

# Press release

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26<sup>th</sup> April

## **Britain warns of avoidable humanitarian disaster in South Sudan**

Britain will provide additional emergency support to help 100,000 people facing severe food shortages in South Sudan, International Development Minister Stephen O'Brien announced today after visiting its volatile border with Sudan.

He warned of a looming humanitarian crisis with hundreds of thousands of people already facing hunger due to poor rain, insecurity and an influx of returnees from Sudan.

Escalating violence in the region may force hundreds of thousands more people to flee their homes which could leave half a million men, women and children in desperate need of food, water and basic healthcare.

But he stressed that life-saving emergency British aid is not the long-term answer to this avoidable disaster. He urged the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to find a lasting solution, which is feasible with leadership and political will on both sides.

Stephen O'Brien visited Jamam refugee camp, where 36,000 people are stranded after fleeing the fighting across the border in Sudan's Blue Nile State. They are among more than 100,000 men, women and children who have been displaced by the violence between the two countries.

Stephen O'Brien called for an immediate ceasefire and for the two governments to return to negotiations to resolve their remaining differences – including oil revenues, which could provide valuable resources to fund basic services.

He reminded the Government of South Sudan of its responsibility to look after its own people. And he warned that British development funds would not be used to fill a financial hole of the government's own making by their shutting down of oil production.

Stephen O'Brien said:

"What I saw at Jamam refugee camp is the very real human suffering of the ongoing problems between Sudan and South Sudan. A devastating combination of conflict and food insecurity is leading to a humanitarian disaster, which we must all do what we can to avert.

"We face a crisis on an unimaginable scale if those South Sudanese living north of the border are forced by the Government of Sudan to leave. I want to remind both governments that it is their own people who are suffering as a result of their inaction.

"Britain remains committed to helping the poorest people of this troubled region – but our aid budget is not a substitute for a lasting settlement."

Violence has intensified in recent weeks. South Sudanese Armed Forces occupied Heglig oil fields, which they have since withdrawn from, while Sudan increased aerial bombardment of the South.

South Sudan is also facing a potential economic crisis after halting oil production in January in response to Sudan's seizure of South Sudanese oil.

Stephen O'Brien called on both sides to demonstrate without any further delay that they are committed to resolving their differences through negotiations supported by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel, and to deliver on their promise to bring a new spirit of cooperation to their talks.

### **Notes to editors:**

Britain will:

- Provide food assistance for 100,000 severely food insecure people for five months through the World Food Programme Emergency Operation (£10m from the existing aid budget); and
- Hold in reserve funds to help mount an emergency rapid response to a possible mass return of South Sudanese from Sudan (£5m from the existing aid budget).

Britain has already supported the UN's Common Humanitarian Fund in South Sudan to provide:

- Clean water for 130,000 people;
- Education and protection for 18,000 children, including 8,600 girls;
- Emergency shelter to 50,000 households; and
- A reduction in the threat of landmines to 68,000 people.

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