

SRSG's Speech for the Memorial Service of the Two Indian Military Contingent Members

UNMISS Compound, Topping, Juba, 08:00 hrs, 20 December 2013

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin

Ambassador Parmod K. Bajaj,

Force Commander, Maj. General Delali Johnson Sakyi,

Honorable Members of the Indian battalions,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues and Friends,

All other protocol observed,

- We gather here in memory of two brave and courageous soldiers of the Indian Battalion I , serving in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. These valiant peacekeepers were caught in the cross-fire targeted towards the civilians while trying to negotiate and provide POC to the 36 Civilians who sought refuge at the TOB, Akobo County, Jonglei State.
- What happened on 19 December was a horrendous act committed by approximately 2,000 armed youths who opened fire and attacked the TOB from all directions, forcing entry into the TOB with the apparent intention of killing the civilians taking shelter.
- The Security Council press statement on the situation in South Sudan, issued on 20 December 2013, stated: *“The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the attack on an UNMISS camp in Akobo,*

on 19 December, which resulted in the death of two Indian peacekeepers and the wounding of another as well as at least 20 other casualties of individuals seeking UNMISS protection. The members of the Security Council expressed their condolences to the families of those peacekeepers killed in the attack, as well as to the Government of India, and to UNMISS, and called on the Government of South Sudan to swiftly investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice. They also stressed that intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a peacekeeping mission deployed in accordance with the Charter of the UN, as long as they are entitled to the protection given to civilians or civilian objects under the international law of armed conflict, may amount to a crime under international law”.

- UNMISS condemns in the strongest terms the violence that occurred in Akobo and continues in other parts of the country. We call on all parties to the crisis to refrain from further violence and seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis. On the part of the United Nations, it is imperative that calm prevails and accountability is served.
- The Force Commander briefed me in detail of the work of the two valiant soldiers, had it not been for their braveness, the death toll at the TOB could have been higher and I salute the Indian Battalion for their tenaciousness and determination. I also welcome the commitment to the Mission and the continued resolve to serve – was movingly relayed to me. They remain undeterred. As a Mission, we are inspired by the dedication shown by the Indian troops. I also thank the Force Commander and the Indian Battalion Commander for their relentless leadership.

- Our mandate from the Member States is clear. We are here to support and help stabilize this new and independent country. We are here to help protect the people of South Sudan, and in particular for those under imminent threat. And we are here to assist with expanding state authority, with strengthening core functions of the state and building peace.
- This mandate and this Mission do not end with such an attack. This horrendous act, which we hope is an isolated incident, will not stop us from carrying out our work. We will carry on, and persist in our collective resolve to work with - and for - the people of South Sudan in building their new country. We will not be deterred.
- Even in the wake of such a tragedy, with the devastating death of two Indian fathers, husbands, and brothers, it is important to say this: Do not allow this attack to discourage you and brothers and sister from around the world from working for the United Nations, and from working for UNMISS in this country. To anyone who wants to threaten us, attack us or put obstacles in our way, our message remains loud and clear, we will not be intimidated.
- And just as strongly, as the SRSG, my message to our staff serving in the Mission is this: The security of our personnel will not be compromised. Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel – of all of you - is of utmost importance. I will do everything in my power to ensure that everyone is safe in the line of duty.

- With a heavy heart, I weep for our two Indian soldiers. The whole Mission is weeping for:
 - Warrant Officer Dharmesh Sangwan, husband of Bhatri Devi
 - Warrant Officer Kumar Pal Singh, husband of Asnee Lata

- On behalf of the Mission, I extend my warmest and most heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of our Indian soldiers. UNMISS mourns your loss and will not forget you. I extend also our condolences to the Indian nation.

- Let us also acknowledge the tragic loss of all the South Sudanese who have lost their lives in this crisis. Our hearts and minds go to their families and loved ones. While we pray for the souls of all the departed, I kindly request you to please pray for the wounded Indian contingent member, Warrant Officer, Mondal Shabul, for a speedy recovery.

- To the families of our Indian fallen soldiers, ***Dharmesh Sangwan*** and ***Kumar Pal Singh***, We are with you in your profound loss. We salute them as they return to your loving arms. Keep your heads high, as you recover as a family from this tragic incident stronger and more resolved to carry out our work.

- I am grateful and humbled by all the support that has already been shown to UN family and to our Indian contingents after this tragedy, from all corners of the world, here in Juba, the Secretary General and the Security Council. I

also want to thank all of you for joining us on a sad day for the Mission and the United Nations as a whole.

- To everyone present here, I ask of you to be brave and courageous just like our fallen soldiers, please help me as your SRSG, as your colleague, as your sister, to carry the torch endowed to us from 193 members of the United Nations. As we remain behind, let us find the strength to carry on collectively and united.