial" said he found a car that transported him to the hospital in Abyei where the bullet was removed from his arm.[105]

4.4 DESTRUCTION AND THEFT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

The attackers burned down several homes and a significant part of the market, and ransacked part of the hospital. During a visit to Abiemnom on 28 March 2026, Amnesty International delegates established that although most homes (*tukuls* and grass houses) were left untouched, several were burned down in every neighbourhood of the town,[106] leaving the owners and their families homeless and dispossessed of their personal belongings. Satellite imagery from 22 March 2026 analysed by Amnesty International shows that over 230 structures were razed. Lower resolution imagery confirms the burning happened between when images were taken on 28 February and 1 March 2026. In some of the homesteads (family compound with multiple structures, typically surrounded by a circular shaped fence made of wood and thorny bushes) all the structures were burned down, while in others one or two were burned and the rest were still intact.[107]

Satellite imagery, Amnesty International researchers' observations and eyewitness testimony show that a significant part of the market was burned.[108]

[102] Interview in person with survivor, 29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[103] Interview in person with survivor, 29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[104] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[105] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[106] Residents who fled the attack and hid in the grassland on the outskirts of the town described seeing fires all over the town in the distance. This may have led people to conclude that the burning had been much more extensive.
[107] Many homesteads are composed of several structures, often a mix of *tukuls* and grass houses, usually surrounded by a light fence made of wooden sticks.
[108] Interviews conducted separately in person with two survivors, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.



Satellite imagery of Abiemnom shows the spread of burned structures – highlighted with orange dots – across the town. Over 230 structures appear razed by fire in the imagery from 22 March 2026. Lower resolution imagery (not shown) confirms burning occurred between when imagery was captured on 28 February and 1 March 2026.

According to survivors, some homes were deliberately set on fire by attackers using lighters,[109] while others seemingly caught fire as they were hit by bullets or other projectiles.[110] The houses are largely made of mud, wooden poles and dried grass and are thus highly flammable and fire may have also spread from other burning structures.

"Nhial", a 37-year-old mechanic, told Amnesty International that some of the attackers, who shot at him and his brother and killed other men who were fleeing the attack, threatened to kill him and told him, **"Your area should remain charcoal"**,[111] suggesting that Abiemnom town should be burned and remain destroyed.

Attackers stole residents' possessions from their homes and in person.[112] Several survivors told Amnesty International that attackers forced them at gunpoint to hand over their mobile phones, money and jewellery while fleeing and when attackers stormed their homes.[113]

For instance, **"Aluel"**, a midwife, told Amnesty International:

[109] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[110] Most houses are made of dry grass, which can ignite easily, especially during the dry season. March falls in the dry season.
[111] Interview in person with survivor, 29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[112] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[113] Interviews conducted separately in person with survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

> **"As I was running to the river, carrying my two-year-old daughter, I saw houses burning, and when I returned to Abiemnom later that day, I saw some of them burned to the ground. I was lucky that my home was not burned or looted, but seven attackers stopped me while I was running to the river and two of them grabbed my shoulders and two others searched my pockets and took my two phones and one of them hit me on my leg with a stick."**
>
> "Aluel" – a 35-year-old midwife.[114]

Others witnessed attackers steal from shops or household items and livestock from homes.[115] For instance, **"Adhieu"** told Amnesty International that, from her hiding place, she saw attackers shoot the padlock of another house and take the goats that were inside. Some of the attackers then came to the house where she was hiding with her pregnant daughter and two other women, tried to rob them and stole mattresses, mosquito nets and other items.[116]

At least one public structure, the Abiemnom Hospital, was partially ransacked by the attackers. **"Aluel"**, a midwife who fled the hospital before the attackers reached it, and another medical professional who was present, told Amnesty International researchers that attackers had stolen medical supplies and mattresses from the hospital.[117]

4.5 DISPLACEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The entire population of Abiemnom town fled in the wake of the attack, and the town remained empty when Amnesty International researchers visited on 28 March 2026, barring a handful of residents, some of whom were tending to their farms but were living at displacement sites away from the town.

There are no reliable population figures for Abiemnom town prior to the 1 March 2026 attack. A town leader estimated that 7,000 people lived in Abiemnom before the attack.[118] The International Organization for Migration reported that the attack on Abiemnom forced "3,148 individuals to move to the Mongolian Battalion (MONBATT) United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Temporary Operating Base. Due to limited capacity at the UNMISS base, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) were compelled to relocate to other relatively safer areas within the county".[119]

Other sources quote much higher numbers for those displaced from Abiemnom to Abyei. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on 17 April 2026 that: "A recent Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment and reports from the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission indicate large-scale displacement following the March 2026 attack on Abiemnom. An estimated 7,444 people (1,486 households) fled to Twic and Gogrial West, while a further 20,485 people (4,097 households) were displaced to the Abyei Youth Centre and Agok/Juoljok."[120] The majority of the people fled to Abyei town and others to Juoljok, Wau and other surrounding areas.[121] Virtually all the survivors of the Abiemnom massacre interviewed in March by Amnesty International said that they did not feel safe to return to Abiemnom in the absence of meaningful reassurances and concrete measures by the relevant authorities and international actors to ensure their protection.

For instance, **"Aluel"**, a 35-year-old midwife and mother of three, told Amnesty International:

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[114] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[115] Interviews conducted separately in person with two survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[116] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[117] Interviews conducted separately in person with two survivors, 28 March 2026, Abiemnom, Ruweng Administrative Area.
[118] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town.
[119] IOM, "South Sudan – Event Tracking Report: Abiemnhom Conflict #101 (04 – 09 March 2026), 18 March 2026, https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-event-tracking-report-abiemnhom-conflict-101-04-09-march-2026
[120] UNOCHA, "South Sudan Humanitarian Update 1-17 April 2026", https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-response-situation-report-no-1-16-april-2026#:~:text=The%20Floods%20Task%20Force%202026%20was%20activated.%20SITUATION,disease%20outbreaks%2C%20restricted%20access%2C%20and%20mounting%20operational%20constraints. UNOCHA and international aid organizations also provided some assistance.
[121] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.

> **"I cannot go back without security. Not so much for me, but for my children. They are young and I work and I cannot be with them all the time. This time, they were saved by the grace of God and last year also, but what if there is another attack?"**
>
> "Aluel" – a 35-year-old mother of three.[122]

Conditions in the makeshift displacement sites where most of the displaced were sheltering in late March 2026 were dire, lacking basic shelter and water and sanitation facilities. At the time of the interviews, around three weeks after the attack, the displaced relied largely on charity from other displaced persons and members of the host community. At the national level, local authorities, the Greater Pioneer Operating Company – an oil consortium composed of four oil companies[123] – and churches were among those who provided some basic humanitarian support to the displaced survivors.[124]

On 8 April 2026, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Albino Akol Atak met with the Chief Administrator of the Ruweng Administrative Area concerning the humanitarian situation in the area, including the plight of people displaced by conflict in Abiemnom and elsewhere. In the meeting he "reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting affected populations and announced that humanitarian supplies are available in government stores and ready for immediate delivery to the area."[125] The promised support was not reported on in a UN OCHA report covering humanitarian support to the area between 1 and 17 April 2026.[126] It is unclear whether the promised support was delivered after 17 April 2026.

Some assistance was provided by international aid organizations,[127] by which time the displaced who were sheltering in Abyei town had been relocated to a displacement site in Miyokol, east of Abyei.[128]

By May, some of the displaced residents had returned to Abiemnom, though available information suggests the number of returnees was small.[129] In September, two medical professionals told Amnesty International that almost all residents had returned to Abiemnom.[130] Amnesty International was unable to verify the exact number of people who returned to Abiemnom at the time of publication.

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[122] Interview in person with survivor, 28 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[123] Ministry of Petroleum South Sudan website, accessed on 7 July 2026, https://mop.gov.ss/partners
[124] Interview in person with survivor, 25 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area and 27 March 2026, Juoljok, Ruweng Administrative Area; South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC), "On March 20th, 2026, the residents of Abiemnom received much-needed humanitarian assistance from the Greater Pioneer Operating Company, in response to the recent massacre", Facebook post, 20 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/groups/3662574880668021/posts/4318021111790058/
[125] Office of the Chief Administrator – Ruweng Administrative Area, "Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Ruweng Chief Administrator Discuss Strategic Response to Displaced Persons in Ruweng Administrative Area", Facebook post, 8 April 2026, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0xzbkL5SPcZBsKZ5Prwx9fy84A693zGod7ytySS4yvp31KtRvdmPiwa2prLybcHxxl&id=100082487230645
[126] UNOCHA, "South Sudan Humanitarian Update 1-17 April 2026", 16 April 2026, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-update-1-17-april-2026
[127] Efforts include registration, verification and – at the time – scheduled distribution of support to 1,331 IDP households from Abiemnhom, in Miakol IDP settlement in Abyei Administrative Area by Save the Children International. The Norwegian Refugee Council had completed registration of 1,600 IDP households in Juoljok and, at the time, was planning a one-off cash distribution to enable them to meet their basic needs. "The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in collaboration with the State Ministry of Agriculture, supported the establishment of two livestock water yards in Miabek and Nai Nai and repaired two out of three tractors planned for maintenance. From 25 to 30 March, an inter-agency team conducted a mission to Abiemnhom to support conflict-affected communities. During the mission, more than 3,300 people were registered and provided with non-food items, including soap and clothing but are also in need of food assistance." UNOCHA, "South Sudan Humanitarian Update 1-17 April 2026", 16 April 2026, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-update-1-17-april-2026
[128] Interview by voice call with humanitarian worker in Abyei, 11 June 2026; Abiemnom Today News, "Relocation of Abiemnhom IDPs to Miyokol, East of Abyei: UNISFA Deploys 55 Tents for Shelter", Facebook post, 2 April 2026, https://www.facebook.com/100063692756922/posts/relocation-of-abiemnhom-idps-to-miyokol-east-of-abyei-unisfa-deploys-55-tents-fo/1547485684051175/
[129] Ruweng Administrative Area Media House Forum, "First Vehicle carrying Abiemnom IDPs arrived to Abiemnom from Wau", Facebook post, 13 May 2026, https://www.facebook.com/groups/1392194608289246/permalink/2152698795572153
[130] Two medical professionals in Abiemnom town, messages to Amnesty International, 29 September 2026, on file with Amnesty International.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND DOMESTIC CRIMES

5.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

5.1.1 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Amnesty International considers this massacre part of inter-communal conflict dynamics. As such, the organization applies international human rights law and South Sudanese law and not international humanitarian law.

South Sudan has ratified several international and regional human rights instruments that contain human rights standards relevant to the violations documented in this report. The right to life is protected by Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that South Sudan ratified on 5 February 2024. Article 6(1) of the ICCPR states: "Every human being has the inherent right to life. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life." This right is a peremptory norm of international law and can never be suspended or otherwise derogated from, even "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation" (Article 4). Article 6 of the ICCPR encompasses the right to bodily integrity. In addition, Article 9 of the ICCPR protects the right to security of person, which includes protection against bodily or mental injury.[131]

The right to life is also protected by Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) that South Sudan ratified on 23 October 2013.[132] Article 6 of the ACHPR protects the right to security of person.[133]

Each state party to a human rights instrument has the general obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights and freedoms enshrined in the instrument. The obligation to protect includes that the state must

[131] ICCPR, Article 9; UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment 35: Article 9 (Liberty and security of person), 2014, CCPR/C/GC/35, paras. 3 and 9.
[132] South Sudan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 5 February 2024 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on 23 October 2013. United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body Database – South Sudan, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx and ACHPR, https://achpr.au.int/en/charter/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights/
[133] ACHPR, Article 6.

protect individuals and groups against violations of their rights by others, including private actors.[134] In its General Comment 3 on the right to life, the ACHPR sets out that "the State has a responsibility for those deaths where authorities knew or ought to have known of an immediate threat and failed to take measures that might have been expected to avoid those deaths."[135] The ACHPR states that "these responsibilities are heightened when an observable pattern has been overlooked or ignored".[136]

Upholding the right to life also requires states to ensure compliance with the procedural element of the right, which is the duty to investigate. International human rights standards including the ACHPR's General Comment 3, the Human Rights Committee's General Comment 36 and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR's) Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death clarify what this duty constitutes. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions has reiterated the importance of investigations: "It is the obligation of Governments to carry out exhaustive and impartial investigations into allegations of violations of the right to life, to identify, bring to justice and punish the perpetrators, to grant compensation to the victims or their families, and to take effective measures to avoid future recurrence of such violations."[137]

According to these international standards, where a death may be unlawful, regardless of whether it was caused by a state or non-state actor, the state must investigate promptly, thoroughly, effectively, independently, impartially and transparently, and must ensure that those responsible are held to account and victims receive a remedy. Under the Minnesota Protocol, an effective and thorough investigation must be "capable of: ensuring accountability for unlawful death; leading to the identification and, if justified by the evidence and seriousness of the case, the prosecution and punishment of all those responsible".[138] The Minnesota Protocol further states that an investigation must, at a minimum, establish the identity of the victim; recover critical evidence relating to the death, including evidentiary material and statements of witnesses; establish the cause and circumstances of a death, and the identity of the perpetrator.[139] It also states that an investigation should aim to identify not only the direct perpetrators, but also all others who were responsible for the death, and should seek to identify any failure to take reasonable measures which could have had a real prospect of preventing the death. It should also seek to identify policies and systemic failures that may have contributed to a death and identify patterns where they exist.[140] In essence, the South Sudanese authorities must demonstrate that they took reasonable steps to establish what happened and hold perpetrators accountable. The failure of the state to take all necessary measures to investigate killings and hold accountable individuals or groups responsible for violations of the right to life constitutes, in itself, a violation by the state of that right.[141]

Similar obligations to investigate violations of the right to security of person apply.

5.1.2 DOMESTIC FRAMEWORK

Abuses committed in Abiemnom on 1 March 2026 also violate provisions of the South Sudan Penal Code protecting the right to life, the right to bodily integrity and right to property.[142] The government must ensure that these are investigated adequately, independently and impartially, that the perpetrators are held accountable, and that the victims and the families of those killed receive redress.

According to the 2009 [South Sudan] Police Service Act, as amended in 2022, the police service has "the primary responsibility of ensuring the security of citizens and maintaining public order, implementing the law, in full neutrality and honesty and adherence to the law, national and international standards."[143] Domestic legislation establishes that the police's functions include preventing and detecting crime,

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[134] See, for instance, ACHPR, General Comment 3: The Right to Life (Article 4), November 2015, https://achpr.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2021-09/generalcommentno3english.pdf, para. 38.
[135] ACHPR, General Comment 3: The Right to Life (Article 4), November 2015, https://achpr.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2021-09/generalcommentno3english.pdf, para. 38.
[136] ACHPR, General Comment 3: The Right to Life (Article 4), November 2015, https://achpr.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2021-09/generalcommentno3english.pdf, para. 39.
[137] Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Report, 7 October 1996, UN Doc. A/51/457, para. 75.
[138] OHCHR, "The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016) (The Minnesota Protocol)", 2017, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol.pdf, para. 24.
[139] The Minnesota Protocol, para. 25.
[140] The Minnesota Protocol, para. 26.
[141] ACHPR, general comment 3, para. 15.
[142] 2008 Penal Code, Articles 206 and 208, and Chapters XVI, XVII and XXII, https://mofaic.gov.ss/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Penal-Code-Act-9-of-2008.pdf
[143] The 2009 Southern Sudan Police Service Act, https://mofaic.gov.ss/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Southern-Sudan-Police-Service-Act-2009.pdf, Article 6 jo The 2002 National Police Service Act, 2009 (Amendment) Act, on file with Amnesty International.

protecting people's lives and properties, assuming internal security operations, and ensuring the safety of citizens, property and public establishments.[144]

Notably, it is also the responsibility of the police "to carry out investigations or any other criminal procedures pursuant to the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure Act, 2008 or any other law".[145]

The duty to protect the county's people and its territorial integrity is also given to county commissioners by the Local Government Act.[146]

5.2 THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROTECT AND INVESTIGATE

Governments are obliged to protect people within their territory from human rights abuses by non-state actors, notably by taking reasonable steps to prevent such abuses and, if serious abuses occur, by ensuring that the abuses are independently and impartially investigated, that perpetrators are brought to justice, and that victims are able to obtain redress and exercise their right to a remedy.[147]

On 17 June 2026, Amnesty International wrote to the Inspector General of Police, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and the Chief of Defence Forces of the army to seek information about the circumstances of the massacre, as well as any measures the authorities had taken to prevent the massacre, investigate the attack and hold the perpetrators accountable. No responses were received.

On 28 September 2026, Amnesty International sent letters summarizing the report's preliminary findings and requesting a response to the Inspector General of Police and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, with copies to relevant authorities in Unity State and the Ruweng Administrative Area. These letters too, went unanswered. UNMISS's response to Amnesty International, however, provides valuable insight into the limited preventive action taken by the government.

According to UNMISS, on 16 February 2026, the mission convened a meeting with the county commissioners of Abiemnom and Mayom counties, during which they agreed to establish a joint committee "to verify the allegations relating to the alleged killing of Bul Nuer individuals and to consult their security advisers on measures needed to enhance protection of civilians."[148] UNMISS also stated that, on 20 February 2026, the Mayom County Executive Director denied claims of an imminent attack on Abiemnom.[149] By 20 February 2026, authorities should have been alive to the possibility of an imminent attack as the early warning signs were clearly present (see section 4.2).

UNMISS writes that, on 24 February 2026, "the Head of the UNMISS Field Office in Bentiu raised the risk to civilians directly with the SSPDF Division 4 Commander and sought the preventive deployment of national security forces to Abiemnom. The Division Commander acknowledged the risk to civilians and advised that such a deployment could only be ordered by the Governor of Unity State."[150] Unless UNMISS and state actors had reason to believe that a party to the armed conflict was preparing to attack Abiemnom, a request for additional forces should have been directed to law enforcement agencies. Amnesty International acknowledges that, in practice, there is often no clear distinction between duties performed by defence forces and law enforcement in South Sudan. Furthermore, there is no basis in South Sudanese law that gives such powers to a state governor.[151] In its response to Amnesty International, UNMISS also writes that: "The Unity State Government and Ruweng Administrative Area authorities also jointly deployed additional security forces to Abiemnom."[152] It is unclear from the letter how many and when additional forces were deployed,

[144] The 2009 Southern Sudan Police Service Act, https://mofaic.gov.ss/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Southern-Sudan-Police-Service-Act-2009.pdf, Articles 7 jo The 2002 National Police Service Act, 2009 (Amendment) Act, on file with Amnesty International.
[145] The 2009 Southern Sudan Police Service Act, https://mofaic.gov.ss/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Southern-Sudan-Police-Service-Act-2009.pdf, Articles 8(1)(c) jo The 2002 National Police Service Act, 2009 (Amendment) Act, on file with Amnesty International.
[146] The 2009 Local Government Act, Article 52, https://docs.southsudanngoforum.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/Local%20Government%20Act%202009.pdf
[147] ICCPR, Article 2; UN Human Rights Committee, general comment 31 [80]: The Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant, 29 March 2004, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13, para. 8; UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, adopted on 16 December 2005, UN Doc. A/RES/60/147.
[148] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[149] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[150] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[151] 2011 Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, Schedules A, B and C makes clear that the "National Defence, National Security and Protection of the National Borders" is a power exclusive to the national government; Two South Sudanese lawyers, Juba, messages to Amnesty International, 12 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[152] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.

whether these were law enforcement or defence forces, and why seemingly no action was taken to prevent the attackers from leaving Mayom.

There were ample warnings that the attack on Abiemnom was imminent (see section 4.2), and the government failed to undertake adequate preparation, including the deployment of additional security forces, to prevent the attack and protect the residents, thereby failing in its obligation to protect the people. Where town residents were killed or injured, the government failed in its obligation to protect the right to life and bodily integrity.

In a statement published on social media on 2 March 2026, the Minister of Information, Communication, Technology and Postal Services, Ateny Wek Ateny, said that "the security organs have been directed to restore order, investigate the incident thoroughly, and ensure that those responsible are identified and held accountable in accordance with the law."[153]

However, persons interviewed by Amnesty International who had information relevant to any investigation, including survivors, witnesses, medical personnel who treated the injured and those who collected the bodies of the dead, had neither been interviewed or contacted by the police or any judicial or investigating authorities, nor had they been informed of any investigation underway or in the process of being set up.[154]

At the time of writing, based on testimonies from survivors and two analysts familiar with the area, none of the attackers, or anyone else suspected of being involved and/or responsible, were known to have been apprehended. Moreover, there was no publicly available information about concrete measures having been taken to investigate the massacre and apprehend and prosecute the suspected perpetrators.

There is also no publicly available information regarding any investigations into the failure of the police in Mayom County to prevent the attack. Given that Unity State authorities had "received prior intelligence regarding a potential threat to Abiemnom County",[155] and that given that community leaders in Abiemnom knew of the mobilization, this was likely well known in large parts of Mayom County and the police in Mayom County should have intervened or, if their capacity was restricted, have raised alarm and requested support.

[153] MoICTPS, "Government statement on Abiemnom deadly incident", 2 March 2026, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1230242765956548&set=a.230793615901473
[154] Interviews conducted separately in person with survivors, witnesses and other persons with information relevant to any investigation, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abiemnom and surrounding areas in Abyei and Ruweng administrative areas.
[155] Radio Tamazuj, "Death toll in Abiemnhom attack rises to 120, officials say", 2 March 2026, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/death-toll-in-abiemnhom-attack-rises-to-120-officials-say

6. UNMISS RESPONSE

In a press release, UNMISS states that it provided shelter and protection to more than 1,000 civilians in its TOB "when clashes were ongoing."[156] In its letter to Amnesty International, UNMISS nuances this statement and writes that "at approximately 5.45am, civilians fleeing the attack began arriving at the base. The peacekeepers immediately opened the gates and escorted these civilians as well as those already in the temporary protective area to safe zones inside the base… Once all civilians in sight were safely accommodated within the base, the gate was closed to protect those sheltering inside from any further threat from the large numbers of armed actors who were attacking the area from multiple directions in a well-coordinated operation. An armoured personnel carrier and troops were positioned at the gate to protect any civilians approaching and facilitate their access into the base. Once firing ceased in the township, the gate was reopened."[157]

Whilst exact timings do not align, this is consistent with survivor testimony that demonstrates that UNMISS opened their gates at the start of the attack,[158] kept them closed at the height of the attack and opened them again after the attack.[159] Of the seven survivors interviewed by Amnesty International who said that they had fled to the UNMISS compound in the hope of receiving protection, two were able to enter the UNMISS compound at the start of the attack, whereas for the others, the gates remained closed.[160] Twelve survivors said that they had been able to enter after the attack was over or almost over.[161] Survivors told Amnesty International that UNMISS helped treat casualties and collect the dead.[162]

"Nyangel", a teacher who arrived in Abiemnom from Khartoum, Sudan one or two years ago, told Amnesty International:

> **"After the incident started in the morning around 4am, we ran to UNMISS… It took us about 30 minutes… Near the door [gate], people fell down due to the shooting. We think they died. When we ran to UNMISS, they opened the door… There were many of us. After we went inside, they closed the door."**
>
> "Nyangel" – a teacher from Khartoum who survived the massacre.[163]

[156] UNMISS, "Abiemnom residents call for unity, peace, and protection after recent violence", 9 March 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/abiemnom-residents-call-unity-peace-and-protection-after-recent-violence. See also, UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA
[157] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[158] UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA, minute 00:00-00:46; Interviews conducted separately in person with two survivors, 26 and 27 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[159] Interviews conducted separately in person with three survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
[160] Interviews conducted separately in person with seven survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[161] Interviews conducted separately in person with twelve survivors, 26-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[162] Interviews conducted separately in person with ten survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[163] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei town, Abyei Administrative Area.
Interview in person with survivor, 29 March 2026, Abyei Town, Abyei Administrative Area.

Six survivors said they had seen their relatives and other town residents getting injured and/or killed outside the UNMISS TOB.[164]

"Akech", a 38-year-old survivor, told Amnesty International that, when the attack started, she ran with her six children, her aunt **"Ajok"**, her aunt's four-year-old daughter and several others towards UNMISS. She recalled:

> **"We tried to run to UNMISS. There was random shooting. We reached up to the door [(gate) at around 7am], but it was closed. When we were at the door, [the attackers] started shooting at us… 'Ajok' was shot in the back of her neck. We ran southwards. I saw dead bodies, those who were shot. I kept running."**
>
> "Akech" – a 38-year-old mother of six who survived the massacre.[165]

"Ajok" died and was buried in the mass grave.

"Anyieth", a 25-year-old woman, told Amnesty International:

> **"I woke up and with my father, 'Lual', aged 60, we ran to UNMISS. The gate was closed. We stayed there by the gate. It was about 5am. There were many people all around. The attackers were shooting at us. My father was shot in the back, between the shoulders, and the bullet came out from his chest. He died immediately. I tried to run away, but it was difficult because the attackers were shooting, so I stayed nearby, and at about 6.30am, when UNMISS opened the gates, I went into the UNMISS compound."**
>
> "Anyieth" – a 25-year-old woman.[166]

UNMISS writes that, throughout the day of the attack, between 2,500 and 2,800 community members, including humanitarian and health workers, sought protection at the TOB. There were 44 peacekeepers from the Mongolian Battalion present at the TOB during the attack.[167]

While the loss of life outside the TOB gates was tragic, Amnesty International understands that it was a difficult operating environment and that there were legitimate concerns for the safety of people sheltering inside. Given the attackers' close proximity to the TOB and the significant numerical disadvantage faced by the peacekeepers, keeping the gates opened throughout the attack would likely have placed residents inside the TOB at greater risk. However, the organization does call for an investigation into the response to be made public.

Amnesty International does question whether UNMISS did all it could to prevent and deter the attack.

A core element of the UNMISS mandate is to protect civilians. The UN Security Council, acting under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, mandated UNMISS to, amongst others, "prevent, deter and stop violence against civilians, including politically driven violence, particularly in high-risk areas, as well as to promptly and effectively engage any actor that is credibly found to be preparing attacks, or engaging in attacks, against civilians, including those in IDP camps, and in the UNMISS protection of civilians site;"[168] and to "identify and deter threats and attacks against civilians, including through strengthened implementation of a mission-wide early warning and response system that draws upon robust conflict-sensitive analysis, regular interaction and close consultations, in areas at high-risk of conflict".[169] On its website, UNMISS writes that "peacekeepers actively patrol in communities to provide a protective presence and deter violence through a

[164] Interviews conducted separately in person with six survivors, 25 to 29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei administrative Area.
[165] Interview in person with survivor, 27 March 2026, Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.
[166] Interview in person with survivor, 26 March 2026, Abyei, Abyei Administrative Area.
[167] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[168] UN Security Council (UNSC), Resolution 2729 (2024), adopted on 29 April 2024, UN Doc. S/RES/2729(2024), para. 3(a)(i); UN UNSC, Resolution 2778 (2025), adopted on 30 April 2025, UN Doc. S/RES/2778(2025).
[169] UNSC, Resolution 2729 (2024), adopted on 29 April 2024, UN Doc. S/RES/2729(2024), para. 3(a)(i); UN UNSC, Resolution 2778 (2025), adopted on 30 April 2025, UN Doc. S/RES/2778(2025).

comprehensive and integrated approach. The mission also uses its good offices to help prevent, mitigate and resolve inter-communal violence."[170]

The UN Department of Peace Operations Handbook on the Protection of Civilians requires that "all bases (however temporary) of UN peacekeeping missions must have contingency plans in place to provide physical protection in both scenarios [civilians gathering outside or seeking entry into a UN peacekeeping base], in consultation with relevant partners including, as appropriate, the host state, the UN Country Team and humanitarian actors."[171] This includes key steps such as always having "a contingency plan ready for such occurrences and ensure that civilians are protected according to the base Community Protection Plan";[172] to "stop the advance of armed actors so that they do not threaten civilians who are gathered around or in the base";[173] to "consider possible scenarios of community tensions and further violence among the protected civilian population";[174] and to "consider joint patrols with the national gendarmerie or police, including during night-time hours."[175]

In short, years of peacekeeping experience, including particular lessons from South Sudan,[176] have resulted in a list of policy requirements and recommendations that could have contributed to more effective protection of civilians on 1 March 2026. In June 2025, the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services concluded that UNMISS "will need to become more anticipatory, needs-driven and accountable to those most at risk."[177]

In response to the April 2025 attack that led to a communication breakdown between the county leaders, UNMISS writes that the mission has tried to "facilitate dialogue at all levels and de-escalate tensions as part of its protection of civilians and peacebuilding mandate."[178] However, no mention is made of promoting criminal accountability – an action that might have deterred a future attack.

In their response, UNMISS writes that, in the two weeks prior to the 1 March 2026 attack, they engaged South Sudanese authorities, specifically the Abiemnom and Mayom county commissioners, the Abiemnom and Mayom executive directors, the SSPDF Division 4 Commander in Unity State, the then Unity State Governor, and the then Chief Administrator of the Ruweng Administrative Area on at least four occasions.[179] It is impossible to know for certain, but Amnesty International believes that more pressure on authorities in Unity State, and Mayom County in particular, might have helped prevent the mobilization and marching of the group of armed men.

UNMISS furthermore writes that, "In the evening of 15 February 2026, amidst ongoing rumours of a potential retaliatory attack, residents of Abiemnom started arriving at the UNMISS temporary base. The Mongolian military peacekeepers established a temporary protective area using dykes close to the base to strengthen security for those seeking refuge."[180]

Despite UNMISS's prior knowledge of the likelihood of an imminent attack, there is no indication from information provided by survivors of the massacre or the UNMISS statement shared with Amnesty International that UNMISS took all concrete measures available to them to try to deter or prevent the attack. It is impossible to determine whether UNMISS night patrols around the town in armoured vehicles could have deterred the attackers, but it is possible that UNMISS took too few precautions. Whilst UNMISS peacekeepers were vastly outnumbered by the attackers, UNMISS was equipped with armoured vehicles, whereas the attackers carried rifles, machine guns, grenades and spears.[181] On their visit to Abiemnom town, Amnesty International researchers did not find evidence of any use of heavier weapons.

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[170] UNMISS, UNMISS Mandate, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/unmiss-mandate (accessed on 16 September 2026).
[171] UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO), *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,* 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf, p. 166.
[172] UNDPO, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,* 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf, p. 166.
[173] UNDPO, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,* 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf, p. 166.
[174] UNDPO, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,* 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf, p. 167.
[175] UNDPO, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,* 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf, p. 167.
[176] UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, *Evaluation of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan Implementation of the Protection of Civilians Mandate,* 26 June 2025, https://oios.un.org/system/files/confidential-files/Reports/2025_ied_25_012.pdf. p. 23.
[177] UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, *Evaluation of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan Implementation of the Protection of Civilians Mandate,* 26 June 2025, https://oios.un.org/system/files/confidential-files/Reports/2025_ied_25_012.pdf
[178] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[179] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[180] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[181] Most survivors interviewed told Amnesty International that attackers mostly carried firearms, and three said some attackers carried spears. Interviews conducted separately in person with survivors, 25-29 March 2026, Abyei town and Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

When asked to describe the preventive measures and response by UNMISS, a health worker who survived the massacre told Amnesty International:

> **"They used to do patrols during the day. They don't patrol at night. Abiemnom authorities were patrolling by car on the night of 28 February. UNMISS brought out a big truck [likely an armoured personnel carrier] outside the base from 1 to 2 March. They expanded their barbed wire and put a poster saying 'protection of civilians'."**
>
> "Mayen" – a health worker in his late 30s who survived the massacre.[182]

UNMISS writes that, as of 27 February 2026, the peacekeepers "were unable to undertake night patrols as their numbers had been reduced from 74 to just 44 military peacekeepers due to the cost-cutting measures imposed on the mission by the UN-wide fiscal crisis, and the requirement to prepare the base for a full withdrawal and closure. Additionally, the decision to consolidate protection activities at the temporary protective area during night hours was based on the need to protect between 1,000 and 1,500 residents who were coming to the base for protection each evening and returning to the town in the morning. Spreading the small number of peacekeepers thinly across multiple tasks could have jeopardized these protection measures."[183]



Photo of the UNMISS TOB perimeter in Abiemnom taken by Amnesty International on 28 March 2026.

On 1 March, UNMISS reported that, since then, "peacekeepers have maintained an enhanced protective presence to reinforce community security around the base."[184] In his 90-day report to the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General reported that, "on 15 February and 1 March, UNMISS provided physical

According to an UNMISS video, attackers also used grenades. UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA

[182] Interview in person with survivor, 27 March 2026, Juoljok, Abyei Administrative Area.

[183] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.

[184] UNMISS, "Press Release - UNMISS alarmed by rising violence in Abiemnom, calls for urgent restoration of calm", 1 March 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/press-release-unmiss-alarmed-rising-violence-abiemnom-calls-urgent?fbclid=IwY2xjawR44H5leHRuA2FIbQIxMABzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeurxb5wPf9BIj8uY29nYcOtq__Md8aqnWyr101oUvkCL_9b02mMCieJYUrsI_aem_3dehW0Q3jzWUpH1GDlI3Xg

protection to approximately 1,500 civilians in Abiemnom after tensions escalated and subsequent attacks by Bul Nuer on Abiemnom."[185] In the same report, the Secretary General refers to a "recent decision" to retain presence in Abiemnom as being in line with its mandate to protect civilians.[186]

After the attack, UNMISS drove through the town to assess the security situation,[187] and reported that it temporarily deployed "40 personnel from the Formed Police Unit" to strengthen its protection efforts and boost community confidence.[188] In its statement sent to Amnesty International, UNMISS writes that "an additional peacekeeping platoon arrived at the base at 4pm on the day of the attack, to reinforce the base and enable protection measures beyond it, taking the total number of troops to 74." [189] Based on survivor testimonies and UNMISS press releases and its statement shared with Amnesty International that it was known that a possible attack was imminent, Amnesty International believes that UNMISS ought to have sent these reinforcements – which were apparently available – prior to the attack instead of after.

The Abiemnom TOB, in particular, would be expected to have a protection of civilians contingency plan, given that it was initially deployed in August 2024 to deter inter-communal violence and protect civilians and had been in place for more than two years.[190] Whilst the peacekeepers established a temporary protective area using dykes close to the base, the UNMISS peacekeepers' reported expansion of their barbed wire perimeter and placement of a sign saying "protection of civilians" on 1-2 March 2026 (after the attack) suggests that these actions were a part of the TOB's contingency plan. This only sharpens the question, however, of why UNMISS peacekeepers apparently waited until after the attack to initiate some of these measures, rather than further fortifying the expanded perimeter the night before, when hundreds of residents had come near their base seeking protection.

The failure of UNMISS to deploy additional troops and take stronger anticipatory or preventive action in the days leading up to 1 March 2026, when tensions were clearly observable, raises serious questions about the mission's performance. UNMISS should investigate and provide a transparent account of the events leading up to the attack as well as the measures it took to protect civilians.

UNMISS is also mandated "(i) To monitor, investigate, verify, and report immediately, publicly, and regularly on abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including against women and children and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, and, where possible, on the chains of command and the decision making structures that led to abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including those that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity".[191] Yet, at the time of publication of this report, UNMISS had not published any report dedicated to the Abiemnom massacre. UNMISS also did not issue any report on the April 2025 attack. In recent years, and despite having dozens of staff in the Human Rights Division across the country, UNMISS has failed to implement their mandate to publish regular and in-depth reports on thematic issues and specific incidents,[192] despite the significant deterioration of the human rights situation and intensification of the armed conflict.[193]

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[185] UN Secretary General (UNSG), Report: Situation in South Sudan, 13 April 2026, UN Doc. S/2026/316, para. 57.
[186] UNSG, Report: Situation in South Sudan, 13 April 2026, UN Doc. S/2026/316, para. 113.
[187] UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA, minute 1:24-1:37.
[188] UNMISS, "Abiemnom residents call for unity, peace, and protection after recent violence", 9 March 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/abiemnom-residents-call-unity-peace-and-protection-after-recent-violence. See also, UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers protect civilians during live firefight in Abiemnhom, South Sudan", 15 April 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBGIqAGWfIA
[189] UNMISS, statement for Amnesty International, 8 October 2026, on file with Amnesty International.
[190] UNMISS, "UNMISS peacekeepers from Mongolia protect hundreds of civilians following violence in Abiemnhom", 10 April 2025, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/news/unmiss-peacekeepers-mongolia-protect-hundreds-civilians-following-violence-abiemnhom; UNMISS, "UNMISS strengthens protection of civilians in northern South Sudan", 26 January 2026, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/node/23563
[191] UNSC, Resolution 2729 (2024), adopted on 29 April 2024, UN Doc. S/RES/2729(2024), para. 3(d)(i); UNSC, Resolution 2778 (2025), adopted on 30 April 2025, UN Doc. S/RES/2778(2025).
[192] Its last two public thematic and incident-focused reports were published in December 2024 and December 2023, respectively. UNMISS and OHCHR, *Deprivation of liberty in South Sudan January 2023 – May 2024,* 16 December 2024, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2024-12-16_joint_public_report_on_arbitrary_detention_with_annex.pdf; UNMISS and OHCHR, *Attacks against civilians in Greater Upper Nile, South Sudan August – December 2022*, 1 December 2023, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/greater_upper_nile_report_0.pdf. See also, UNMISS, Human Rights Reports, https://unmiss.unmissions.org/en/human-rights-reports?page=0 (accessed on 9 July 2026).
[193] CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan*, A/HRC/61/25, 19 February 2026, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session61/advance-version/a-hrc-61-25-auv.pdf; CHRSS, "South Sudan: UN Commission urges AU and UN Security Council to act decisively as crisis deepens, demanding urgent action and renewed commitment to peace, accountability and a credible transition", 13 October 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/south-sudan-un-commission-urges-au-and-un-security-council-act-decisively; Human Rights Watch (HRW), "South Sudan: Incendiary Bombs Kill, Burn Civilians," 9 April 2025, https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/09/south-sudan-incendiary-bombs-kill-burn-civilians; CHRSS, *Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan*, A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session58/advance-version/a-hrc-58-27-aev.pdf

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's failure to protect the residents of Abiemnom town is part of a tragic and chronic failure of the South Sudanese authorities to protect people in South Sudan. The Abiemnom massacre is also another incident in the list of incidents where UNMISS could have done more to protect civilians.

Most survivors of the Abiemnom massacre interviewed by Amnesty International said that they could not envisage returning to Abiemnom in the absence of any concrete measures to guarantee their safety. Many identified criminal accountability as a priority to ensure non-repetition of the horrors of 1 March 2026. Also mentioned by many was the need for effective protection, by UNMISS as well as by national forces. Some also expressed a desire for a meaningful reconciliation process and political agreements between the communities' leaderships containing concrete protections guarantees. In addition, those whose homes and businesses were destroyed and those, mostly women, who had lost the breadwinner in the family also said they needed support and aid to rebuild their lives.

In addition to the recommendations identified above by the survivors, Amnesty International has the following recommendations for the South Sudanese authorities, UNMISS and other UN actors, and the ACHPR.

TO THE SOUTH SUDANESE AUTHORITIES, ESPECIALLY THE POLICE AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

- Ensure that the competent police and judicial authorities promptly conduct an independent, impartial and thorough investigation into the Abiemnom attack, and that the findings of the investigation are made public.
- Ensure that the investigating authorities have the necessary means to carry out the investigation unhindered and the necessary powers to summon and compel the relevant authorities to cooperate fully with the investigation – including by providing relevant records and documentation.
- Ensure that the necessary mechanisms are in place to guarantee the safety and protection of witnesses who may testify in the investigation and any subsequent legal proceedings. Ensure that all evidence of crimes and human rights violations is preserved, including by issuing an order that all police, military and other official records must be preserved.
- Seek the assistance of international experts, including ballistic experts, pathologists and forensic anthropologists, in conducting the investigation. If necessary for the investigation, and with full informed consent of the families, exhume bodies in the mass graves in order to conduct autopsies by independent and recognized local and international forensic pathologists to establish the causes and circumstances of death. Families of the deceased must be kept fully informed of any procedures and developments and must be allowed to be present, in person or via their legal representatives, at the exhumation and autopsies of their deceased relatives.

- Ensure that those suspected of being criminally responsible are held accountable through fair trials without recourse to the death penalty. Ensure that injured survivors and families and dependents of those killed, and those whose homes and property were destroyed or damaged, are entitled to obtain fair and adequate reparation from the state, including financial compensation.
- Strengthen the police so that it is capable to effectively carry out its law enforcement duties. Ensure competent and independent internal and external oversight mechanisms. Ensure a culture where police embody human rights norms.

TO THE TRANSITIONAL NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

- In line with Article 82 of the 2011 Transitional Constitution, conduct a parliamentary inquiry into the Abiemnom massacre, including by summoning responsible public officials, safeguarding its independence and ensuring the findings are made public and accessible to survivors of the massacre and the general public.

TO UNMISS

- Conduct an internal, independent investigation into the UNMISS response in the weeks leading up to the Abiemnom massacre, during the attack and its aftermath; publish and widely disseminate the findings in a manner that is accessible to the survivors and wider South Sudanese public.
- Publish and disseminate widely – in a manner that the findings are accessible to the South Sudanese public, including the suspects and victims – an in-depth report on the Abiemnom massacre that clarifies responsibility for the attack, including chains of command on the attackers' side as well as individual responsibility in the failure on the government's side to protect human rights and to deliver accountability.
- Improve delivery of UNMISS's mandate to "monitor, investigate, verify and report immediately, publicly and regularly on abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including against women and children and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, and, where possible, on the chains of command and the decision making structures that led to abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including those that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity" by publishing regular and in-depth reports on thematic issues and incidents.

TO THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the impact of past technical assistance by OHCHR against clear benchmarks and timelines, including for steps towards criminal accountability and strengthening of the domestic justice sector, and including the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan and incorporation of crimes under international law in the Penal Code.
- Ensure that technical assistance to the justice sector respects the division of jurisdiction between military and civilian courts and includes positive measures to ensure effective independence of judges and prosecutors, including the creation of an independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- Publicly report on violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including thematic and incident reports (including a report dedicated to the Abiemnom massacre) in accordance with the UNMISS mandate that go beyond periodical reports only and strengthen the periodical reports with analysis.

TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- In future Human Rights Council sessions, explicitly condemn ongoing violations and recognise the need for political will to address human rights violations and abuses as well as crimes under international law.
- Continue the accountability-focused resolution on advancing human rights in South Sudan and maintain the mandate of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

- Call on South Sudan to ensure that victims' rights to truth, justice and reparations and victims' participation within judicial proceedings (including for the Abiemnom massacre) and related processes are central and that adequate protection mechanisms are established.
- Call for further steps, including justice and security sector reforms and other forms of guarantees of non-recurrence, to address systemic and deliberate violations and abuses in South Sudan

TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

- Request that UNMISS investigate and provide a transparent account of the events leading up to the attack, as well as the measures it took to fulfil its protection of civilians mandate in the days and weeks prior to the attack.
- Call on UNMISS to publicly report on violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including thematic and incident reports in accordance with the UNMISS mandate that go beyond periodical reports only and strengthen the periodical reports with analysis.
- Call on all Member States of the United Nations to contribute fully to the UN peacekeeping budget, in a timely manner, to cover the costs of UNMISS and all peacekeeping operations in accordance with Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant General Assembly resolutions. Although this is a collective responsibility of all UN Member States, permanent members of the Security Council bear special responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security and therefore for the provision of proper financing of the missions the Security Council creates and mandates.

TO THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

- Call on South Sudanese authorities to report to the ACHPR on measures taken to implement the ACHPR's General Comment No. 3 on the Right to Life, with specific reference to measures taken prior to and after the Abiemnom massacre.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.

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THE ABIEMNON MASSACRE

INACTION AND IMPUNITY IN SOUTH SUDAN

In the early morning of 1 March 2026, a large group, estimated to be between 1,000 and 1,500 strong, of armed Nuer men from Mayom County in South Sudan's Unity State, stormed Abiemnom town, in the Ruweng Administrative Area, killing a reported 213 people and injuring at least 109 people. The attackers raided and ransacked parts of the hospital and shops and burned homes and sections of the market. The attack lasted around four hours.

Government authorities and UNMISS were aware of numerous warning signs of a possible imminent attack on Abiemnom town in the days and weeks prior to 1 March 2026. Unity State authorities acknowledged receiving intelligence about a potential threat, while community leaders reported that residents of Mayom had warned relatives in Abiemnom that young men were mobilising and weapons and ammunition were being assembled. Around 1,000 civilians had sought protection outside the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Temporary Operation Base on 28 February. These warnings gave both state authorities and UNMISS time to take preventive measures.

Despite the ample warnings that the attack on Abiemnom was imminent, the government failed to undertake adequate preparation, including sufficient deployment of additional security forces to prevent the attack and protect the residents, thereby failing in its obligation to protect the people. Where town residents were killed or injured, the government failed to protect the right to life and bodily integrity. At the time of writing, the South Sudanese authorities also failed to investigate the attack and offer remedies to the victims.

Given UNMISS's prior knowledge of the possibility of an imminent attack, UNMISS ought to have done more to prevent the attack. The apparent failure of UNMISS to take stronger anticipatory or preventive action in the days leading up to 1 March, when tensions were clearly observable, as well as their lack of public reporting dedicated to the Abiemnom massacre, raises serious questions about the mission's performance.

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