

Mr. Karim A.A. Khan
Office of the Prosecutor
International Criminal Court

6 December 2021

Re: Open Letter by 36 Survivors of international crimes committed in South Sudan/Uganda to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

Dear Mr. Karim Khan,

We are 36 survivors and witnesses of forced displacement, persecution and conflict-related sexual violence including rape, gang and mass rape, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. We have also survived or witnessed summary executions, killings, abductions, forced starvation, destruction of property and looting which have been perpetrated in South Sudan during the conflict.

We are writing to you today as our plea, and that of thousands more survivors, is not being heard. Our stories are not being heard. As a result, the horrific crimes that we have experienced or witnessed remain unpunished, and the perpetrators remain free to violate, degrade, destroy and kill.

We, and every single child, woman and man who have been affected by the conflict deserve justice.

As we have done too many times before as survivors and advocates, we raise our voices now again to demand justice. To begin to repair the harm done, we respectfully request the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to open a preliminary examination concerning the Uganda/South Sudan situation.

We want justice because:

1. In justice we find peace and in peace we can return to South Sudan. I want to go back home because in my village I will be treated with dignity. *In the refugee settlement I do not have a support system, and I am stigmatized because of what happened to me. My husband has left me with the child I had from the rape. My husband beats the child I had from the rape.*
2. I don't want what happened to me to happen to my sisters, brothers, and other women anywhere. I do not want others to go through what happened to me. *I think justice will prevent these crimes to keep happening.*
3. I want each individual to be treated equally, power struggle between tribes is the root cause of the war. *The war is caused by the fight for power between different tribes. Victims of the conflict are caught in the middle. Depending on your tribe or tribe allegiance, you have different access to resources, jobs, land.*

4. To maintain security in the country, even at night. *I want to feel safe when I am at home, in the settlement, in my village, to go get water or wood or cultivate, I do not want to be fearing for my daughters, for myself, for my family.*
5. They have destroyed our property, I want reparations for when peace comes, for my children, and to be treated for the mental and physical injuries I have suffered. *I have little access in the settlement to medical care and psychosocial support, and I know I would not have access to it if I go back to South Sudan. I am not able to be economically independent, I have no land left to cultivate and to feed my children, I do not have money to continue school or to send my children to school.*
6. The leaders should understand the incidents that happened during the conflict and have a record of what happened. *I want them to recognize what happened to us, I want them to know the consequences of their war. I want everyone to know the truth about what happened.*
7. Reconciliation allows for people to come together and interact with the government. Justice will allow me to forgive.
8. So our voices will be heard outside.
9. Justice will give me the freedom to speak out. *I fear stigma from my community. If there is a judgement, it will empower me, give me the confidence to support others.*
10. I want the perpetrators to face the court. *I want those who are responsible for the war and for what happened to me not only to acknowledge what they did, but to be punished for what they did.*
11. I want my family to know it was not my fault and that I was forced so I can get peace in my heart.

We endorse the Article 15 communication made to your office concerning the situation in Uganda and South Sudan. We are asking you as the ICC Prosecutor to do right by us, and all survivors and victims of the South Sudanese conflict. It is critical that the ICC look into the situation and advance justice and accountability for the full scope of international crimes committed against the people of South Sudan including women and girls. We believe in the power of survivors. We hope you do too.

Respectfully,

36 survivors of the South Sudanese conflicts