

IRISH JESUIT MISSION OFFICE STATEMENT ON THE VIOLENCE IN MABAN, SOUTH SUDAN



On Monday [23 July 2018] there was vicious spate of violence and destruction of property in a series of targeted attacks on humanitarian assets and compounds, in which more than eight agencies including the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) were heavily affected.

Thanks to the intervention of the local church leadership, the main JRS compound was spared, but the Arrupe Learning Centre was stormed by the mob of attackers and badly damaged, which will halt or delay the computer courses, teacher training and English language classes which are run there.

The staff had already left the Centre to seek refuge from the violence at the home of a local village leader, so they were spared physical injury or worse. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) took them and many other NGO workers to their base for security later that day.

More than 300 staff from NGOs in the region, including 25 JRS team members have now been evacuated by the UN for their safety. The team is now safe and the project leader Fr Tony O'Riordan SJ is currently monitoring the situation. The attack has forced JRS to suspend all but critical activities in the local communities and with the

refugee population in the Maban area.

United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, Adnan Khan, has strongly condemned the attacks saying he urges all involved “to immediately cease such actions. Aid workers, regardless of where they are from, sacrifice their time and all too often their safety to save people affected by the South Sudan crisis. They are free to work in any part of the country in line with the law of the land” he said.

As the safety of the JRS team and facilities is under threat at the moment and resources including classrooms and equipment have been destroyed in the attack, there is no option to temporarily suspend work in the region. This will leave more than 80,000 people without access to the English-language classes, computer courses and teacher training education and training which provide much-needed opportunities for a more stable future for them and their community.

“Despite the attack on our facilities, the Irish Jesuit Mission office and partners will continue to support the JRS team on the ground in their commitment to provide psycho-social support and education programmes in the region” said Fr John Guiney SJ, Director of Irish Jesuit Missions which funds JRS programmes in Maban.

Morale among the JRS team has been badly shaken by the incident which was frightening for everyone to witness. They are supporting each other, and are grateful for the leadership and guidance that Tony O’Riordan has provided, which has proved invaluable at this difficult time.

“This incident in Maban and other such incidents of violence in South Sudan over the past number of years calls for an urgent intervention by the international community to help to restore law, order and security for all of the people of this young nation” said Fr Guiney.