



# **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

## **REPORT 2025/031**

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### **Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan**

**UNMISS needed to strengthen documentation  
of its human rights activities**

**17 July 2025**

**Assignment No. AP2024-633-05**

# **Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management of the human rights programme in UNMISS to achieve the Mission's mandate. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2024 and included a review of: planning; human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting; human rights due diligence policy; and training, capacity building and technical assistance.

UNMISS Human Rights Division had developed various strategic plans which were aligned to the Mission's Human Rights mandate. The Division also produced the required public and internal periodic reports on human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian laws and reported its activities in the results-based budget performance report. UNMISS took steps to enhance the standard operating procedures related to the implementation of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, aiming to strengthen compliance. However, there were gaps in the documentation for the human rights programme activities, and the management of the pertinent human rights cases in the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights database.

OIOS made three important recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNMISS needed to:

- Enhance the adequacy and completeness of documentation supporting case verifications and investigations.
- Take measures to ensure the completeness of cases in the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights database as well as strengthen follow-up and quality control of cases.
- Enforce the use of guidelines and tracking tools to document technical assistance and capacity building, including assistance to treaties implementation activities carried out at the national level.

UNMISS accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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# **Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan**

## **I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).

2. UNMISS is mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 2625 (2022), 2677 (2023), and 2729 (2024) to:

- (i) Monitor, investigate, verify, and report on human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including those against women, children, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence;
- (ii) Accelerate the implementation of monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements on sexual and gender-based violence;
- (iii) Monitor, investigate, and report on incidents of hate speech and incitement to violence in cooperation with the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; and
- (iv) Coordinate with, share information with, and provide technical support and capacity building to international, regional, community, and national mechanisms and stakeholders engaged in monitoring, investigating, prosecuting, and reporting on violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

3. The Human Rights Division (HRD) leads the implementation of the Human Rights mandate. It is headed by a Director at the D-2 level who reports to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) and to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva. The Director also serves as the High Commissioner's representative in South Sudan and is assisted by one HRD coordinator at P-5 level, four team leaders also at P-5 level, as well as 99 other authorized posts, comprising 38 international staff, 32 national staff, and 29 United Nations Volunteers. As of 31 March 2025, there were 11 vacant posts. 63 per cent of the staff were male and 37 per cent, female.

4. HRD's main office is at the Mission Headquarters in Juba, with programmes operating in 11 field offices: Juba, Bor-Pibor, Malakal, Wau, Bentiu, Kuajok, Rumbek, Torit, Yambio, Yei, and Aweil. HRD programmes are governed by the Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions (hereinafter referred to as United Nations Human Rights policy) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DPO (formerly DPKO) and OHCHR.

5. The OHCHR database is the main repository for documenting cases of human rights violations. This database has been in use since 2007, and is administered by OHCHR in Geneva, which also grants access to Mission personnel. However, due to intermittent access to internet resources in some field locations in UNMISS, HRD also uses a civilian casualty matrix which tracks key information on human rights incidents affecting civilians, including killings, injuries, abductions, and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). This matrix is the primary HRD operational tool that supports reporting on human rights issues. HRD daily reports and the civilian casualty matrix are used to provide reporting on trends and patterns of human rights violations to the UNMISS mission leadership weekly, and ad hoc flash reports are incorporated into UNMISS early warning mechanisms, and form the basis of UNMISS quarterly and annual briefs on violence affecting civilians.

6. HRD budget included in the overall UNMISS budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25 is shown in table 1 below. OHCHR provided an annual budget of \$120,210 for each of the calendar years 2023 and 2024.

**Table 1: Total of Human rights division budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25**

|                | 2023/24<br>in (\$000) |                 |            | 2024/25<br>in (\$,000) |                 |            |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------|
|                | Appropriations        | committed       | Percentage | Appropriations         | Committed       | Percentage |
| Personnel      | 13,412.8              | 13,362.2        | 99         | 14,308.9               | 10,510.2        | 73         |
| Operating cost | 650.5                 | 594.5           | 91         | 588.6                  | 417.3           | 71         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>14,063.3</b>       | <b>13,956.7</b> | <b>99</b>  | <b>14,897.5</b>        | <b>10,927.5</b> | <b>73</b>  |

*Source: Budget and Finance Section*

7. The total numbers of violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law cases reported by HRD are as follows:

**Table 2: Total of human rights violations and abuses by types for calendar years 2022, 2023 and 2024**

|                                  | 2022         | 2023         | 2024         |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Killed                           | 1,600        | 1,524        | 1,561        |
| Injured                          | 988          | 1,052        | 1,299        |
| Abducted                         | 501          | 601          | 551          |
| Conflict Related Sexual Violence | 380          | 163          | 246          |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>3,469</b> | <b>3,340</b> | <b>3,657</b> |

*Source: HRD public reports*

8. In 2024, disaggregated data on victims of human rights abuses by sex and age showed 75 per cent for men, 12 per cent for women, and 13 per cent for children.

9. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics

## **II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

10. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management of the human rights programme in UNMISS to achieve the Mission's mandate.

11. This audit was included in the 2024 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the criticality of protection of civilians and human rights issues in the mandate and operations of UNMISS.

12. OIOS conducted this audit from October 2024 to March 2025. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2024 and covered higher and medium risks areas in human rights programme of UNMISS, including: (i) planning; (ii) human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting; (iii) human rights due diligence policy; and (iv) training, capacity building and technical assistance.

13. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) assessment of HRD's data management systems, including OHCHR and matrix databases used for reporting to determine their completeness and data integrity; (d) trend analysis of data on human rights violations and abuses; (e) testing of a randomly selected sample of: (i) UNMISS human rights cases recorded in the OHCHR database to verify adequacy, timeliness, support, and (ii) documentation of capacity building activities; and (f) visits to human rights programmes conducted in field

offices in Kuajok (Warrap State), Bor (Jonglei State), and Juba (Central Equatoria State) to assess operations in those offices.

14. OIOS review of the data in the OHCHR database indicated that documentation relating to cases of human rights violations was not timely updated in the database. A further review of the civilian casualty matrix also noted some gaps in the completeness of the documentation in some instances. These gaps have been highlighted in this report. In the view of HRD, the matrix allowed timelier update of relevant data, as the HRD units had more control over it, making it more reliable for reporting incidents.

15. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

### **III. AUDIT RESULTS**

#### **A. Planning**

The Human Rights Division's strategy will be reassessed considering the postponed elections and the ongoing political crisis in South Sudan

16. The United Nations Human Rights policy states that the overarching goal of the work of human rights components, in conjunction with other components, is to contribute to protection of human rights through both immediate and long-term action, empower the host country population to assert and claim their human rights, and enable State and other national institutions to fulfil their human rights obligations. These objectives guide the development of specific work plans in keeping with peace operation mandates, capacity and priorities.

17. UNMISS HRD prepared several strategy documents which covered the various aspects of the human rights programme. These included:

- a) UNMISS/OHCHR Human Rights Division Strategy (2022-2024) outlining a two-year vision for addressing the human rights situation in South Sudan.
- b) UNMISS Accountability Strategy for South Sudan (2025-2027) focusing on human rights violations, rule of law, and accountable government institutions.
- c) UNMISS HRD strategy to implement Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/52/43 on technical assistance and capacity building and strengthening engagement with international human rights mechanisms.
- d) UNMISS HRD strategy on monitoring human rights during elections, providing guidance on rights, actors, issues, and concerns to monitor before, during, and after elections under UNSCR 2729 (2024).
- e) UNMISS Strategy on Promotion of Civic and Political Space in the Republic of South Sudan to support inclusive and accountable governance and ensure free, fair, and peaceful elections, as outlined in UNSCRs 2677 (2023) and 2729 (2024) and under the Revitalized Agreement.

18. The OIOS review of the strategy documents indicated that generally they were aligned to the mandate and covered all mandated activities. UNMISS HRD also finalized its strategy on monitoring human rights in the context of elections in July 2024, valid for three years, assuming the presidential election would be held in December 2024. However, the election was postponed to December 2026. HRD indicated that the strategy would be updated to reflect changes and associated impacts after the approval of the UNMISS mandate for 2025-26 and once additional information on the elections becomes available.

Human Rights Division has developed annual work plans for the division and its various units and field offices

19. The review of the 2024/25 annual work plans showed that HRD has developed a Divisional-level plan, which was then broken down into separate plans for each of the seven units and 10 field offices. Key activities to fulfill the HRD mandate were detailed in these plans with targets, expected accomplishments, and timelines.

Implementation of Human Rights Division mandated activities was reported in the Results Based Budget but some gaps in documentation were noted

20. A review of the 2023/24 RBB HRD report showed that mandated activities carried out by the HRD were reported in the annual RBB report and included planned outputs, approved targets, actual results and explanations to variations where necessary. These were generally supported by a portfolio of evidence kept in the SharePoint folders restricted to HRD staff. Some examples of the RBB outputs and results are highlighted in table 3 below.

21. However, OIOS review of the evidence identified some gaps in the documentation as highlighted in the succeeding section on human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting and the attendant recommendations.

**Table 3: 2023/24 Example in RBB report on the component 2 monitoring, investigating and reporting of human rights violations**

| Planned outputs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Approved target                           | Result actual                              | UNMISS remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Documentation and verification of violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law:<br>(a) the conduct of 120 specific investigations and monitoring missions.<br>(b) 200 visits to detention facilities.<br>(c) establishment of profiles of actors involved in human rights violations and abuses for accountability purposes and to ensure strict compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy.<br>Number of risk assessments conducted, and sensitization and/training sessions organized.<br>(d) the publication of 2 situation/region-specific public reports on human rights, 2 thematic public reports, and 3 quarterly and yearly reports on civilian casualties. | 120<br><br>200<br>As needed-<br><br><br>7 | 375<br><br>546<br>See remarks<br><br><br>8 | HRD conducted 108 risk assessments in 2023 and 76 risk assessments in 2024. HRD also conducted 11 sensitization/training sessions for both UNMISS components and South Sudan security forces, to raise awareness regarding HRDDP procedures and enhance compliance. d) published 8 public reports on human rights. |
| Empower civil society organizations and provide technical support to promote a culture of human rights by:<br>(a) strengthening the operational capacities of civil society organizations and support to various stakeholders through the provision 150 advocacy interventions.<br>(b) conducting human rights outreach/media events, awareness-raising, and sensitization campaigns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 150                                       | 189                                        | Item (b) referred only to the commemoration of the 75 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with series of activities across South Sudan under the theme “Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All”.                                                                                |
| Provision of technical support to civil society organizations and local authorities to enhance and protect civic space by conducting 12 monthly civic space and protection meetings with civil society                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 12                                        | 18                                         | Meetings with civil society organizations and human rights institutions in Juba and the states.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                                                                                                                                                                              |   |    |                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| organizations and national human rights institutions and organizing 5 multi-stakeholder dialogues with local authorities on protecting civic space and public participation. | 5 | 17 | More multi-stakeholder dialogues with local authorities were conducted covering 534 individuals, as the need arose in the field. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## B. Human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting

### Need to enhance the documentation supporting human rights case verifications and investigations

22. The first three elements of the HRD mandate as indicated in paragraph 2 involve documenting human rights abuse cases and preparing reports for both internal and public use. The HRD Guidance Note on Human Rights Internal Reports (March 2022) states that determinations on human rights violations should be based on verified information. In this regard, HRD follows the OHCHR methodology, including obtaining concurring information from at least two independent and credible sources.

23. The verification process consists of two steps: i) verification of sources (at least two independent sources including a primary source) and analysis of the reliability and credibility of sources; and ii) establishing the OHCHR standard of proof of ‘reasonable ground to believe’<sup>1</sup>.

24. OIOS review of a sample of 60 out of a total of 1,644 cases that were investigated and verified in Warrap, Jonglei, and Central Equatoria in 2023 and 2024, noted that mandatory information such as location, date and type of incidents, alleged perpetrator(s), and the number of victims were captured and disaggregated by age group and sex. However, documentation supporting case verification/investigation, such as witness interview statements, photographs, and site visit reports, were not systematically available. Out of 60 cases, 37 lacked adequate documentation to support both primary and secondary investigation sources. Additionally, five cases had only one adequate source of supporting documentation for the investigation conducted. For example, in cases UNM/24/0201 (6 May 2023) and UNM/24/0729 (28 June 2024), the only available documentation consisted of the statements that HRD received information from different sources. However, there was no indication of the names of the individuals interviewed, the dates or locations of the interviews, or whether they were conducted in person or by phone.

25. HRD explained that in some instances, supporting documentation may be absent from case files due to operational challenges faced by HRD, such as the inaccessibility of remote areas or restrictions imposed by government security forces. However, in the absence of sufficient documentation, there may be concerns about whether the case investigation was conducted with the thoroughness required to meet expected standards, which could affect the perceived reliability of its conclusions. Where there are extenuating circumstances for the absence of supporting documentation, these should be recorded as well. To support the integrity of the process, field team leaders are encouraged to strengthen their review of documentation related to case verifications and investigations.

#### **(1) UNMISS should take measures to enhance the adequacy and completeness of documentation supporting the case verifications and investigations.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that Conflict Related Violations unit will sensitize and continue to remind Human Rights Division field offices team leaders of their obligation to implement the measures.*

<sup>1</sup> The following information should be included: (a) sources of information (minimum two); (b) date of incident; (c) location (including payams and counties); (d) type and number of victims (including civilian status/sex/ethnicity/age, where possible); (e) identity of perpetrators where possible (affiliation/ethnicity/number of perpetrators); (f) nature/circumstances of the incident; (g) what rights have been violated; (h) context of the incident; and (i) nexus to conflict.

### Need to timely update cases recorded in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights database

26. The United Nations Human Rights policy requires that data gathered in monitoring, fact-finding and investigation by the human rights component shall be entered into the OHCHR human rights case database or in a database of equal standard approved by OHCHR.

(a) Reconciliation between the in-house centralized matrix database and OHCHR database

27. The review of the reconciliations between the in-house centralized matrix database and OHCHR database prepared by the CRV Unit covering the period 1 January 2024 to 30 September 2024 (latest reconciliation available during the audit) indicated that 54 per cent of cases recorded in the matrices were not timely reflected in the OHCHR database as detailed in table 4 below:

**Table 4: Reconciliation between Matrix - OHCHR database for 1 January – 30 September 2024.**

| Field Office | Cases from DSRs <sup>2</sup> available in OHCHR database |                                     | Cases from DSR not in database | Total number of cases | Percentage of cases uploaded in database | Percentage not in database |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|              | Recorded                                                 | Cases requiring update <sup>3</sup> |                                |                       |                                          |                            |
| Grand Total  | 123                                                      | 361                                 | 564                            | 1,048                 | 46                                       | 54                         |

Source: HRD – CRV unit data

28. HRD indicated that the reconciliation reports showing 54 percent of data pending entry were prepared before the OIOS audit. As of 31 January 2025, ongoing efforts have reduced this figure to 17 percent. However, the quarterly reconciliation for the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 is still pending completion.

(b) Delay in re-assignment of cases

29. In addition, delays were observed in reassigning cases to new case managers following the departure of their predecessors. For example, OIOS identified several cases still assigned to a case manager in the Kuajok field office who had left the Mission seven months prior to the audit. Although HRD considers the reassignment of cases in the OHCHR database to be a purely administrative task and asserting that continuity in monitoring, investigation, and reporting is maintained at both field and Headquarters levels, this situation highlights the need for clearer accountability at the field level in case management. This issue was particularly evident during the OIOS visit to the Kuajok field office, where staff were unable to access a selected case sampled for testing and had to escalate the matter to HRD Headquarters in Juba.

(c) Outstanding cases

30. A significant number of cases recorded in the OHCHR database are still open. 2,472 (81 per cent) out of 3,039 cases were still open in the OHCHR database for the period reviewed, as detailed in table 5:

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<sup>2</sup> DSR for daily situation report

<sup>3</sup> Cases requiring update means those with incomplete information.

**Table 5: Summary of status of cases in OHCHR database 2022, 2023 and 2024.**

| Case status in the database | 2022       |            | 2023       |            | 2024         |            | Grand total  |             |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
|                             | Numbers    | Percentage | Numbers    | Percentage | Numbers      | Percentage | Numbers      | Percentage  |
| Case closed                 | 296        | 38         | 160        | 21.0       | 111          | 7.7        | 567          | 18.5        |
| Case open                   | 479        | 62         | 627        | 79.0       | 1,366        | 92.3       | 2,472        | 81.5        |
| <b>Grand total</b>          | <b>775</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>787</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>1,477</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>3,039</b> | <b>100.</b> |

Source: OHCHR database provided by HRD

31. OIOS was unable to accurately assess the ageing of open cases due to a lack of detailed, accessible information. HRD explained that the age of cases was not a closure criterion in the OHCHR database, as older cases may remain open for ongoing monitoring of issues like land grabbing, abductions, and mistreatment in custody. While this approach supports continued oversight, not all open cases fit these criteria. Incidents such as civilian deaths from armed youth attacks, shootings by security forces, and police misconduct which were still open despite no further action being required, highlight the need for monitoring, follow up and clearer documentation and justification for keeping cases open.

(d) Cases of duplication

32. A review of cases recorded in the OHCHR database revealed instances of duplication, where cases with different reference numbers shared identical descriptions and were assigned either the same or conflicting statuses. For example, in Jonglei, cases UNM/23/0054 (open) and UNM/23/0055 (closed), both dated 6 June 2023, describe the same incident. Similarly, in Central Equatoria, cases UNM/23/0097 and UNM/23/0096, both dated 11 January 2023 and still open, also refer to the same event. OIOS considers that HRD would benefit from a systematic review of open cases in the OHCHR database to verify their current status and close any duplicates or cases lacking sufficient justification to remain open.

33. Despite the range of other measures by HRD to ensure the prompt and quality reporting of human rights incidents for incorporation into UNMISS early warning and information sharing mechanisms, having an updated, accurate and comprehensive database (archive) preserves the institution memory and facilitates quick access to historical data, documents, and records for legal inquiries or research needs.

**(2) UNMISS should take measures to ensure the completeness of cases in the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights database as well as strengthen follow-up and quality control of cases.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that, subject to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights provision of access rights for new colleagues, the documentation process for cases left by former staff will be completed.*

Required public and internal periodic reports on human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian laws were produced

34. The policy directive on public reporting by human rights components of United Nations peace operations states that the Mission shall issue the following reports: (a) periodic public reports on the human rights situation; (b) thematic public human rights reports; and (c) ad hoc public human rights reports, unless circumstances necessitate that the reports be issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Reporting is essential to fulfill the human rights monitoring and investigations mandate and to keep the Mission senior leadership informed about emerging trends and patterns of human rights violations and abuses for appropriate intervention and advocacy.

35. HRD produced public and internal reports (daily sitreps, weekly, flash/emergency, periodic reports) to provide information related to human rights violations/abuses that have occurred in the Mission area.

- For public reports, HRD leadership engaged with key government officials prior to publication, and the information reported was adequately gender disaggregated. All thematic reports such as the “Brief on Human Rights Judicial Accountability” were appropriately drafted and duly cleared by the Mission leadership. HRD quarterly public reports on human rights violations within the context of international and national human rights frameworks covered identified priority areas such as SGBV (killings, abductions, injuries, and sexual violence).
- The internal quarterly reports to United Nations Headquarters and the Security Council covered the other aspects of human rights violations and abuses monitored in line with the three-year (2022-2024) strategic workplan, such as extra-judicial executions, torture/ill-treatment, prolonged and arbitrary detentions, and violations related to fundamental freedoms like restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and related restrictions on civic space.

36. However, OIOS analysis of the 2024 planned and produced reports on the human rights situation in South Sudan showed that out of 22 reports planned (9 public and 13 internal) including 12 quarterly reports and 10 annual or ad-hoc reports, HRD produced 17 reports (7 public and 10 internal). The planned reports that were not produced are listed in table 6:

**Table 6: Reports planned for 2024 but not produced**

| Reports not produced                                                                                                       | Planned dates   | Comments                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1- Civic and Political Space in South Sudan and the Implications for the 2024 Elections (Public report)                    | 1 October 2024  | Could not be produced because the election was postponed                                                                                                                       |
| 2- The Impact of Intercommunal Violence on the Right to Life in Warrap State (Public report)                               | 30 Octobre 2024 | Ongoing at the time of the audit as it had been put on hold because of the changed political situation and deterioration of security within the country                        |
| 3- Brief on the Implementation of Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) – 2023. (Internal report)                      | 30 April 2024   | HRDDP Unit was re-structured in October 2023, with adjusted priorities. As such, the priorities for the Unit in 2024 shifted to the development of a Strategy and Action Plan. |
| 4- Brief on the Implementation of United Nations Human Rights Instruments and Mechanisms in South Sudan. (Internal report) | 5 July 2024     | Government of South Sudan has not undertaken steps for the domestication of the international human rights treaties which were acceded to in February 2024.                    |
| 5- Brief on Human Rights Judicial Accountability (internal report).                                                        | 22 August 2024  | The brief has been incorporated into the text of the Accountability Strategy Implementation report for 2024.                                                                   |

37. In addition to the above, delays were also noted between the planned and actual publication/finalization dates of some reports as summarized in table 7.

**Table 7: Delays observed in the report production for 2024**

| Reports                                                                       | Planned dates  | Publication date | Time elapsed in days |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Q1 2024 Quarterly Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: January – March 2024 | 5 June 2024    | 17 July 2024     | 42 days              |
| Deprivation of Liberty in South Sudan.                                        | 31 July 2024   | 18 December 2024 | 140 days             |
| Q2 2024 Quarterly Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: April – June 2024    | 31 August 2024 | 16 October 2024  | 46 days              |

|                                                                                                            |                  |                  |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|
| Q3 2024 Quarterly Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: July – September 2024                             | 30 November 2024 | 6 January 2025   | 37 days  |
| Update on the Implementation of the UNMISS Accountability Strategy (2022- 2024): January – September 2023. | 15 April 2024    | 26 February 2025 | 317 days |

38. HRD indicated that several factors contributed to the observed delays. Reports underwent multiple layers of review and clearance, and government comments which should be incorporated, often exceeded the agreed timeframe. Additionally, due to the rapidly changing security and human rights situation in South Sudan, planned reports were frequently postponed to address other priorities.

39. OIOS concluded that required public and internal reports were produced and exceptions were explained. Given the explanations and review of documents provided, no recommendation is made in this regard.

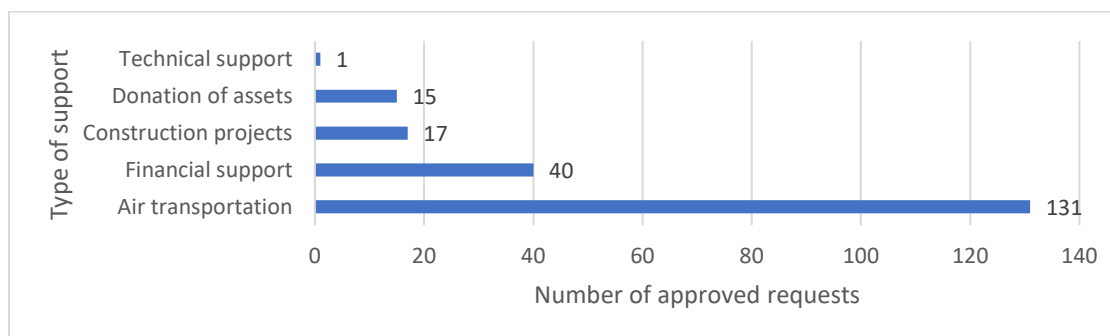
### C. Human rights due diligence policy

#### UNMISS took steps to enhance the standard operating procedure on the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy implementation to improve compliance

40. The Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) mandates that UNMISS should ensure that all support to non-United Nations security forces aligns with the United Nations Charter and respects international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law.

41. UNMISS' HRDDP unit, the primary compliance focal point, reviewed support requests and risk assessments from Mission entities sponsoring requests for support before submitting them to the HRDDP Task Force. In reviewing the requests, risks were classified into three categories: no/low, medium, or high. Support to high-risk recipients was required to be withheld until corrective measures were taken. Medium-risk recipients received support contingent on mitigatory measures, while no/low-risk recipients received support without mitigation. Sponsoring entities were required to monitor and report on mitigating measures and recipient behavior during the period of support via online forms. The Task Force evaluated risks and mitigation measures, making recommendations for approval by the Mission's senior leadership. During the audit period, 204 support requests were approved, as shown in the chart below:

**Chart 1: Approved requests for support to non-United Nations security forces during the period July 2022 to September 2024**



Source: HRDDP unit

42. OIOS review identified that during the audit period, 14 quick impact projects valued at \$431,555 in support of non-United Nations security forces had not undergone the HRDDP review process due to

oversight by the sponsoring entities. As of January 2025, 13 of the projects had been completed and one was still ongoing. Furthermore, a review of a sample of 35 approved requests indicated that although risk assessments contained mitigating measures that were required to be implemented during the duration of the support, sponsoring entities had not monitored and reported on the implementation of mitigatory measures set out in the risk assessments for 33 requests. 32 of these requests were categorized as medium risk whilst one was classified as high risk.

43. The HRDDP unit explained that operational priorities such as development of a strategy and action plan due to restructuring of the unit and streamlining the reporting tools including putting in place necessary benchmarks for reporting mitigation measures, affected the unit's ability to process project codes required by sponsoring entities to report on the implementation of mitigatory measures.

44. The Mission has since finalized the revision of the HRDDP SOP, effective from 13 January 2025. Amendments made simplified the process for sponsoring entities, reduced the administrative burden on sponsoring entities, the HRDDP Task Force, and its Secretariat; and would enhance compliance with the HRDDP. The revised SOP allows sponsoring entities to submit umbrella risk assessments for up to 12 months or various activities, providing increased flexibility to support prescreened non-United Nations security forces quickly. It includes enhanced measures to address monitoring and reporting challenges posed by umbrella risk assessments.

45. The revised SOP has been shared with all United Nations entities and components through the Task Force Co-Chairs, and nominations have been requested for Focal Persons for HRDDP implementation. The HRDDP Secretariat is in the process of engaging with sponsoring entities to conduct sensitizations on the revised SOP. OIOS concluded that UNMISS has taken steps to simplify and improve controls over the HRDDP process.

## **D. Training, capacity building and technical assistance**

### Satisfactory progress has been made on mandatory training on human rights

46. To be well-equipped to protect and promote international human rights and humanitarian law in the host country, all UNMISS personnel are required to complete mandatory induction training and an online course on human rights. The HRD provides induction training, while the Integrated Mission Training Centre (IMTC) tracks the completion of mandatory online courses by UNMISS staff.

47. The induction training for new staff includes a module covering a basic understanding of human rights and the mandate and activities of the HRD. OIOS review of training records in Inspira also indicated that as of 18 February 2025, 2,215 (97 per cent) of the 2,274 Mission personnel had completed the course. Taking into consideration staff movements, sick leave and other absences as well as regular reminders from the IMTC for staff to complete the training, no recommendation was made.

### Need to adequately document capacity building and technical assistance and advocacy of treaties adoption

48. The United Nations Human Rights policy outlines that the human rights component's work in capacity building is based on the assessment arising from its monitoring work. The policy further states that for human rights training activities, OHCHR shall evaluate their impact and outcome through different methodologies and identify further training needs. In 2023, the Division, in conjunction with other UNMISS components and partners, carried out 399 programmes for 15,484 people. Participants included government ministries, human rights groups, civil society, and security forces. In 2024, HRD did advocacy and

conducted 274 programmes for 12,856 people from government, human rights groups, civil society, community leaders, women and youth groups, people with disabilities, and faith-based organizations.

a) Capacity building conducted by the sector field offices

49. The field offices conducted several training activities, which were either funded by the HRD programme budget (UNMISS and OHCHR), or by internal partners/sections such as Rule of Law, Gender, United Nations Police, Child Protection, and Civil Affairs, with the partners funding significantly more activities. The 2024 capacity-building activities carried out in Jonglei, Warrap and Central Equatoria field offices and their related funding are summarized in table 8 below:

**Table 8: 2024 Capacity building activities and related funding for Jonglei, Warrap and Central Equatoria field offices**

| Funding source | Jonglei   | Central Equatoria | Warrap    | Total     | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| HRD or OHCHR   | 2         | 6                 | 18        | 26        | 32         |
| Partners       | 21        | 18                | 16        | 55        | 68         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>23</b> | <b>24</b>         | <b>34</b> | <b>81</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: HRD reports

50. HRD explained that the higher reliance (68 percent) on external requests/partners to carry out the capacity building was due to limited funding or lack of staff. OIOS noted that not having control over the entire initiative of the capacity building activities carried out could hinder the implementation of the HRD annual work plan.

51. Furthermore, OIOS review of the capacity building records indicated important gaps:

- While HRD maintained attendance records for capacity building activities to support the liquidation of utilized funds, the same records were not available for sessions organized by partners. The team leaders of the respective field offices explained that the reported number of participants trained, disaggregated by sex and their designation are maintained by the substantive sections that organized the training. However, this information should have been obtained from the training organizers, to maintain an adequate portfolio of evidence to support the training reported as conducted by HRD.
- In addition, the training needs assessment was not always documented to ensure the training delivered was tailored to specific needs and expectations. The team leaders stated that the invitation emails, which were not always available during the audit, described this. However, sometimes, the training request was made by phone without any documentation. Furthermore, no feedback or evaluation assessment of the training by the participants was conducted after the training to capture the satisfaction of participants and areas for improvements.

52. HRD explained that an evaluation tool was initially developed by a consultant and disseminated to HRD team leaders and thematic units for implementation. However, due to significant challenges relating to some participants with limited or no formal education, they were unable to complete the evaluation forms because of the language and literacy barriers but expressed their understanding and satisfaction through questions, comments, and oral feedback documented in the mandatory activity report submitted upon completion of each training session. However, the objectivity of such assessments could not be established and OIOS review noted that some of these training participants were justice actors or members of the State Human Rights Commission who would not be limited in their education.

53. HRD further indicated the existence of guidelines and tracking tools for documenting capacity building and advocacy activities at all levels, but these were not consistently implemented across the Division. For example, in the Bor field office, the team leader documented priority areas for capacity building and technical assistance based on feedback from authorities, civil society officers, justice chain actors, and other partners. However, this practice was not consistently implemented across other field offices.

54. After the audit fieldwork, HRD implemented a mechanism where the Planning Unit monitors external training requests, and field offices are required to submit training reports, including a list of participants, to ensure effective tracking and oversight. Given the action taken by HRD, no recommendation is made.

b) Support to treaties implementation and capacity building at the national level.

55. The Capacity Building & International Mechanisms Unit was required to undertake advocacy engagements and provision of technical assistance and capacity building support to the Government of South Sudan, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to promote adherence to international human rights standards while the field offices were responsible for advocacy and training at the field level.

56. South Sudan is currently a State party to African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, and core international human rights treaties; such as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and their attendant Optional Protocols.

57. OIOS was not able to review national-level capacity building and advocacy activities (responsibility of the Capacity Building & International Mechanisms Unit) because the necessary documentation (such as 2023/24 workplans, monthly activity reports, and capacity building records) could not be made available by the Unit during the audit, despite HRD indicating the existence of guidelines and tracking tools for documentation. The HRD explained that annual reports for technical assistance and capacity building were prepared in 2023 and 2024 by HRD and provided to the Government of South Sudan. However, these reports presented high-level information and an aggregated overview of technical assistance and capacity building, without detailing the contributions of field offices and national-level activities.

58. As a result, the support to implementation of treaties and capacity building at the national level could not be determined due to lack of documentation and records supporting these activities. Although HRD Leadership explained that they advocated for effective collaboration and creating synergies among various mission components as part of collective efforts towards achieving the UNMISS mandate, no documentation to support this assertion was made available.

**(3) UNMISS should enforce the use of guidelines and tracking tools to document technical assistance and capacity building activities.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and indicated that it has developed a monitoring and evaluation strategy, along with an evaluation template, which will be shared with Human Rights Division units for implementation.*

#### **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

59. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNMISS for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

| Rec. no. | Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                               | Critical <sup>4</sup> /<br>Important <sup>5</sup> | C/<br>O <sup>6</sup> | Actions needed to close recommendation                                                                                                                                                               | Implementation date <sup>7</sup> |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1        | UNMISS should take measures to enhance the adequacy and completeness of documentation supporting case verifications and investigations                                                       | Important                                         | O                    | Receipt of evidence of communications and reminders sent to team leaders and sensitization material.                                                                                                 | 1 August 2025                    |
| 2        | UNMISS should take measures to ensure the completeness of cases in the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights database as well as strengthen follow-up and quality control of cases | Important                                         | O                    | Receipt of evidence of timely reconciliation between the Matrix and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) database, including updates and a quality review of the OHCHR data. | 1 August 2025                    |
| 3        | UNMISS should enforce the use of guidelines and tracking tools to document technical assistance and capacity building, activities.                                                           | Important                                         | O                    | Receipt of evidence of a monitoring and evaluation strategy, along with an evaluation template developed and implemented.                                                                            | 1 August 2025                    |

<sup>4</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>5</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>6</sup> Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

<sup>7</sup> Date provided by [entity] in response to recommendations. [Insert "Implemented" where recommendation is closed; (implementation date) given by the client.]

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**



Date: 15 July 2025

To: Mr. Byung-Kun Min,  
Director  
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: Mr. Guang Cong.   
Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-  
General (Political) and OiC Head of UNMISS

Subject: **UNMISS response to the Draft Report on an Audit of the Human Rights  
Programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan  
(Assignment No. AP2024-633-05)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the draft report from OIOS on an Audit of the Human Rights Programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan.
2. Please find attached the Mission's comments on the recommendations.
3. Thank you for your consideration and support.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS  
Ms. Leda Limann, UNMISS  
Mr. Musa Yerro Gassama, UNMISS  
Ms. Daniela Wuerz, UNMISS  
Ms. Sintija Steinite, UNMISS

## Management Response

## Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

| Rec. no. | Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                               | Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup> | Accepted? (Yes/No) | Title of responsible individual                                                          | Implementation date | Client comments                                                                                                                                   |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | UNMISS should take measures to enhance the adequacy and completeness of documentation supporting case verifications and investigations                                                       | Important                                      | YES                | The Head of Conflict related violence team leader and the HRD Field Offices Team Leaders | 1 August 2025       | CRV will sensitize and continue to remind HRD Field Offices Team Leaders of their obligation to implement the measures.                           |
| 2        | UNMISS should take measures to ensure the completeness of cases in the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights database as well as strengthen follow-up and quality control of cases | Important                                      | YES                | Head of Conflict related violence team leader the HRD Field Offices Team Leaders         | 1 August 2025       | Subject to OHCHR's provision of access rights to new colleagues to enable them complete documentation process for cases left by former colleagues |
| 3        | UNMISS should enforce the use of guidelines and tracking tools to document technical assistance and capacity building, activities.                                                           | Important                                      | YES                | Head of Capacity Building Team and HRD Field Offices Team Leaders                        | 1 August 2025       | A monitoring and evaluation strategy and an evaluation template have been developed and will be shared with HRD units for implementation.         |

<sup>1</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.