

### CONFLICTS

In South Sudan, conflict is best understood as a threefold phenomenon. Elites compete for control of the presidency, oil resources, and state offices, with alliances shifting as commanders defect. These struggles spill into local arenas, where communities clash over cattle, land, and water, often along ethnic lines but ultimately driven by livelihood concerns. Simultaneously, border disputes and different conflicts in neighbouring countries feed arms, fighters, and instability back into the country. Climate shocks (especially floods) intensify displacement and pressure on scarce resources, blurring the lines between political and communal violence. As a result, people experience conflict less as one war with a clear front and more as overlapping power struggles, local raids, and regional spillovers.



### THE THREE PILLARS OF PEACE



#### PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

Due to these multiple manifestations of conflict, physical integrity is scarce. Violence is linked to armed confrontation and state repression, with its intensity shifting over time. Although major wars have centred on Juba, the worst abuses are felt in remote towns and rural areas. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is another pervasive form of harm, mostly affecting women and girls. In a patriarchal society where such violations are rarely treated as a serious crime, SGBV has been used as a weapon of war. This is particularly the case by national security forces when targeting civilians in rebel areas such as Unity, Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, and Upper Nile. Despite an action plan being signed by the government under international pressure, these abuses have not ceased to occur.



#### HUMAN RIGHTS

Since independence, most political, civil, and labour rights in South Sudan have weakened, with press freedom a partial exception. People recognise these problems: many cannot name an institution they trust to protect their rights, and overall confidence is low. Views vary across the country. In parts of Greater Bahr el Ghazal and a handful of areas less affected by recent wars, people are more hopeful; communities in harder-hit regions are, meanwhile, more sceptical. Overall, the right to life is seen as relatively secure, but freedom of expression is widely viewed as at risk. Other rights, such as those concerning movement, education, health, physical security, property, and work, are perceived as unevenly protected, reflecting both everyday insecurity and very limited ways to seek justice.



#### CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Weak rule of law and a contested security sector prevail. Army, police, and other security personnel are simultaneously seen as protectors and as major threats due to their heavy involvement in local conflicts. Traditional authorities are seldom mentioned when people talk of human rights, yet chiefs and customary courts remain central to everyday justice. In Rumbek Centre, courts led by chiefs resolve disputes over land, cattle, and family matters; practices such as wanhalel, now enshrined in Lakes State Customary Laws, are widely respected tools for making peace. In Malakal, locals rely on a mix of governors, churches, non-governmental organisations, UNMISS, and chiefs to manage tensions. Across regions, these different actors interact and sometimes compete, shaping how conflicts are settled.

### NOTIONS OF PEACE

For our Survey Results in South Sudan scan:



Fieldwork done between 2019-2022