

Rights for Peace Statement

14th UN Forum on Minority Issues 2021

Thank you Madame Chairperson, distinguished delegates:

Repeatedly, identity narratives are at the root of structural discrimination, injustice, human rights abuses and unresolved grievances.

From our work in Sudan and South Sudan we see that localised clashes often start as individual disputes, which then flare up along identity lines – these flare ups are exacerbated by systemic negligence, systemic discrimination or manipulation by leaders.

The lack of official uptake in resolving cases drives people to take matters into their own hands, often escalating tensions and leading to cyclical patterns of violence.

Civil society groups consistently call on their governments to take responsibility for protecting citizens and pursuing justice and accountability. Silence and lack of intervention, however, result in chronic insecurity and escalating violence.

In the context of violent conflict, identity-narratives can lead to mass atrocities: prejudice, blame, vilification and demonisation of the “other” can lead to dehumanisation, making mass persecution possible. Very often, “the other” is a minority.

We recommend that donor funding specifically prioritises this area as (to quote the Secretary General) “so few resources are reserved for prevention of violent conflict”. We are using and recommend an identity lens for monitoring and countering hate narratives and related violence. Monitoring should include:

- Collecting hate narratives and specific instances of hate speech that amount to incitement to violence or incitement to genocide;
- Monitoring ‘identity-bias’ motives to human rights abuses;
- Monitoring of structural discrimination against minority groups;
- Monitoring manipulation of inter-communal grievances by political and other influential actors.