

PRESS STATEMENT

South Sudanese Military Court convicts 10 soldiers for rape, sexual harassment and murder committed during the July 2016 Terrain Hotel Attack

Nairobi, 7 September 2018: Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) welcomes the conviction and sentencing of ten soldiers for the July 2016 rape of aid workers and murder of a local journalist during the attack at the Terrain Hotel Compound in Juba, South Sudan. LAW further calls on the Government of South Sudan to secure accountability and end impunity for the thousands of instances of sexual violence, as well as other grave human rights violations committed in the country's civil war.

On 11 July 2016, between 50 and 80 SPLA (government-aligned) soldiers reportedly broke into the Terrain Hotel in Juba, where they raped five female international aid workers, murdered a local journalist and allegedly subjected other compound residents to beatings and mock-executions. UN peacekeepers were stationed close by but did not assist when asked for help by the survivors. Following intense public outcry calling for action against the alleged perpetrators, a military trial commenced in May 2017.

Yesterday, 6 September 2018, eight months since the end of the trial, the Court delivered the much-awaited verdict and sentencing ten soldiers to prison terms ranging from seven years to life for rape, sexual harassment, murder, and looting. The Government has also been ordered to pay compensation to the survivors, as well as to the family of the deceased journalist and the owner of the Terrain hotel. This decision marks one of the first trials regarding grave violations committed by government forces in South Sudan.

Reports of rape, gang rape, mass rape and abduction (including sexual slavery) in South Sudan by members of armed forces, aligned to both sides of the conflict, have continued since 2016. However, South Sudanese women and girls have had limited access to justice or accountability for those crimes. LAW urges the Government of South Sudan to provide effective avenues for legal redress, as well as the diligent prevention of the commission of grave human rights violations and international crimes.

"We welcome this verdict, and also exhort the Government of South Sudan to address the widespread sexual violence against women and girls throughout the country. We hope that this is just the beginning of a clear commitment by the Government to end tolerance of egregious sexual violence, targeting women and girls, as well as boys and men," said Antonia Mulvey, LAW's Executive Director.

This verdict on this case must not be an isolated event. The countless allegations of sexual violence against civilians must be impartially investigated and prosecuted. LAW urges the Government to take the necessary steps to establish the Hybrid Court as envisioned in the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). In the interim, the existing justice system should be used to secure justice for serious sexual violence crimes against South Sudanese women, girls, men and boys, ensuring all necessary measures are in place for the protection and dignity of survivors.

About Legal Action Worldwide (LAW): Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent non-profit network and think tank of lawyers who provide creative legal assistance in fragile and conflict-affected areas. LAW provides legal assistance to the most vulnerable, placing national lawyers at the forefront of legal change. LAW uses legal advocacy, research, advice and strategic litigation to bring about this change. LAW's work spans the Horn of Africa, Middle East and South Asia and it has offices in the UK and Switzerland. LAW's main focus is addressing sexual violence in conflict. LAW has global and national partners, with which it works to achieve change and empowerment.

LAW's work has been covered international and national media coverage, including the New York Times, the UK Times, the Guardian, Voice of America, Huffington Post, Foreign Policy and a number of UN and UK government reports. You can read more about LAW's work on our website: www.legalactionworldwide.org

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