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## **150 Killed as Former Rebels and Army Fight in Southern Sudan**

By Reuters

KHARTOUM, Sudan — At least 150 people were killed and 400 to 500 were wounded last week in heavy clashes in southern Sudan between former rebels and the Sudanese Army, a United Nations official said Sunday.

Peter Maxwell, director of the United Nations field office in the town of Malakal, said that most of the dead were combatants, but that 20 to 30 were civilians caught in the cross-fire.

The fighting erupted Nov. 28 in Malakal and was the heaviest between the government in Khartoum and the former rebels since a peace deal last year ended the civil war with the southern rebels, which was Africa's longest-running conflict.

"Most of the bodies have now been recovered," Mr. Maxwell said.

The United Nations said Saturday that the bodies of people killed during the clashes had contaminated a portion of the Nile upon which civilians had been depending for drinking water because some water pumps in the town were broken.

A statement from the United Nations on Sunday said that three bodies had been retrieved from the river, though it could not determine whether the bodies were those of people who had died in the clashes.

United Nations agencies have been distributing water purification tablets to local residents.

The army and the former rebels have blamed each other for setting off the fighting, which ended with a cease-fire on Friday. The United Nations said both sides had disengaged and returned to their areas.

The statement said United Nations peacekeepers and police officers, in addition to forces from both sides, were patrolling the town as part of a "confidence building" step.

The United Nations has 10,000 peacekeepers in the south to monitor the north-south peace agreement, help train police officers and human rights workers and provide other services.

Mr. Maxwell said life in the town was gradually returning to normal on Sunday.

“Yesterday, people were queuing for basic foodstuff,” he said. “Today, shops seem to be pretty much open and going back to their normal business. People who fled the fighting are back in town.”

The north-south peace agreement formed separate north and south armies, with joint armed units in the main towns in the region, including Malakal, the capital of the Upper Nile region and potentially one of the most oil-rich regions in Sudan.

The pact also included agreements to share power and wealth between the north and south, but efforts to carry out the provision have been slow, because of the difficulty of making progress on central issues like the demarcation of borders and ownership of oil fields.

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