

Armed Conflicts and Migration Crisis in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

Armed conflicts have occasioned crisis migration in South Sudan, endangering the rights and safety of the country's civilian population. To address this monumental humanitarian problematic in the face of the visible incapacity of the state to act decisively and effectively, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan intervened to protect civilians. In doing so, it introduced a paradigm shift by establishing the protection of civilian sites (PoCs). However, the role of UNMISS in addressing the migration crisis has been understudied. Utilizing secondary data and premised on the humanitarian development approach, this article underscores the relevance and limitations of protection of civilian sites in the management of the migration crisis. It further establishes that the Mission was unable to effectively manage the migration crisis because millions of internally displaced persons living outside the PoCs and refugees in neighboring countries were not adequately catered for. Furthermore, there were challenges with the resettlement of IDPs and return of refugees due to the persistence of violence and rural insecurity. It is, therefore, recommended that UNMISS in collaboration with the government of South Sudan should enforce existing peace agreements to resolve the conflict and stop the further escalation of the conflict and forced migration, collaborate in restoring legitimate governance attuned to the needs of the people, put in place social and economic recovery initiatives that will address the needs of the displaced persons, empower the returnees to restart their economic activities and spark development in the communities recovering from the armed conflicts.

Keywords: Armed Conflicts, Crisis migration, Humanitarian-development, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, South Sudan, Protection of persons

INTRODUCTION

Crisis migration is a major humanitarian problem currently affecting people throughout the world. In many humanitarian contexts, especially in Africa South of the Sahara, Asia Pacific regions, and Latin America, migration crises are mainly precipitated by armed conflicts, natural disasters (e.g. drought, flooding, earthquakes or rainstorms), epidemics and pandemics as well as debilitating socioeconomic conditions which often occur simultaneously or after one humanitarian catastrophe has occurred and the deleterious effects are still being agonizingly experienced by the impacted populations (Martin, Weerasinghe, & Taylor, 2013; Organization of Islamic Organization (OIC), 2017; Canta, 2020; Nwosu, 2023). These complex emergencies typically require urgent actions to protect people who are affected or are potential victims. South Sudan is a victim of crisis migration induced by armed by protracted armed conflicts since 2023.

Global crisis migration norms obligate States as duty bearers to protect persons that are affected or are on the move. It is the primary duty of State to protect persons who are forcefully uprooted from their homes and communities from harm, preventing the violations of their rights and addressing their humanitarian needs as well as facilitating the return of internally displaced persons back to their communities are some of the important responsibilities that duty bears are expected to discharge when responding to forced migration crisis. The United Nations as the leading intergovernmental humanitarian organization usually intervenes when an affected State, for certain reasons, is unable to discharge its humanitarian responsibility effectively and decisively when migration crisis occurs. It is against this backdrop that this paper critically examines the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan which is characterized by unprecedented migration crisis and the continuing need for protection of persons. This article examines the response of UNMISS to the migration crisis and the protection of persons in South Sudan.

Conceptual Clarifications: Armed conflicts, migration crisis and protection of persons

This section focuses on the conceptual review of armed conflict, migration crisis and protection of persons, respectively. To begin with, scholars have variously conceptualized armed conflicts (Wallerstein & Sollenberg, 1998; Groone, 2011; European Parliament, 2023). Groone (2011, p1) avers that armed conflict “involves horrific acts of violence and destruction”. Thus, the European Parliament (2023) states that an armed conflict occurs when there is a violent confrontation between the armed forces of States (international armed conflict) or between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State (non-international armed conflict). This definition excludes situations of violence such as internal disturbances and tensions.

From a critical perspective, China, Tarnande, & Akpar, (2023) theorized that two forms of insecurity, namely, “insecurities of power and authority” and “insecurities of the civil society are co-existing in contemporary modern states. Insecurities of power and authority reside within the domain of the state and are characterized by the abuse of power or the failure of power and authority to strike a balance between normative and empirical capabilities in maintain an orderly society. Insecurities of the civil society on the other hand are caused by the uncivil society through its excessive struggle for freedom, sometimes even contesting for the sovereignty of the State in total disregard of its normative and empirical capabilities. The challenge is even worse when the two forms of insecurity co-exist in the State. It is the view of this discourse that where either one or two of these insecurities occur or co-exist, forced displacement and migration crisis are often the resultant effect suffered by affected populations. The armed conflicts and crisis migration in South Sudan are a combination of these two forms of insecurity.

The concept of migration crisis consists of two words crisis and migration. It is therefore, apt to begin with the meaning of crisis. Sahin-Mencutek (2022, p.3) refers to crisis as commonly identified extraordinary event leading to temporal instability and uncertainty in the pre-existing status quo or perceived normality. In a similar vein, Cantat (2020, p.4) is of the view that:

A crisis is commonly portrayed as an extraordinary event, or set of events, leading to instability and danger and affecting a pre-existing normality. In order for a crisis to be named, a course of things accepted as normal, or ordinary, must be seen as disrupted in ways that are considered as constituting a significant breakaway. In this sense, “crisis” as a discursive category is underpinned by normative assumptions about what is good/ bad, desirable/undesirable and what needs to be addressed. The notion of crisis also holds a performative potential regarding prescriptions on how to return to the desired normal.

Cantat (2020) further explains that crises generate specific responses, usually referred to as crisis management, and often call for a set of extraordinary measures to rectifying abnormal humanitarian situations. The foregoing implies that crisis migration is a rupture of normality. It also entails that they last within a relatively short period of time. However, it should be noted that crisis can be prolonged and metamorphose into a protracted armed conflict if not resolved as the situation in South Sudan illustrates. Migration is the voluntary and involuntary movement of persons from one place to another (Martin, Weerasinghe, & Taylor, 2013). Whether proactive or reactive, migration can be a source of crisis depending on how populations on the move are managed. It is to be noted that reactive migration caused by natural disasters (flooding, earthquakes, windstorms, famine, heath waves) or manmade factors (wars, political instability, economic downturn) tend to precipitate more migration crisis. For Martin, Weerasinghe, and Taylor’s (2013) reactive crisis migration encompasses the diverse forms of movements in situations in which people become trapped in the context of humanitarian crises. Crisis migration, therefore, refers to situations involving large-scale, complex migration flows, often triggered by conflict, instability, or natural disasters, leading to significant challenges in managing these movements and providing support for those affected. These crisis situations often involve humanitarian concerns, border management difficulties, and potential social and economic challenges affecting the capacity of those affected to meet their needs (Martin, Weerasinghe, Taylor, 2013; Cantat, 2020; Sahin-Mencutek, 2022)

Crisis migration creates vulnerabilities which call for protection. Protection of persons is an internationally recognized ethic which acknowledges that safeguarding people during armed conflicts is an essential aspect of humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping operations (ICRC, 2012; Nwosu, 2023). The main thrust of

protection is that when conflict or a natural disaster occurs and scores of people are affected or are likely to be affected, efforts must be made by the relevant authorities, the primary bearers of responsibility for protection, and the international community when it becomes necessary and in line with established international humanitarian norms, to prevent populations that are affected from harm and danger, especially in relation to their human rights (Caverzasio, 2001; Geneva Call, 2020). Geneva Call (2020) states that protection of individuals is the duty of all armed parties to a war to guarantee that civilians are, in fact, safe. In a similar breath, the ICRC (2012) in its broadest sense, notes that protection seeks to ensure that authorities and other actors respect their obligations to the affected populations and the rights of individuals. From this perspective, protection includes actions that are taken to stop or prevent actual or prospective violations of international humanitarian law as well as other pertinent legal frameworks or standards that safeguard human rights (ICRC, 2009; ICRC, 2012; OCHA, 2022; Nwosu, 2023).

Furthermore, Ali (2022) asserts that protection of persons is crucial for the purpose of lessening the risks that people face and to guarantee that people's rights are respected in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights laws. He argues that this is evident in the notable rise in the variety and number of humanitarian and human rights actors working to safeguard persons who are vulnerable to abuses or violations in violent conflicts and other violent circumstances. In order to safeguard civilians and non-combatants, a wide spectrum of humanitarian and human rights actors are found in almost all conflict zones across the world, as well as in dire circumstances hidden from public scrutiny.

International humanitarian law establishes the requirement for the protection of the civilian population. It shields civilians and anybody not involved in combat or armed hostilities from attacks or civilians must be safeguarded during armed conflict. The guidelines to safeguard civilians are contained in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and its 1977 Additional Protocols. Civilians are protected by other international legal frameworks, such as human rights legislation and its inalienable rights, by national laws that are compliant with international law, and by the notion of humanity in circumstances that are not covered by these treaties, such as internal disturbances. (ICRC, 2009; ICRC, 2012).

The United Nations recognizes the protection of individuals impacted by armed conflict as a component of the responsibility to protect (R2P). Paragraph 138 and 139 of Decision 1674 (2006) of the UN approved shortly after the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome recognizes the responsibility to protect civilians in protection of civilian. It follows that exercising sovereignty entails accountability. In the event that governments blatantly fail to protect their populations, the UN further announced its readiness to work with pertinent regional organizations and take prompt, decisive measures in accordance with the UN Charter as Paragraph 138 of the Summit Outcome Document states:

Each individual state has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help states to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capacity (UN World Summit Outcome Document, 2005).

The UN Security Council recalled, among its pertinent prior resolutions, Resolution 1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which reaffirmed, inter alia, the provisions of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 United Nations World Summit Outcome Document (2005). This link between the protection of civilians and the responsibility to protect was reiterated in UN Resolution 1706 (2006), which dealt with the situation in Darfur, Somalia. Resolution 1894 (2005) is the UN Security Council resolution on protection of civilian sites (PoC) which establishes the connection between protection of civilian sites (PoCs) and the duty to protect. The UN World Summit Outcome's paragraphs 138 and 139 are specifically recognized by Resolution 1894 (2005) as belonging to the relevant provisions regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict (ICRC, 2009; ICRC, 2019).

Theoretical Framework: Humanitarian-development Nexus Approach

Crisis migration in South Sudan has been examined from the perspective of humanitarian-development approach which throws attention to the necessity of peace building and development rather than the long-standing preoccupation of traditional humanitarian approaches with the delivery of aid to affected populations in fragile societies (Cunningham (2017; Lie (2020; International Peace Institute (2018). The four key assumptions of the “sustaining peace” approach are as follows; (i) Peace is a state of mind that grows from below. (ii) the peace process requires the recognition and tackling of the root causes and consequences of conflict (iii) External interveners must work for healing and reconciliation, not impair efforts towards reconciliation (iv) Where international humanitarian assistance concurrently attends to security, human rights, development, and humanitarian needs of affected populations, there are greater chances of establishing the conditions for maintaining peace (The International Peace Institute, 2018). According to Strand (2020), the aim is to address the root causes of humanitarian crisis and connect humanitarian management with conflict prevention. Lie (2020) contends that approach aims to understand the war-to-peace transition in fragile societies. Thus, it is important to remember that conflict and peace are not mutually exclusive and that different parties need to be encouraged to work together to bring about peace (Lie, 2020). By focusing on armed conflicts, migration crisis and protection of persons, this paper is well linked to the assumptions of peace, recovery and development advocated by the theory.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Immediately after the attainment of independence by South Sudan in 2011, the UN Security Council on July 8th 2011, decisively voted for Decision and Resolution number 1996 and established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (UNSC, 2011) to forestall the outbreak of hostilities between the new State and Sudan from which it separated, and following the outbreak of the war, manage the humanitarian crisis. As contained in the Status of Forces Agreement (2011) entered into by the warring parties in South Sudan, UNMISS is made up of three components: (a) a Special Representative appointed by the UN Secretary General; (b) a civilian component made up of UN officials and other individuals assigned by the Secretary General to assist the Special Representative or made available by participating States; and (c) a military component made up of military and civilian personnel made available to UNMISS by participating States to serve as part of UNMISS.

Initially, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was entrusted with maintaining South Sudan's peace and security and assisting the government in building State capacity required for efficient, democratic governance (Jochemsen, 2022). In an optimistic mood, UNMISS was created with the intention of averting a resumption of hostilities between South Sudan and Sudan upon their separation (Hunt, 2020). When UNMISS was first established, it consisted of 7,000 military personnel and 9,000 civilian employees. After the first year, these figures were expected to decline as peace was expected to return. The UN Security Council concluded in resolution 2677 (2023) that the South Sudanese situation still poses a threat to regional and global peace and security. As a result, the UNMISS mandate was extended by the Security Council until March 15, 2024. Additionally, it emphasized that the mission should keep working towards the three-year strategic vision outlined in Resolution 2567 (2021) in order to avert the resumption of civil conflict, establish lasting peace, and promote inclusive, responsible governance in addition to free, fair, and peaceful elections that are in line with the revitalized peace accord.

The humanitarian mandate of UNMISS was revised and refocused with most of its critical State building responsibilities discarded. Relying on Chapter VII of the UN charter, the UN Security Council assigned an original multidimensional mandate to UNMISS which among other duties, required UNMISS to (i) “provide assistance to the South Sudanese government in order to prevent, mitigate, end, and safeguard civilians from conflict” by (a) facilitating the anticipation, prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflicts; (b) establishing an early warning system; (c) monitoring and reporting on human rights; (d) advising the government on security matters in compliance with human and refugee law; (e) actively deterring violence through patrols and active deployment in high-risk areas where the government is unable to provide security; and (f) ensuring security so that UN humanitarian workers can carry out their mandated duties in a safe manner and (ii) develop the state's ability to uphold the rule of law, provide security, and bolster the judicial system by (a) creating plans for security sector reform, (b) putting national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration into action, and (c) fortifying

the police force (d) creating a military court system; (e) assisting in the creation of a child-safe environment; and (f) providing assistance for demining operations.

Thus, from all indications, UNMISS was tasked with using "all means necessary" to promote peace, safeguard people, discourage violence, and ensure the safety of UN personnel. Examining the original mission critically reveals that the mandate was far more focused on state-building initiatives for the newly formed state of South Sudan. Part of UNMISS mandate also covered issues that would directly affect conflict resolution and the peace process. Additionally, UNMISS's mandate was limited to South Sudan. The UNISFA was tasked with keeping the peace along the northern border between South Sudan and Sudan as a separate mission. Following the outbreak of the South Sudanese Civil War in 2013, the UN Security Council was forced to amend the UNMISS mandate, substituting a more narrowly focused set of peace and security-related operations for the majority of the capacity-building initiatives. The UN Security Council authorized Resolution 2132, increasing force levels to 12,500, within days of the start of the Civil War (UN Security Council, 2013).

Protection Mandate of UNMISS

UNMISS was assigned specific protection mandate to (a) guarantee, regardless of the origin or location of the violence, effective, prompt, and dynamic protection of civilians who are in danger of bodily harm through a comprehensive and integrated approach (b) avoid, discourage, and put an end to violence against civilians, including politically motivated violence, especially in high-risk areas. In addition, any actor who is reliably discovered to be planning or carrying out attacks against civilians in internally displaced person (IDP) camps and the UNMISS protection of civilian sites must be dealt with quickly and effectively (c) maintain proactive deployment and a mobile, flexible, robust and effective posture by active patrolling with particular attention to high-risk areas, IDP camps and the UNMISS protection of civilian site and identify as well as deter potential threats or attacks through a mission-wide early warning and response system (d) maintain public safety and security of and within existing UNMISS protections of civilian sites, and whenever protection of civilian sites have been re-designated, to protect civilians in those re-designated camps under the sovereign responsibility of the government, if the security situation deteriorates (e) discourage, stop, and deal with gender-based and sexual violence, including by stepping in to defend survivors and civilians who are in danger. (f) promote community-led peace discussion procedures, use good offices, foster confidence, and facilitate in support of UNMISS protection strategy, particularly with respect to women and children, to avoid, ameliorate, and resolve inter-communal violence. (g) Work with partners to complement community disarmament initiatives and support the development and implementation of gender-responsive community violence reduction programmes to help reduce inter-communal violence, with a focus on women, youth, and members of armed groups who are unable or unwilling to be integrated into the necessary Unified Forces. (h) Assist the South Sudanese government in expanding and reforming the justice and rule of law sectors by offering technical assistance and developing capacity. (i) create a safe atmosphere in which internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees can return, relocate, resettle, or integrate into host communities in a dignified, voluntary, and safe manner; (j) swiftly and forcefully confront any actor discovered to be planning or carrying out an attack against civilians, IDP camps, UNMISS's protections of civilian sites, other UN buildings and staff, or foreign and domestic humanitarian actors.

The UN Security Council passed Resolution 2187, which changed UNMISS's role from multifaceted state-building to one that was specifically focused on protecting civilians, monitoring, investigating, and reporting human rights violations, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, assisting in the political process to put an end to hostilities and implement the revitalized peace agreement and facilitate the return to democratic rule (UN Security Council, 2014). In case resources were limited, priority was to be given to the protection of civilians. The next section discusses how UNMISS carried out its protection mandate in the context of an unprecedented migration crisis in South Sudan.

UNMISS Protection of Persons in the Context of Migration Crisis in South Sudan

Protracted armed conflicts precipitated unprecedented crisis migration and attendant humanitarian emergency in South Sudan which required protection of affected populations by UNMISS. The United States Department of State (2017) and the OCHA (2022) reported that ongoing conflicts and insecurity in South Sudan had forced

millions of people to be displaced internally and across borders into neighboring countries. The US Department of State put the figure in 2017 at 3.5 million displaced persons with 1.9 million persons being internally displaced. Five years later in 2022, the OCHA (2022) put the slightly reduced figure of internally displaced persons at 1.7 million and refugees and asylum seekers at 2.3 million. Of the 1.7 million IDPs, only 200,000 individuals forcefully displaced were housed at the PoC sites within the UN bases. Jochemsen (2022) claims that following the outbreak of war and violence in 2013 and escalation in 2014, hundreds of thousands of people fled to UNMISS facilities, bringing with them the responsibility of protecting civilians. Hunt (2020, p.65) states that “Following the outbreak of the war, in 2013, the Security Council mandated the termination of State-building activities and a reorientation towards physical rights-based and humanitarian protection...the shifting mid-conflict from a peace building mission to one focused primarily on protecting civilians was a radical departure from anything that had been tried before in the history of peacekeeping”. Table 1 presents the number of civilians at Points of Crisis (PoC) across five South Sudanese states in 2015.

Table 1: Estimated number of Civilians in UNMISS PoC Sites

State	Location	Number of Civilians Seeking protection
Central Equatoria	UN House PoC 1 & 2	8,011
	UN House PoC	20,652
Jonglei	Bor	2,288
Upper Nile	Malakal Melut	48, 840
Unity	Bentiu	723
Western Bahr El Ghazal	Wau	121, 194
TOTAL	-	201, 911

Source: Stern (2015, p.6).

The mission of protecting civilian populations impacted by armed conflict was executed by UNMISS with identified challenges. First and foremost, considering the fact that 1.9 million people were internally displaced in 2015 and 1.7 million in 2022, the housing of 200,000 people was negligible and inadequate. Again, UNMISS was unable to handle the security situation effectively leading to the persistence of the armed conflict and the continued displacement of people which resulted in the civilian population in the PoC sites to keep fluctuating. It persisted in evolving, mirroring the shifting nature of the dispute. On the positive side, the safe haven created by UNMISS prevented acts of genocide and saved thousands of lives, particularly those of non-Dinka populations who sought safety in the camps (Day et al., 2019). The creation of such expansive PoC sites and the importance of the PoCs in the UNMISS mandate set the mission apart from prior peacekeeping operations. On the other hand, UN forces' neglect of duty resulted in multiple occasions where UNMISS was unable to protect people in and near the PoC camps (The Guardian, 2016). As a result, the mission established the Operational Coordination Committee, whose duties included overseeing top management and making sure the early warning system received the proper replies (Jochemsen, 2022).

Protracted conflict and flooding posed grave challenges to the protection of persons. Consequently, civilian populations continued to be displaced time and time again, with serious humanitarian consequences. The OCHA (2022, p.6) humanitarian needs report averred that continued conflict in South Sudan combined with flooding resulted in large-scale internal and cross-border displacement. The report further notes that due to compounding shocks, both in areas of displacement and return, populations had been forced to keep displacing time and again. It states that at least 90,000 returnees from abroad remained displaced within the country, unable to reach their homes. In 2021, there were 2 million IDPs in the country (55 per cent of whom were women and girls), as

compared to 1.7 million in 2020. An additional 2.3 million South Sudanese remained refugees hosted in neighbouring countries.

UNMISS was not very effective in the area of security of lives and property. This was the case in spite of security presence at the PoCs and 259,599 police unit person days patrols carried out by the UN in and around the PoC sites during the 2019–2020 term (UNGA, 2020). For instance, the UN House in Juba and the PoC locations, the World Food Programme warehouse, and humanitarian workers sheltered in the Terrain Hotel were all targets of attacks in 2016, to which the UNMISS failed to respond (Hunt, 2020). In addition, there had been reports of criminal activity, such as physical assaults and gender-based violence, in the places of conflict (PoCs), which were effectively little cities with thousands of residents, as well as of inadequate internal security measures (Hunt, 2020). Stern (2015, p. 5) states that UNMISS encountered significant difficulties in responding to this illicit activity because the 2011 Status of Forces Agreement, which governed its jurisdiction and responsibilities, placed the onus of prosecuting suspected offenders on the government of South Sudan.

There were also concerns bothering on the fact that significant resources were allocated to the PoC sites which may not have been the best means of protecting civilians, given that the PoC sites only sheltered about 10% of the over 2 million IDPs within South Sudan (in addition to an additional over 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries). In fact, UNMISS has had difficulty preventing violence in the isolated regions that were not near the points of conflict since there were less troops available to operate in these areas due to troop concentration near the PoC locations. In order to improve the management of the humanitarian crisis, UNMISS decided to designate some of the PoC sites—such as those in Juba, Wau, and Bor—as typical displacement camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and placed under government authority by late 2020 (UNMISS, 2020). The UN also trained a local police force. With these initiatives, UNMISS was able to transfer its forces from relatively stable static positions to farther-flung hotspots for prevention of violence. UNMISS continued to maintain control over both the biggest and most vulnerable PoC camp in Bentiu and Malakal. Additionally, during that time, the operation carried out 1,195 hours of air patrol and eliminated 27 suspected bombs (Jochemsen, 2022).

Despite the fact that there were more mobile days than static days, the mission fell well short of its intended mobile presence in areas outside the PoC sites. Large-scale political violence had mostly given way to smaller, communal violence following the 2018 peace accord. Conflicts over territory and resources, particularly the frequency of livestock raids, were major causes of this violence (International Peace Institute, 2020). UNMISS organized local reconciliation initiatives, such as community discussions and local resolutions mediated by locals, in response to this trend towards localized violence. This emphasis on local initiatives is evident in the 2019–2020 performance report, which lists 1036 local events and 24 national gatherings held to raise awareness of the purpose. The team arranged 275 community-level reconciliation meetings during that time. Additionally, 110 meetings between community leaders and the national government were arranged by the mission (UNGA, 2020; Jochemsen, 2022).

Part of UNMISS's responsibility included assisting IDPs in their safe and voluntary return. Despite the fact that fighting had continued in the countryside since the peace agreement was signed and the RTGoNU was established, UNMISS announced on September 20, 2020, that armed forces would gradually leave Bor and Wau and that PoC sites would be turned into camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), which would be under the management of the South Sudanese government. As a result, UNMISS classified the locations in Juba, Wau, Bor, and Bentiu as IDP camps, leaving the Malakal site because of its complicated political and security circumstances (Salifu, 2023). The move from the PoC to the IDP camp was justified by the fact that, following the establishment of the Revitalized Government of National Unity, the 2018 peace agreement had dramatically decreased political violence nationwide (Salifu, 2023).

In terms of the safety of people, the shift from PoC sites to IDP was different from earlier UNMISS initiatives. The mission's ultimate goal was to establish long-term circumstances that would enable widespread voluntary returns and eventually result in the closure of the PoC locations. The team scheduled consultation meetings with IDPs to explore concerns about possible returns. In order to address issues with safe returns, the mission also undertook meetings with the host communities and local authorities. Many IDPs were thought to remain in the camps in order to receive the services offered there, rather than out of concern for their safety; these services had already being established in places where they may return (Day et al., 2019). This involved building

maternity wards, markets, boreholes, and elementary schools (UNGA, 2020). The mission must resolve a number of issues pertaining to returns and relocations. Since the government could not give them enough security, a large number of non-Dinka IDPs were terrified to go back to their hometowns in Dinka-majority districts. Worse still, their properties may have been seized by others in numerous instances and relocating them to different regions where they belong to the ethnic minority, however, fosters a sense of security (Jochensen, 2022).

Section Five (5): Conclusion and Recommendation

The armed conflict-induced migration in South Sudan posed a grave protection and humanitarian challenges which necessitated the United Nations intervention to protect affected persons. In responding to the migration crisis and the attendant humanitarian crisis, generally, UNMISS opened its gates to thousands of forcefully displaced civilians fleeing from the armed violence and this intervention saved the lives of over two hundred thousand persons (World Peace Foundation, 2017). By so doing, UNMISS can be credited with ensuring that the South Sudanese fleeing from insecurity and living under the protection of the UN in designated PoC sites were shielded from attacks and their rights were also guaranteed.

However, this humanitarian gesture was not sufficient considering the scale of migration crisis and the fact that the IDPs housed in the PoCs were a small component of the over 1.7 million people internally displaced. The rest of the remaining 1.5 million civilians or thereabout affected by the conflict living in areas not protected by the UN forces were constantly under attack and were not given adequate protection even as the UNMISS security teams carried out patrols in some areas. Also, more than 3 million South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries were not availed protection.

It can, therefore, be clearly stated that while UNMISS played a recognizable and appreciable role in protecting civilians that were affected by armed conflicts in South Sudan, especially those taking refuge in United Nations Protection of Civilian Sites, the majority of the “affected population” was not adequately protected in the face of the ongoing armed conflicts. The disproportionate and special attention given to the PoC sites to the near inconsequential attention to other internally displaced civilians in the remote parts of the country undercut the inadequacy and challenge to UNMISS protection scorecard. Within the PoC sites as in the areas outside that were affected by conflicts, there were reports of criminal activities which UNMISS was unable to address because it lacked the power to prosecute.

Worse still, at the time this study was concluded, UNMISS was yet to commence the process of returning internally displaced persons back to their homes and communities due lack of commitment and continued safety in the rural areas. The withdrawal of peacekeeping forces in some troubled parts of the country and the transitioning of PoCs to IDP camps which would be placed under the direct management of the South Sudanese authority raised serious concerns regarding the humanitarian conditions of IDPs giving the inability of the state over the years to respond to the needs of the people.

It noteworthy that the use of Protection of Civilian Sites (POCs) for protection of persons by UNMISS saved the lives of thousands of internally displaced South Sudanese affected by armed conflict but it also left millions of people outside the circuit of protection in the countryside where violence, killings, rights violations and humanitarian crisis persisted. It is, therefore, recommended that it is important for UNMISS to work together with the South Sudanese authorities and other humanitarian actors to refocus attention on the millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living outside the UN protected sites and the return of millions of refugees in neighbouring countries.

UNMISS should also ensure that the newly designated IDP camps are not solely left to the management of the RTGoNU because the South Sudanese state is still a warring party. Continued support to the South Sudanese government to the management and resettlement of IDPs to their various communities must be given top priority. There is also need to improve security in IDP camps and remote areas to safeguard the lives of the people against attacks by warring armed groups before returning IDPs to their communities.

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