

30.06.2021

Joint note on the security situation in the Bentiu IDP camp

Protection Cluster and CCCM Cluster

Background

Since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic, the residents of Bentiu Protection of Civilian site (POC) have suffered violent clashes from armed youths, widespread looting and robberies, physical & sexual violence, and threats against aid workers on various occasions.

After transition of the POC site to an IDP camp, the joint police forces were tasked with the protection of civilians and maintaining the safety and security of the site. Following the deployment of the joint police force on the 17th March, after the resignation of the former POC site, the number of gang-related security incidences reduced as some of the gang group members left for other locations.

On 7th June 2021, the State governor issued a decree to appoint the CHC Chairman Mr. Bigoah Kuong as Chief Administrator and Community High Committee chairperson, alongside other appointees, for an unspecified period. This contravened statements made at the time of the transition in which the Government made clear in a number of public fora that community governance arrangements would not change. Thereafter, a dispute on the appointment arose between members of the IDP community leadership on the one hand, and the state-appointed CHC chairperson Mr. Bigoah Koang with support from the local authorities on the other hand. Community leaders opposing the appointment argued that the POC transition was not supposed to result in dismantling of the community structures in the POC, and that it is only security that was to be the responsibility of the government. In response, County Solidarity elected a new CHC chairperson – Mr Abraham Hap Meat – who took an oath on 21 June. This new chairperson was also selected from Mayiandit county, the same County where Mr. Bigoah Koang comes from.

In the wake of the community appointment, Mr Abraham Hap Meat (CHC chairperson) and Mr Makul Mayak (County Solidarity) were arrested by state government forces. The detainees were released on 23 June without any charges.

The leadership dispute occurred amidst an increasing number of security incidents such as theft and armed robberies, GBV, abduction and killing incident due to a high proliferation of arms, and armed groups in the IDP camp. A meeting between the state governor and county solidarity was organized on 30th June and agreed on measures to address the current leadership dispute. However, the same night, information on incidences of armed robberies in Sector 3 was received.

Analysis of security incidents

In the past six months (January- June), incidences of armed robbery and burglary have been increasing. The peak was in the month of June, in which armed robbery (16 incidences) and burglary (12 incidences) were reported. This current trend is alarming and causing fear among the communities living in the IDP camp. There is a need for stakeholders including government, humanitarians, community members, and UNMISS understand the cause of this increasing trends in crimes and provide a better solutions for the IDP site population.

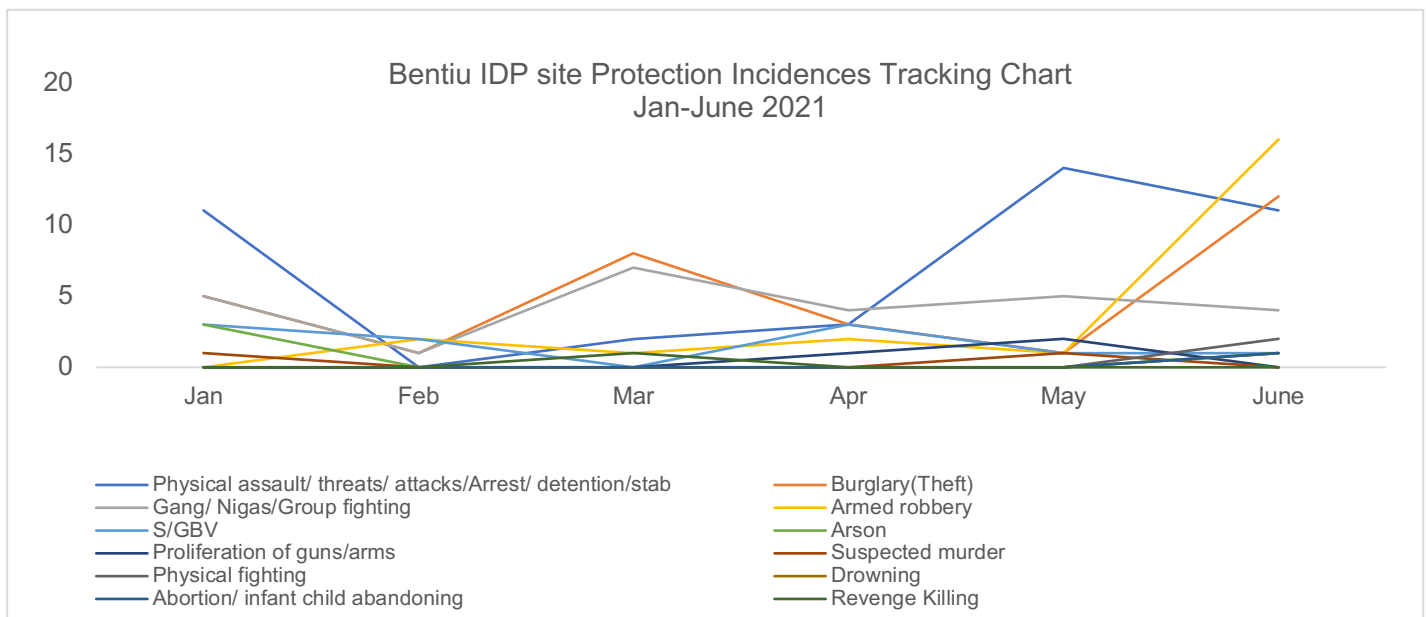
Summary of reported protection incidences tracking in Bentiu IDP June 2021¹

Month	Armed robbery	Physical assault/ threats/ attacks/Arrest/ detention/stab	Burglary (Theft)	Gang/ Nigas/Group fighting	Physical fighting	S/GBV	Arson	Drowning	Abortion/ infant child abandoning
June	16	11	12	4	2	1	1	1	1

Summary of protection incidences tracking in Bentiu IDP January- June 2021.

Month	Physical assault/ threats/ attacks/Arrest/ detention/stab	Burglary (Theft)	Gang/ Nigas/Group fighting	Armed robbery	S/GBV	Arson	Proliferation of guns/arms	Suspected murder	Physical fighting	Drowning	Abortion/ infant child abandoning	Revenge Killing
Jan	11	5	5	0	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mar	2	8	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Apr	3	3	4	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
May	14	1	5	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
June	11	12	4	16	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1
Grand Total	41	30	26	22	10	4	3	2	2	1	1	2

¹ The protection incidences reported from Bentiu IDP Camp from 1-30 June 2021



Challenges

- **County Solidarity/Chief Administrator-CHC Leadership turmoil in the IDP site:** the partial withdrawn of the Block leaders, Sector leaders, and the Community Watch Groups activities as result of the leadership crises. Initially, the community members had a clear reporting line for issues within the community, and for now, the community is uncertain on whom to contact for issues especially security concerns. The CWG is hesitant to respond to robberies because most of the criminals are armed with Guns and there are random checks conducted in the IDP camp on the presences of weapons as before.
- **Absence of law enforcement institutions:** there is no static statutory court in the state or counties. Two prosecutors are deployed in Unity State with limited capacity and resources to investigate criminal cases, as well as absence of well-trained police investigators.
- **Decrease in mobile court rotations:** since the beginning of COVID 19 pandemic, only one mobile court came to attend some of the legal cases investigated by the prosecutors.
- **Youth in despair:** lack of livelihood and job opportunities continue to lead youth to adopt negative coping mechanisms such theft, robbery, and other anti-social behaviors.
- **Demonstration against the Governor's decree:** during the demonstration, the protestors dismantled the police post near the MSF gate and attempted to beat the police officers. As a result, the joint police forces decided to cease the patrolling inside the camp. However, information received suggests there was a resumption of patrolling on 29 June.
- **Perpetrators' identity remains unclear:** allegations of armed men wearing uniform committed robberies have caused distrust between IDP community and the joint forces.
- **Reports of alleged misconduct:** since the deployment of joint police, some forces have committed misconducts against the residents of IDP camp such as harassment.
- **Coordination between joint police and civilians:** lack of proper coordination and communication between IDP community and the joint police forces primarily due to the capacity of the joint police to engage the community in dialogue on security issues.

- **Limited government capacity at the state level:** the state government does not have the financial resources or logistics to support the joint forces. UNMISS has reduced the technical and logistic support to the joint police, as well as the footprint in the IDP camp.
- **Joint police recruitment and training:** lack of presence of female police officers, to create parity within the law enforcement of the IDP camp, who are trained and empowered to respond to reported cases of SGBV incidents.

Advocacy and interventions at the state level

- The protection cluster has shared timely information on security incidents with UNMISS in order to engage the joint police and the state government.
- A meeting with RRC deputy chairperson to advocate on the role of the state government to ensure safety and security of population in the IDP camp.
- A bilateral meeting with the state governor to advocate for protection of civilians.
- The Protection Cluster jointly with UNMISS/HRD have organized weekly training sessions for joint police forces to build capacity on human rights standards and South Sudanese national framework.
- The protection cluster is planning to organize a meeting with county solidarity to assess the community-based protection solutions for the security situation.

Recommendations

- The leadership crisis to be fully resolved and a reconciliation between the IDP leadership and the Joint Police to be carried out in the presences of the religious leaders ,traditional leaders, other opinion makers and the top senior government officials at the state level inside the IDP Camp.
- Governor and humanitarians to resume monthly meetings as previously agreed
- RRC to establish a coordination mechanism between the Community Watch Group and the Joint Police Forces.
- RRC to organize monthly meetings with County Solidarity and IDP community structures.
- To allocate financial resources for construction a statutory court, accommodation for judicial staff and police posts.
- Government of South Sudan to assign the required personnel for judiciary and law enforcement institutions.
- Government of South Sudan to assign trained joint police forces for deployment in the IDP camp, including female officers.
- The Joint Police to be provide 24 reachable telephone lines that the IDPs can call whenever the armed criminals are in the IDP camp.
- The joint police force to re-enforce their presences and patrols long the perimeter fence beside the Sector 3 since this is where the criminal gangs are accessing the IDP camp due to its far distance /edge from the UNMISS helipad watch tower.
- Humanitarian actors to create age- and gender-tailored life skills sessions for youth (men and women), including job and employability soft skills sessions and promote youth engenuity and foster healthy, lawful, and dignified livelihoods opportunities.
- Humanitarian actors to promote peace championing opportunities through youth sports and recreation, which incorporates and includes men, women, and people living with disabilities;
- Strengthen dialogue and peacebuilding through youth-led conferences and forums; and, Establish/strengthen representation of youth in other public forums and leadership dialogue.