



Adjusting Terminology for Organised Violence in South Sudan

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I. Overview

February 2020 saw the formation of the executive of the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU). Since then fighting between the signatories to the Revitalised Agreement on Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (RARCSS) has been significantly reduced, as parties broadly respect the ceasefire. However, although the agreement largely brought an end to violence between signatories, South Sudan continues to experience significant levels of organised violence.

The scope and intensity of this violence at times match – or even surpass – that of the national civil war. Since early 2020, large-scale organised violence has been observed in central and southern Jonglei State, including, at peak, the involvement of around 10,000 fighters engaged in lowland Pibor alone – equivalent to a standard South Sudan People's Defence Forces' (SSPDF) division. Similar to the national civil war, sub-national organised violence is typically characterised by deliberate attacks on civilians and their livelihoods. This has severe humanitarian consequences, alongside at times heavily restricted humanitarian space.

Despite ongoing high levels of violence, the prevailing perception about the security situation in South Sudan is that absolute peace has been achieved. The decrease in violence between signatories to the Revitalised Agreement serves to support this narrative. However, such a narrow interpretation of peace entails that ongoing high levels of organised violence at the sub-national level remain understated. The severity of the situation is often diluted, and the causes of the violence repeatedly missed or obscured. Instead, sub-national organised violence is explained by drawing on widely accepted narratives that focus on an assumed inherently violent context, as well as on assumptions around livelihood strategies and social structures that facilitate violence.

Problem Statement

Labels and narrative frames used to describe an issue implicitly trigger broader understandings and mental models. Differently put, labels and frames that are used to describe an issue inform the explanations that are sought.

To describe organised violence in South Sudan, terms like cattle raiding and revenge, ethnic or tribal violence, and inter-communal violence are widely employed. In addition, labels used for armed actors often refer to entire ethnic groups or generalised masses of youth. In turn, such narratives often heuristically prompt explanations based on ideas of tradition, intractability, normality in context, and low severity. However, violence is highly varied across South Sudan, and even within ethnic groups and livelihood systems. Therefore, commonly accepted explanations are often incomplete as they fail to account for variation in the relationship between what they base their explanation on – ethnic difference, pastoralism, or small arms proliferation – and the levels of organised violence seen around South Sudan. Not only do dominant narratives and labels encourage misleading explanations for the violence, but being so widely accepted, they also discourage ongoing critical and fine-grained assessments of real-life conflict dynamics.

In short, common labels and terms used to describe organised sub-national violence in South Sudan do more to obscure than to explain the how and why of violence. They serve to deflect attention, prevent an understanding of, and deny accountability for ongoing organised violence. Moving away from generic and frequently problematic labels like cattle raiding, revenge, and inter-communal violence would support a more nuanced analysis and understanding of diverse sub-national conflict dynamics, drivers, interactions with political processes, linkages to the state, and impact on civilians.

Objective of the Document

This effort does not seek to eliminate the usage of terms such as cattle raid or inter-communal violence, as the occurrence of these events and the literal meaning of these terms remains. The purpose of this document, however, is to support a diversity of organizations and personnel engaging with issues of peace and conflict in South Sudan in pursuing greater and more accurate understanding of conflict dynamics. This document proposes revised terminology, including three categories of organised violence: national, sub-national, and localised violence. To place organised violence within the proposed categories, an analytical framework is provided, based on the key characteristics of violence: purpose, severity, and tools.

Scope of the Document

While this document aims to provide a more accurate understanding of conflict dynamics, it is nevertheless important to highlight that the complexity of overlapping and heavily interrelated layers of violence in South Sudan do not allow for distinct typologies. For instance, the characteristics of sub-national and localised violence in South Sudan, as seen in Jonglei in 2020, at times mimic that of civil wars, particularly when considering the organization and capacity of actors involved and the impact of violence on civilians or non-participants. As such, the guidance in this document does not seek to provide precise distinctions between situations of violence, but rather to support the analysis of patterns and trends within complex situations.

It should further be noted that the classification of organised violence within this framework as national, sub-national, or localised violence does not seek to trigger International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or other legal regimes. Nevertheless, analysis conducted on the basis of this guidance note and indicators set out in this document may inform the legal classification of situations of violence in South Sudan. Specifically, indicators to determine the severity – scope, armed actor capacity, and impact on the civilian population – are commonly used within IHL to determine the existence of a non-international armed conflict and to distinguish conflicts from other forms of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions, riots, or acts of banditry.

Finally, the proposed categorizations are intended to cover situations of organised violence, not necessarily every violent incident. While all violence is of concern, it is the organization of aggrieved populations for the purpose of using violence at larger scale, frequency, and intensity that typically leads to the greatest humanitarian and other consequences.

II. Characteristics of Violence

Analysis of organised violence in South Sudan should adopt labelling consistent with its observed characteristics using terminology that helps to explain why and how it is occurring. To place organised violence within the proposed categories, the following three elements should be considered:

1. Purpose
2. Severity
3. Tools and targeting

Purpose of Violence

Organised violence should first be considered by its purpose, defined by the objectives being pursued by the armed actors involved and disaggregated as possible for macro, meso, and micro layers of objectives. The diverse conflicts seen in South Sudan cannot be seen as only based on issues like perceived differences of identity or an absolute scarcity of resources. Where these elements exist, they must be analysed in relation to their politics, including dynamics of power and access. Three heavily interrelated layers of objectives can be used to guide analysis of purpose. These layers overlap and operate in constant interaction and any single use of organised violence may be complementary or antagonistic to the goals of actors across all three layers. The use of organised violence in pursuit of national, state, and local political and economic agendas also creates negative feedback loops of violence that

may quickly deviate from the original motivation for using or threatening violence. Categorization of organised violence should reflect the most salient layer of objectives, though other layers will likely be relevant to some degree.

1. **National Objectives:** The use of violence in pursuit of national political and economic agendas is most prominent in the outbreak of national civil war but is also found in interactions with sub-national issues. This may produce violence in the process of the mass accumulation of resources, such as livestock, or delivering on bargains made with state and local elites, such as pressing an exclusionary land claim.
2. **State and Local Objectives:** State and local agendas may work in concert with, counter to, or alongside national agendas, interacting with violence in dynamic ways. Violence may occur as state and local elites seek to demonstrate their value to both national elites and grassroots constituencies and as they use the resources delivered by national elites to pursue state and local objectives that may have no connection to national agendas.
3. **Grassroots Objectives:** The political and economic objectives of national, state, and local elites do not explain every instance of violence in South Sudan, including incidents of organised violence. Male youth as well as women and girls retain considerable agency regarding the use of violence despite their differential exploitation within organised violence across all layers. Male youth may reject the objectives of higher layer objectives in favour of their own in the use of violence, just as women may utilise their societal role in generating honour and shame to offer incentives and disincentives for a range of behaviours related to violence (for more information on the complex roles women in conflict play, see for instance this [Conflict and Gender Study from 2018](#)).

Severity of Violence

In assessing the severity of organised violence, three dimensions should be considered:

1. Geographic, social, and temporal scope
2. Capacity of armed actors involved
3. Impact on communities

Geographic, social, and temporal scope

Geographic scope refers to the physical and administrative areas relevant to the organised violence being analysed. This should at least begin to reflect an appropriate framing of the administrative boundaries of concern, such as competing or disputed administrative systems, differences between communal and statutory boundaries, and administrative level. Additionally, key aspects of topography should also be considered, especially in how they structure how and why organised is occurring. To say that organised violence is occurring in Leer County is one framing, but to highlight that organised violence involving one area of Mayendit North and one area of eastern Leer County, moving from the mainland where violence is common into the wetlands where pursuit does not typically occur is far more helpful framing.

Social scope refers to which social groups are involved in organised violence and how so. For a majority of South Sudan's population and geographic area, particularly across the wetlands and flood plains, communities are characterised by segmentary lineage systems. To varying degrees across space, time, and communities, this enduring social structure promotes the fission and fusion of constituent social groups in relation to the social level at which violence or the threat of violence is attributed by the communities involved. When a dispute arises between Village A and Village B, violence can occur even if various bonds exist between them and residents largely belong to the same higher-level social group, such as Clan X. When a different conflict becomes active, such as between Clan X, Clan Y, and Clan Z, Villages A and B may set aside or even resolve their situation of violence to come together as constituent groups of Clan X in response to a higher social level of conflict with Clans Y and Z. The situation of violence between Villages A and B may also resume later on when the conflict with Clans Y and Z becomes inactive.

Given the lack of standard English terminology for the different levels of social groups within this system, referring to the levels numerically can sometimes be helpful. Within Lakes State, for example, the most intense violence often occurs among 3rd (section) and 4th (sub-section) level groups. For example, many violent incidents in the 2019/2020 dry season at key pastures along the Naam River east of Rumbek town occurred among communities (4th Level) from among the Aliamtoch 1, Aliamtoch 2, Pakam, and Rub (3rd Level) of the Agar (2nd Level) Dinka (1st Level) of Greater Rumbek. Using numeric levels helps to maintain comparability in analysis of the social scope of conflict.

Temporal scope refers to the duration of the organised violence, though should also consider its timing. The duration of single incidents is often brief, with armed clashes or raids often only lasting a few hours to a few days. This does not always hold, however, and prolonged periods of fighting are important to note. For example, two of the three periods of greatest concern for organised violence in the first seven months of 2020 in Jonglei State have lasted multiple weeks to now multiple months. The duration of different cycles of violence across the national, sub-national, and localised spectrum may endure continuously or cyclically for extended periods of time, with the potential to last years or decades while moving between active and latent periods. Numerous conflicts in South Sudan – including layers of organised violence within central and southern Jonglei, including the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), internal to Greater Rumbek and in interactions with Cueibet County and Greater Yirol; and internal to Greater Tonj and in interactions with Jur River County and the counties of southern Unity State – existed before, during, and in parallel with the civil war, at times predating the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the two preceding Sudanese civil wars. Reflecting on where continuity does and does not exist in the organised violence observed can offer quick and helpful insights.

The timing of organised violence should always be considered, including where it falls within a seasonal calendar for a given location’s livelihood system and the expected and actual timing of the main dry and rainy seasons and the transitions between them. The impact of any given incident or set of incidents of organised violence is strongly influenced by seasonality. Short periods of organised violence have the potential to produce long periods of food insecurity. One mechanism for this disproportionate impact is seasonally targeted violence. Rain-fed agriculture, which predominates in South Sudan, may be most affected if violence delays or prevents planting and other activities like weeding. Pastoralism may see the highest impact when vital dry season water and grazing access are denied. As the seasonal calendar of different livelihood and coping strategies varies geographically and socially

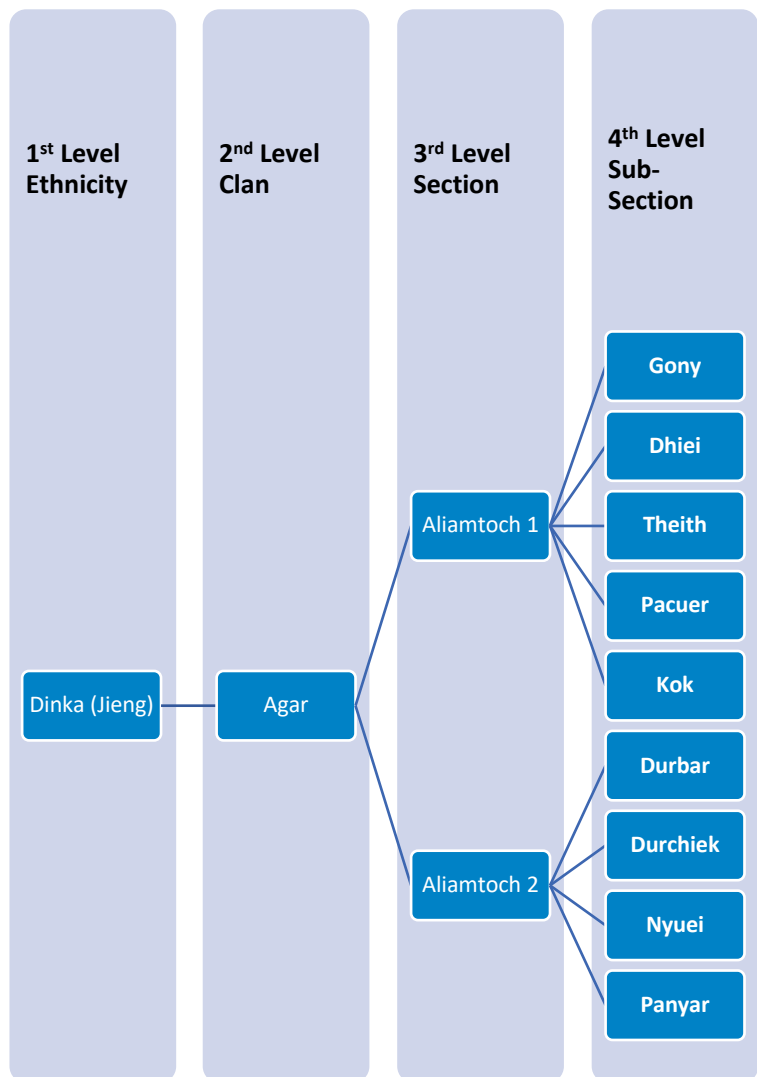


Figure 1: Segmentary Lineage Structure in Rumbek East County, Lakes State

across South Sudan, any determination of the impact of violence on food security requires analysis of timing and climatic conditions, including basic indicators of rainfall and vegetation coverage.

The common assumption that the incidence of most forms of violence declines in the rainy season cannot be taken as an axiom of rural South Sudan, for example, as it has been invalidated by events consistently. Consider some basic elements of organised violence and seasonality below:

- Concentrated bursts of organised violence in the main planting season with long-term impact
 - Less than one month of violence may yield 12-18 months of severe food insecurity, even if stability follows, in single-season agricultural areas
- Dry season transition into early rainy season more conducive to large-scale movements of people and livestock, especially when mechanised
 - Large-scale offensives, use of heavy vehicles and weapons
 - Grass burned in early dry season for livelihoods, lack of vegetation improving visibility and capacity to pursue attackers
 - Some level of grass regrowth and water availability is required for the movement of livestock for migration or after raiding
- Rainy season and regrowth of vegetation, such as elephant grass, generally more conducive to small-scale movements of people by foot
 - Small group and individual violence, including guerrilla warfare and killings
 - Vegetation reduces visibility and benefits attack and evasion

Capacity of Actors Involved

Armed groups are collective actors assumed to be operating cohesively around an agenda, identity, or political purpose, using weapons to inflict harm. Typically, the following types of actors may be involved in situations of organised violence, though armed actors are not limited to these groupings and black-and-white distinctions between them are not always possible:

1. Government security forces (typically varies by sector and units involved)
 - a. **Example:** Note the difference in remuneration, equipment, and training between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, the National Security Service forces, and the Presidential Guards, all of which maintain large ground forces.
2. Armed opposition forces (referring to national goals)
 - a. **Examples:** SPLA-in Opposition, National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SSLM/A)
3. Paramilitary groups (blended government security and militia forces) and pro-government militias (militias aligned but not blended with or incorporated into government security forces)
 - a. **Examples:** Mathiang Anyoor, Special Operations (former SSLM), Dut ku Beny
4. Community-embedded militias/self-defence groups
 - a. **Example:** Consider a spectrum from professionalised forces at times capable of directly challenging government security forces, such as the Lou Nuer White Army or Shilluk Agwelek, down to less cohesive and lower capacity militias like single cattle camp groupings of *titweng/gelweng*

The level of organisation and military capability of actors involved in organised violence can vary widely in South Sudan, from small raiding groups organised for a single raid to professionalised militias with thousands of fighters and military training and weaponry. While the capacity of armed actors is not always apparent from the type of armed actor alone, the severity of organised violence is typically worsened by the presence or involvement of

government or armed opposition forces. Some aspects of capacity and indicators for gauging them are offered in the ICRC report *The Roots of Restraint in War* as below:

ARMED ACTOR ATTRIBUTE	INDICATOR	EXAMPLE
LOCUS AND TYPE OF AUTHORITY	Operational Authority	Top leaders; sub-commanders; negotiated
	Decision-making	Top-down; consensus among key commanders; joint among influential members
	Nature of Authority	Degrees of bureaucratic and/or charismatic
NATURE OF HIERARCHY	Levels of Hierarchy	Established; limited, flat
	Consistent Use of Rank	Highly; limited; none
	Regulation of Promotion	Highly; limited; informal and fluid
	Level of Military Coordination	High; limited, low
NATURE OF DISCIPLINE	Observable Rules	Clear-limited-no signs i.e. regimented schedules, military justice, etc.
	Codification of Rules	Explicit documentation; limited documentation; orally communicated
	Consistent application of rules	Consistent; inconsistent; no consistency
DEGREE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION	Interaction with individuals outside of group	Tightly controlled; limited interaction; embedded in community

Impact on the Civilians¹

Intensity is often presented as a function of fatalities directly attributable to violent acts, but should be used more flexibly to consider the direct impact on livelihoods, assets, displacement, food insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence, psycho-social effects, etc.

When commentators, humanitarians, or donors refer to intercommunal violence, such violence is often characterised as inherently less impactful on the humanitarian situation compared to national level conflict or civil war. Such assumptions are usually based on the ideas about differences in levels of organisation and tactics of the armed actors. As set out above, this is not in line with the nature of organised violence in South Sudan at the sub-national level. Additionally, besides the large numbers conflict-related deaths, sub-national and localised violence

¹ For the purpose of document, civilians are defined as “those who are not, or who are no longer, taking part in a situation of violence”.

like seen in Jonglei and Western Lakes have repeatedly been observed to result in mass destruction of livelihoods, stripping of assets, and displacement.

Geographic, Social, and Temporal Scope	Capacity of (Armed) Actors Involved	Impact on Civilians ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and duration of armed clashes/battles; • Geographic and administrative scope of organised violence; • Organised nature of the acts of violence and the improbability of their random occurrence; • Types and levels of social groups involved in a situation of violence, especially within descent-based social organizations; • Total duration of the situation of violence; • Physical and social distance between actors engaged and communities affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of fighters/units deployed by different actors and cumulatively • Presence or involvement of government security and/or armed opposition forces • Types of weapons used, including small arms, light weapons, heavy weapons and especially heavy artillery • Existence of hierarchical structure and chain of command within opposing groups and/or capacity to control members of the group • Capacity to plan and launch coordinated operations • Capacity to recruit, train and equip new fighters • Effective control over specific territory • Identified patterns of attacks, such as systematic violent dispossession of a civilian population off high-value land/topographic feature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of conflict-related deaths • Extent of damage to civilian property and asset-stripping, especially of critical livelihoods assets • Impact on civilians, particularly severe and extreme food insecurity, displacement, abduction, sexual and gender-based violence, and psychological effects

Forms and Targeting of Violence

While the previous section highlights the impact of organized violence, the following segment delves specifically into the different forms of violence used, as well as what violence is being directed against, to support the categorisation of violence according to defined layers. Reference to targeting of civilians in this section should therefore not be conflated with the impact of organized violence at all levels on civilians and communities, as set out above. Furthermore, violence should be not causally explained by the forms that it takes, only in part described by it. Cattle raiding is not the sole cause of cattle raiding, nor are there cattle raids because some populations are inherently cattle raiders. While some forms of violence used in one layer of objectives may be rare to others – a heavy artillery barrage is far more likely to involve nationally-oriented actors than exclusively localised actors, for example – many common tools of violence are seen across all layers. Some common forms of violence seen across all layers include:

Raids: The use of violence for a mobile attack on one or more distinct sites, such as villages or cattle raids, for asset-stripping, property destruction, and inflicting fighter and/or civilian casualties. Raids are not intended to achieve a change in control of territory, though they may support this aim in degrading another armed actor’s capacity. As a single tool of violence, the scale, intensity, and degree of civilian targeting varies widely across raids. Some raids may conclude after several hours while others may involve the establishment of a temporary staging area and a

series of raids over a period of weeks before the departure of attacking forces. More importantly, not all raids target livestock and not all livestock are stolen through raids.

Armed clashes: Armed clashes are violent interactions between two armed groups at a particular time and location. During an armed clash, armed force is used at close distance, between armed groups capable of inflicting harm upon the opposing side. Armed clashes can occur between state and non-state groups or between different non-state armed groups. Armed clashes can result in a change in control of territory – including control over a pasture areas, natural resources, or towns – although unless in instances of national level violence, it would not necessarily be the purpose of the violence.

Shelling: The proliferation of small arms in South Sudan is often seen as one of the “root causes” of the protracted violence at the sub-national level. However, organised violence does not result from the proliferation of arms, even if this is an enabling factor in its escalation. Nevertheless, understanding the types of arms and ammunition flowing to non-state actors, as well as their origins and suppliers, is key to gaining a fuller picture of organised violence. The use of light and heavy weapons can help to gauge which actors may be involved in a violent incident or organised violence, as well as the depth of their involvement and some indications of their intent. Shelling is often used subjectively in South Sudan and in common usage may extend from the use of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) up to the use of the heaviest artillery found in the country. An indication of shelling is often on its own insufficient given the varied understanding of the term, but considering what weapons systems were used in each reported shelling can quickly help tease out the significance of the action. While the use of RPGs may distinguish among raids, the use of heavy artillery – such as involving a D-30 122mm howitzer or BM-21 multiple rocket launcher – immediately sets an incident or situation of violence apart from most violence in the country given the limited availability of these weapons, their ammunition, and the personnel needed to operate them.

Targeting refers to the locations, groups, activities, and assets affected by organised violence. While this primarily considers the direct impact of violence, analysis should also consider the indirect impact created by civilian perceptions of insecurity and how this informs their decision-making on where to go and what activities are possible in a given location at a given time. Analysis of targeting should consider what organised violence is being directed against: targets of military importance as well as if and how civilians are being targeted, including attacks on activities and assets critical for livelihoods and subsistence.

Targeting of locations of strategic and operational value – or targets of military importance – may happen at all levels of violence. For example, consider attacks by the Murle on Waat and Yuai garrisons during the 2020 violence. Military importance may not always be readily apparent at first glance. For example, the strategic significance of a site like a military base at Dolieb Hill, which controls a major route to the city of Malakal, may be clear. However, the military significance of a minor military outpost at Mayen Jur in Gogrial East is less obvious unless it is known that it protects the livestock holdings of various national political and military elites.

While civilians are frequently targeted in organised violence in South Sudan, the degree to which this occurs and how it is done vary. In some cases, only select individuals are targeted in organized violence, such as key community members like chiefs, elders, and administrators. In other cases, any and all civilians may experience violence. The pursuit of civilians into hiding places despite the risk of ambush is a common indicator of non-selective civilian targeting, for example. Sub-national and localised violence in South Sudan have seen particular shifts in targeting over the last year, with attacks characterised by perpetrators prioritising causing maximum civilian casualties and damage to community assets over raiding cattle. 2020 also saw an increase of attacks on state and NGO facilities such as schools and medical clinics, as well as on humanitarian infrastructure and supplies.

Importantly, sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, also continues to be widespread and pervasive at all levels of organised violence in South Sudan, often characterized by a recognizable pattern of terror and subjugation used as a tactic of war.

While livelihoods are often directly attacked or indirectly inhibited through the use or threat of organised violence, patterns of livelihoods targeting may be either [selective or holistic](#).

1. Holistic Targeting of Livelihoods

- a. **Objective:** Destruction or at least heavy suppression of an entire livelihoods system
- b. **Primary Methods:**
 - i. Stripping and destroying all productive and household assets regardless of the value to the perpetrator or the targeted population
 - ii. Blocking, inhibiting, and otherwise rendering unfeasible all livelihoods and coping strategies, including moderate to complete restrictions on movement for the targeted population related to trade, coping, and out-migration
- c. **Some Key Characteristics:** Typically, large-scale, labor-intensive, persists across seasons, and involves denial of humanitarian access

2. Selective Targeting of Livelihoods

- a. **Objective:** Redistribution of specific livelihoods assets, typically those of greatest value and liquidity, such as livestock
 - i. Blurring of objectives between acquisition of assets and forced population movement; may not be apparent until patterns in targeting and severity emerge
- b. **Primary Methods:**
 - i. Heavily premised on individual raids for livestock, grain, and household items; targeted killings may occur between, during, and after major raiding periods
- c. **Some Key Characteristics:** May vary widely in scale, intensity, labor needed, seasonality, and effect on humanitarian access

III. Categories of Organised Violence

By determining the purpose and severity of violence, the existence of organised violence can be established – as opposed to isolated or sporadic acts of violence. The degree to which purpose and severity apply will determine the category of violence. Within any of these categories, actors across all three will see intended and unintended gains and consequences, with relative military, political, economic, and social winners and losers from all the organised violence occurring, regardless of its category. Labelling organised violence with one category does not diminish the relevance or importance of objectives found in other categories.

- **National Violence:** A situation of violence involving at least one armed actor engaged in a national civil war, including signatories and non-signatories to a national peace agreement. National civil war refers to armed conflict among armed actors with nationally-oriented objectives, including but not limited to regime change, devolved governance or autonomy, or secession.
 - **Example:** Major military operations in southern Central Equatoria State and eastern areas of Western Equatoria state among NAS, IO, and the incumbent government security forces.
- **Sub-national Violence:** A situation of violence involving armed actors without identified nationally-oriented objectives, but pursuing political agendas beyond limited local issues, such as sub-county areas or groupings of villages, while engaging in violence characterised by multiple indicators of organization and intensity. If violence shows strong indications of organization and intensity despite being localised, it may also be considered as sub-national violence.

Sub-national violence may or may not involve objectives focused on natural resource access and control, as such economic issues are inherently political.

- **Example:** On 16 May 2020, a large grouping of well-organised lowland Murle launched a coordinated attack on a series of Lou Nuer villages over a 70 km stretch of Uror and Nyirol Counties, with no cattle camps targeted and the heavy involvement of uniformed personnel among the lowland Murle and government security force garrisons alongside Lou Nuer militia.
- **Localised Violence:** A situation of violence involving armed actors or groups without identified nationally or sub-nationally oriented objectives beyond limited local issues. Such violence has the potential to match various indicators of severity, but the geographic and social scope remains limited and the most salient purpose identified remains local.
 - **Example:** Through the 2020 dry season, conflict among small descent-based social groups within the Aliamtoch 1 of the Agar Dinka concentrated among a string of bomas engaged in organised violence involving up to several hundred fighters, with dozens of fighter and civilian fatalities, over a limited geographic and social scope.

Incidents that do not meet the criteria

When incidents of violence do not meet the criteria set out in this document, they should not be labelled as organized violence. Such incidents may include forms of violence found across the three categories as well as other forms of violence, including but not limited to:

- Grassroots violence (see below)
- Crimes (see below)
- Riots and other civil unrest
- Isolated or sporadic acts of violence, including criminality with no discernible political linkages
- Cross-border incidents, such as when an isolated act of violence can be attributed to an armed actor operating from an area outside the internationally recognised borders of South Sudan

“Grassroots violence” includes violence that does not fall within the described layers of objectives but may be more closely related to norms around honour, shame, and gender and age roles than higher layer objectives. Such violence may occur to achieve or respond to forced or voluntary elopement, adultery, domestic and sexual violence, other social conflicts around perceptions of honour and shame, outstanding revenge claims, and criminality. Triggers may include the (re)acquisition of cattle, land disputes, disputes between pastoralists and agriculturalists, familial or clan disputes, and the settlement of blood feuds. Such violence does not generally meet the criteria described above, particularly around scope, armed capacity of actors involved, and impact on communities. It should be noted, however, that grassroots violence can escalate rapidly, especially along segmentary lineage lines, particularly when manipulated or instrumentalized by political or military elites.

Furthermore, while crimes committed on an ad hoc or opportunistic basis are likely not organized, there are many examples of crimes perpetrated by criminal networks or organised armed groups. These groups may have varying political links, with some not politically linked at all, but they often have sophisticated operations and chains of command. Such networks or groups also likely would not evade accountability or, or at least, retribution without some higher-level patronage, kick-back, or other corrupt support system. Proceeds obtained from their criminal activity may fuel additional insecurity through weapons proliferation, trafficking in persons, and financial or material support to political or power elites. Consequently, criminal activity, while not part of organised violence should not be ignored, particularly where a factual nexus can be shown between the crime or series of crimes and a suspected organisational structure.

Acronyms

GPAA	Greater Pibor Administrative Area
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
NAS	National Salvation Front
RARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
R-TGoNU	Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army-in Opposition
SSLM/A	South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
SSPDF	South Sudan People's Defence Forces