

**Date:** December 21, 2012.

***For Immediate Release***



South Sudan Action Network  
on Small Arms

**SSANSA CONDEMNS THE KILLING OF PROTESTERS IN WAU.**

WAU, WESTERN BAHR – EL – GHAZAL, South Sudan - The South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms (SSANSA) joins others in condemning in the strongest words possible the shooting at protesters in Wau which killed a dozen civilians and injured several others in a protest that took place on December 8. While the bloodshed has ceased, tears still continue to flow and tensions remain high in Wau.

Evidences revealed that the protests were a culmination of over two months of disagreements and tensions regarding the proposed move of the capital of Wau from its current administrative location to Bagara Payam. Reliable sources indicate that this move lacks popular support of the citizens. We are very concerned that that the process has crept into violence, and ended up in to the loss of lives. Such acts are absolutely unhealthy for state - society relationship in a new nation supposedly treading the path to democratization. Eyewitnesses confirmed that the protests were peaceful.

Geoffrey L. Duke, National coordinator at the SSANSA Secretariat said, *“Why kill a people peacefully protesting the decision of their leader. This is very appalling. Where is the freedom of speech and assembly that is enshrined in our constitution? In any case, if there was any form of violence by the protesters, the police have the mandate to use and only proportionate force to keep the situation under control but not up to such a deadly and disproportionate scale.”*

To address this issue exclusively and ensure that there is no relapse into similar violence in the future, SSANSA recommends three course of actions;

- One is to ensure that the violence and killings be properly investigated; perpetrators established and brought to justice. This is to deter potential and future perpetrators from such intolerable actions – and to confirm the commitment of the Republic of South Sudan towards upholding rule of law, Justice and Human Rights.
- Two is to reverse all administrative decisions taken against the law and the will of the people regarding the circumstances that led to the crisis. This further will reaffirm the commitment of the government towards the pursuit of democracy.
- Third, is for the state government to begin candid dialogues with the citizens to ensure that the people endorse the decision to move the capital from Wau to Bagara. In all subsequent processes, the will of the people should be the determinant of any form of further action.

To embark on the above recommendations, a joint committee comprising of the government of South Sudan, (Human Rights Commission inclusive), the Civil Society and representatives of the International Community needs to be formed to investigate the killings. We applaud the government in instituting a committee headed by H.E the Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan to probe this matter. However, we urge them to consider including representatives of the Civil Society and UNMISS in this committee to balance the composition and enhance transparency and trust on the work of the committee. SSANSA is ready to facilitate the nomination of civil Society representatives to this committee.

We are also concerned about the heavy deployment of armed forces in Bagara Payam. Communities seem not to understand the need for such a heavy deployment, thus causing a situation of panic and further tension among the communities. Where a genuine proportional security threat exists, we urge the government to enlighten the communities about such a need, in order to clear existing misunderstandings over the presence of these forces. And where there is no concrete reason for the forces to remain in Bagara Payam, we call upon the government to consider withdrawing the forces from among the communities to their respective designated army locations.

We as well urge all the communities of to disengage from any form of and plan for violence and embrace peace by standing for dialogue with all stakeholders in the conflict.

SSANSA is a Network of civil society organizations from across all the 10 states of South Sudan united against gun violence in South Sudan.

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