Position Paper

Topic: Protecting Civilians in the South Sudanese Conflict

Country: United Kingdom

Committee: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The 21st century proved to be the best time to be alive, yet that could not put an end to the wars and conflicts still happening around the globe. South Sudan, a state that won its independence in 2011, thus becoming the newest one in the world, has been dealing with an internal crisis since 2013, is ranked by the United States think tank as the most fragile state in the world for four years in a row.The crisis goes to the extent of both internal and external conflicts, terror and a trigger for human rights violation. Additionally, the conflict risks escalating into a broader regional war, South Sudan being placed at the nexus of intensifying competition among four counter-terrorism partners – Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Sudan. Not to generalise, the state has been suffering from attacks started by the Government as well as by the rebels, corruption, unemployment, food insecurity, alongside with the death of more than300,000 people and the newest of all, cholera. Living in terror, the UN reports that more than 3.5 million people have been displaced in a country of about 12 million, therefore immigration becoming an inevitable war consequence. This makes it the world's third-largest refugee population after Syria and Afghanistan.

The international mechanisms for addressing crises of this scale – from the World Food Programme to UN peacekeeping – are essential tools for mitigating the fallout of the war and cannot function without UK political and financial support, as South Sudan is to receive £100 million in UK aid this year. On 29 June, the UN general assembly voted to reduce the budget allocated by 50% with immediate effect. Throughout the negotiations, the UK government stood against these cuts, clearly presenting UK’s approach towards the crisis, one of support and total integration. Furthermore, the UK Government considers that the issue should be tackled from two perspectives.

Internally, the UK suggests the strengthening of South Sudan’s systems, including the justice and military ones. Signs of corruption seem to be pushing ahead as President Kiir announced that Lieutenant General Marial Chanuong - blacklisted by the Security Council in 2015 - would head the government ground forces. Therefore, even though the government embraced the creation of a hybrid tribunal, further implication is needed. This could include efforts to train progressive South Sudanese lawyers and judges, including within the military justice system, on investigating violations of international criminal law. With a stronger and more reliable system, the two parties can be brought to the negotiation table in a more facile way. Additionally, related to the peace agreements that could be made, one further action that can be made is to support South Sudanese CSO s’ efforts to advocate for accountability to be integrated into the framework of any peace agreement. This could include support for large-scale population-based studies to determine the attitudes of South Sudanese towards peace and justice. It should also include efforts to strengthen the role of women and other marginalised groups in peace negotiations. The imposition of sanctions against all those benefiting from war(more precisely, against the six individuals designed by the Committee in July 2015) would further enhance the population’s trust in the government and assure the opposition of accountability. State’s sovereignty will be respected, yet the UK stresses that this principle does and did not give the Government a license to commit mass atrocities.

Externally, UK insists on further involvement as a Member State in the United Nations, as the UK is to expand its contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping force in South Sudan, raising the planned total from 300 to 400, as well as being opened to raise the funds. The UK stresses on the Communities South Sudan is part of (including membership in the African Union, East African Community, Inter-Parliamentary Union, The International Criminal Police Organisation, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Organisation for Migration) to intervene in the crisis in any way possible. The UK wants to reassure the states having strong feelings against intervention that humanitarian aid will not break any state’s sovereignty. Furthermore, UK would stress upon EAC’s federalisation plan that cannot take place with a member state currently at war.

United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) has proved to be rather problematic lately, being under intense pressure to explain why thousands of peacekeeping troops failed to respond to urgent calls for help and under accusations of rape and robbery. The UK suggests introducing a Professional Criminal Investigation Team in the Field. Because the existing international investigation mechanism – the AU COI – lacks credibility, an alternative international investigative body, independent from UNMISS, would augment and assist the already existing efforts. If peacekeeping operations and the budget continue to grow, as they did last year, then the need for more exacting accountability mechanisms becomes ever acuter. In this way, the soldiers accused can be fairly judged and sanctioned, if such be the case. Lifting all the restrictions on the movements of UMISS and humanitarian workers would ensure that their help works at full capacity.

The solution that has been proposed and now needs to be re-debated is the arms embargo, towards which the UK expresses full support. Any peace agreement that has been signed failed, as both sides have consistently broken a ceasefire. The UK insists on the idea that no embargo could completely stop weapons coming in the country and remove the weapons already in the country, but it could have an impact on preventing the acquisition of heavy weapons and aircraft and vehicles.

Although The United Nations Security Council has had a significant contribution towards assuring peace, the crisis could not be put to an end. Ethnic groups are already in danger, being threatened with extinction, cannibalism is being practiced as a way of torture and families are being separated by immigration, famine or killings. Therefore, the delegation of the UK strongly supports introducing communal help, justice and humanitarian aid in the area as soon as possible.