



JOINT STATEMENT
by
The South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC),
The International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC)
and
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
(the IFRC)
on
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Response to escalating conflict and violence in South Sudan
20th March 2025

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & NEEDS

Since the beginning of 2025, political tensions at national level have increased, coupled with an escalation of violence and the protracted armed conflict in Western Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and in particular in Upper Nile State.

Heavy deployment of security forces has been observed in Juba and along several main road axes. Recently, Ugandan troops and heavy military equipment have been deployed officially to South Sudan in support of the SPLM. Reported use of military aircraft, including drones, and subsequent bombardments in some areas are significant developments.

In recent months, the humanitarian impact of the escalating armed conflict and political tensions have been significant. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced by fighting in Western Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile State. There are reports of burnt houses, destroyed livelihoods, and sexual violence. Thousands were displaced in Western Equatoria and Western Bahr El Ghazal by the hostilities. Thousands of people have fled Malakal in anticipation of possible violence there, fearing violence escalating along ethnic lines. The recent fighting in the area of Nasir and Ulang have resulted in up to 84,000 people displaced within Upper Nile State according to UNHCR, with thousands having fled across the border to Ethiopia.

Several hundred people taking part in the fighting or not taking part, have been either killed or injured in the fighting, with very limited and complicated access to life saving health services. This violence has developed amidst an ongoing cholera crisis, affecting numerous areas in South Sudan, and even exacerbating the consequences with reports of dozens of weapon wounded dying from cholera before reaching health care facilities.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Partners in South Sudan have already begun responding to some of the most pressing humanitarian consequences focusing on priorities and specific added value. SSRC has trained all its HQ staff on First Aid and rolling out the same to the branches. Additionally, SSRC is distributing non-food items to conflict affected communities and deploying trained personnel to manage the ORPs under Cholera response. Among others, ICRC has focused on the delivery of life-saving surgery and medical care to weapon wounded, with deployment of an ICRC mobile surgical team to Akobo early March. This team will shortly be reinforced by the IFRC ERU, already in country to support the SSRC in responding to the cholera. In other parts of the country, emergency assistance and protection services to communities directly affected by armed conflict have been/are planned to be delivered by ICRC in collaboration with the SSRC.

In conclusion, the current situation could deteriorate, developing into a wider crisis in the country, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation. The humanitarian needs are already massive on all sectors and expected to increase, pointing to the importance to leverage the collective capacity of the movement in South Sudan.

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THE MOVEMENT'S COLLECTIVE AMBITION AND INTENDED RESPONSE

The current escalation and humanitarian emergency are unfolding at a time when humanitarian organizations have been reducing their assistance due to an increasingly uncertain international humanitarian funding environment. People displaced, returnees and host communities are struggling to meet their basic needs such as water, food and healthcare. The affected population are exhausting their coping mechanisms. Their situation will undoubtedly worsen if not addressed. There is a need for the RCRC Movement to upgrade its response.

With a long history of successful Movement Coordination, the Movement Partners in South Sudan had anticipated to the current crisis by developing a Movement contingency plan. This Plan is now being activated, and Movement Partners are not sparing efforts to collaborate to support the SSRC in acquiring necessary resources and capacities to serve the most vulnerable through its network of volunteers. Together with the Contingency plan, a Business Continuity Plan is being developed to respond to the worst-case scenario and ensure duty of care and that SSRC keep operating and providing the emergency humanitarian assistance.

The Movement Partners in South Sudan are leveraging their unparalleled reach, resources, and acceptance to deliver impactful response. Guided by the commitment to their principles and values, the Movement's response is centered on urgent and lifesaving activities, fostering complementary actions in line with the drafted Operational Contingency Plans.

The **SSRC** will fully engage and further reinforce its extensive network of volunteers and branch structure, to ensure proximity to communities for impactful response activities. The SSRC will steadfastly continue to enhance its operational and organizational capacities and development, with the collective support of the Movement Partners.

The **ICRC** will focus on delivering on its mandate in armed conflicts, in particular on protection, including in partnership with SSRC (e.g. Protection of Family Links), and by leveraging its role as neutral intermediary for humanitarian outcomes. It will prioritize targeted emergency assistance to people affected by armed conflict in collaboration with SSRC, especially to communities not reached by other actors or where ICRC has a specific added value and expertise (e.g. surgical chain of care). The ICRC will pursue its detention activities, according to its specific mandate. Finally, it maintains a dialogue with the authorities and parties to the conflict and facilitate, when needed and possible, the access of Movement Partners.

The **IFRC** will focus on delivering on its mandate, supporting SSRC in the capacity enhancement of the SSRC, including the ongoing project on improving connectivity of the 21 branches of SSRC with Star-link to ensure the flow of information. Moreover, IFRC will utilise resources under the Unified Plan for preparedness and response and is considering an activation of the Federation wide response tools (DREF, EA and Surge (Rapid Response Personnel/ERUs) as needed to support SSRC and Movement collective response. The current CCMC ERU will continue to provide the support to SSRC in cholera response.

MOVEMENT COORDINATION

In the context of a highly fragmented security, political, economic and social landscape that could be fueled by renewed fighting countrywide, that would affect those protected by our mandate, the roles of the three Movement components in responding to the impact of armed conflict and the violence are attributed in alignment with the Seville Agreement 2.0, with functions allocated based on the mandate, expertise and capacity of each component, adopting a pragmatic approach. The SSRC is the convener, taking a central and pivotal role in coordinating the Movement response. The ICRC is the co-convener of the Movement response in South Sudan due to the situation of armed conflicts, while the IFRC assumes specific functions and activities to support and complement the operational efforts to address the humanitarian needs associated with the renewed violence.

Before the current crisis, the Movement Partners have streamlined their collective response to armed conflict, consequences of violence in Sudan, natural disasters and epidemics such as the outbreak of Cholera, and this has proven to add value to the humanitarian response. In November 2024, the Movement components have organized

already a Mini-Summit related to the Cholera outbreak and the convener (SSRC) and co-convener (ICRC) roles were attributed. With the escalation of armed conflict and violence, these attributed roles are confirmed.

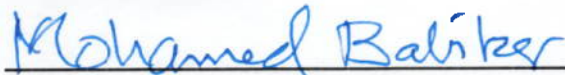
The Movement Partners are maintaining and enhancing the well-established Movement coordination mechanisms on operations and security and ICRC will continue to provide security management support to the Movement Partners, based on Security Framework Agreements and bilateral security agreements¹. SSRC security capacity, based on the Safer Access Framework continues to be reinforced by ICRC, IFRC and its membership as per existing and planned set up. The ICRC will, as much as possible, facilitate access to sensitive and conflict-affected areas to Movement Partners, helping in contacts with stakeholders. To optimize the Movement response, ICRC will continue to support the SSRC in locations with limited SSRC presence due to conflict sensitivity, to the extent of its capacity and possibility.

WAY FORWARD

- Operationalization of the Movement Contingency Plans.
- Develop the Movement business continuity plan.
- Increase the security awareness and preparedness across the Movement Partners
- Streamline the Movement communication guidelines, key messages and communication plan.
- Streamline the information management and Movement reporting.
- Focus on acute emergency plans, while planning for recovery activities, when timely and relevant.
- Development of the Movement Picture -mapping of Movement Partners' contribution in kind or funding to crisis response plan.
- Scale up and adapting the Movement Coordination structure at all levels- assign clear roles and responsibilities while avoiding duplication of existing Emergency response structures and coordination processes and mechanism (reporting system), considering Partners are going shift to remote support/Management (online meetings).

The Partners are committed to integrating the development of the SSRC throughout the execution of the response to ensure the National Society emerges stronger and more resilient. All Movement Partners are considerate of the capacity in the country and will ensure it is not exceeded.


Secretary General,
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International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies


Head of Delegation, South Sudan Delegation
International Committee of the Red Cross




¹ The ICRC is currently providing the security support services to all Movement Partners (IFRC and PNS) based on bilateral Agreement level 2. The support could be upgraded to level 3, based on the operational needs and added value.