

War Crimes Shouldn't Pay

Stopping the looting and destruction in South Sudan
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The Sentry is an initiative of the Enough Project and Not On Our Watch (NOOW), with its implementing partner C4ADS.



Foreword

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After nearly two years of following the money underwriting South Sudan's war economy, this report represents the first public release of the findings of The Sentry's investigation into the links between public corruption and armed conflict.

The Sentry's investigation has generated substantial information indicating that top officials ultimately responsible for mass atrocities in South Sudan have at the same time managed to accumulate fortunes, despite modest government salaries. Some have been involved in questionable business deals while others have apparently received large payments from corporations doing business in South Sudan. Meanwhile, some top officials and their family members own stakes in a broad array of companies doing business in the country—and in some cases, these commercial engagements may be in violation of South Sudanese law. Members of their families often live in multi-million dollar mansions outside the country, stay in five-star hotels, reap the benefits of what appears to be a system of nepotism and shady corporate deals, and drive around in luxury cars—all while much of their country's population suffers from the consequences of a brutal civil war, and in many places, experiences near-famine conditions. In short, The Sentry found that South Sudan's top officials have benefited both financially and politically from the continuing war and atrocities committed within their country.

Our investigation also found that top officials in South Sudan could not maintain the status quo without the system of international banks, businesses, arms brokers, real estate firms, and lawyers who, knowingly or unknowingly, facilitate the violent kleptocracy that South Sudan has become. The Sentry's investigation found instances of reliance on these types of institutions and actors on five different continents: Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Sentry analysts have painstakingly collected documents and other information that illustrate how money that could be used to improve the living standards of South Sudan's population is used to fund weapons purchases or armed groups and is effectively diverted from public coffers and moved out of the country.

In the wake of this investigation, we propose a new strategy to counter mass atrocities that would utilize the tools of financial pressure normally reserved for countering terrorism, organized crime, and nuclear proliferation. The new approach would combine anti-money laundering measures with targeted asset freezes focused on key leaders and their networks, accompanied by robust enforcement. These tools would have two objectives: to create leverage in support of more effective peace efforts, human rights protections, and good governance initiatives; and to bring to account those responsible for atrocities—officials who have been operating with impunity because the international community imposes no meaningful consequences for their war crimes and appropriation of state resources.

In South Sudan, war crimes shouldn't pay.

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