

The South Sudan NGO Forum condemns killing of aid worker in Budi County and attacks on humanitarian agencies in GPAA

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The South Sudan NGO Forum strongly condemns the fatal shooting of a humanitarian staff member during an attack on a convoy of INGO vehicles in Budi County, Eastern Equatoria State on 12 May 2021. The well-marked humanitarian convoy was travelling along the Chukudum-Kapoeta road and headed to a health facility when it was fired upon by unknown assailants, resulting in one INGO staff fatality. The attack took place along a road that has suffered frequent ambushes of commercial and private vehicles over the course of several years. The NGO Forum stands in solidarity with the friends, family members and colleagues of the killed aid worker.

“The sudden demise of our team member has been shocking for all of us in the Cordaid family. It is moments like these that reminds us how unpredictable and challenging the life of humanitarian workers could be. Cordaid will continue to fight infant and maternal mortality and morbidity “whatever it takes”, as our deceased team member wanted.” - Kinga Komorowska, Cordaid Country Director

In a separate incident, compounds and warehouses of NGOs and UN agencies in Gumuruk in the Pibor Administrative Area were attacked from 11th May and humanitarian personnel were forced to evacuate the area as a result of insecurity. Thankfully no staff were harmed during this incident, but humanitarian assets and facilities were stolen and destroyed disrupting essential life-saving operations. Western Pibor remains one of the most food insecure parts of South Sudan with humanitarian agencies responding to populations who are in ‘catastrophic’ levels of hunger and malnutrition.

“For the second time in less than a year Gumuruk in GPAA has been the scene of fighting with immense hardship for the local population. Sadly this is not unique in South Sudan, and the cycle of violence continues. NCA and partners have lost equipment and supplies that should have supported the community, and specially women and children in the difficult months ahead as the rainy season makes access even more challenging. Our commitment to support communities in South Sudan remains strong, but we need a conducive and safe working environment for all humanitarian workers to deliver on our commitments.” - Kari Oyen, Norwegian Church Aid Country Director

These attacks follow an unacceptable and escalating pattern of violence towards humanitarian agencies, staff and supplies in South Sudan with both direct targeted attacks, and indirect criminality and conflict putting lives and programmes at risk.

Populations in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance are the ultimate victims when conflict or insecurity forces humanitarian agencies to suspend operations or divert funding to security measures. The South Sudan NGO Forum calls upon the Government of South Sudan to ensure that key humanitarian transport routes and areas remain safe and accessible and humanitarians protected. Only then can humanitarian agencies effectively and efficiently reach communities in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance.