

Libya has 'lurched from one emergency to another,' high-level UN official tells Security Council

The status quo in Libya is "untenable," Ghassan Salamé, Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) told the Security Council on Wednesday.

The UN Special Representative pointed to the violence in the capital, Tripoli, that began on 26 August as shattering "the façade of calm that had prevailed since May 2017," relaying that tanks and heavy artillery were deployed into residential neighborhoods, leaving 61 Libyans dead and injuring nearly 160.

"Many of those who died were civilians, including children. Families were forced to flee their homes. Looting and crime became common place as gangs took to the streets. Hundreds of criminals broke out of prison. Migrants were either trapped in detention centres, or turned onto the street," he detailed.

Against the backdrop that the city was "on the brink of all-out war," he said that on 4 September, UNSMIL brokered a ceasefire between the major parties to the conflict, halting the fighting and restoring some order.

Mr. Salamé said that as a first step for peace to take root, the Mission was offering technical assistance and its good offices in support of the ceasefire.

"Groups that violate the ceasefire must be held to account," he stated, adding that the UN and the international community are watching. "The time for impunity is behind us."

He noted that in recent weeks, "the nation has lurched from one emergency to another." Fearing that it "may become a shelter for terrorist groups of all persuasions," he asked the Council for more help at this critical juncture.

Groups that violate the ceasefire must be held to account – *Special Representative Ghassan Salamé*

Alerting the Council that the presence and operations of the terrorist group ISIL are spreading, he cited an attack that claimed the lives of four police officers on 23 August claimed by the extremists; as well as on 10 August when armed groups forcibly evicted displaced Tawerghan families from the Tariq al-Matar IDP Camp; and a 2 May attack on the High National Elections Commission.

The Special Representative highlighted fighting between Chadian Government

and opposition forces operating from Southern Libya, underscoring that “the recent Agreement signed between Chad, Sudan, Niger and Libya needs to be implemented, so Libya does not also become an alternative battleground for others.”

Meanwhile, he continued, the country’s citizens suffer “deteriorating standards of living,” and for many, “every day is a personal emergency.”

In tackling the underlying causes, he stressed the need for strong, unified civilian and military institutions, explaining UNSMIL’s dual track approach.

“First,” he said “we are working to revise the security arrangements in Tripoli” to reduce armed groups and work with Libyans to identify steps towards reshaping security in the capital and develop sustainable arrangements.

“The Mission’s second priority is to address the economic issues, which underpin the crisis and erode the daily lives of citizens across the country,” he informed the chamber, noting that if the plundering continues, there is little chance to move either the economic reforms or political process.

“We are also committed to advocating for a more equitable distribution of wealth in Libya focused not on appeasing groups based on their military strength, but on providing for citizens based on their need,” stressed Mr. Salamé.

He maintained that Libyans want change in their political leadership: “I will not mince words. Many members of the House of Representatives are failing to do their job,” he stated. “They simply have no intention of relinquishing their positions. They have put in place legal provisions to maintain their authority in perpetuity.”

He said that Libya needs the “unified, determined and vocal position” of the Council, to find the peace and tranquility it is desperately looking for.

Peace must be built ‘block after block’ UN General Assembly President tells key forum

Under the theme of charting “A Credible Pathway to Sustaining Peace,” Miroslav Lajčák, President of the [72nd](#) General Assembly, convened this year’s one-day High-level Forum for Member States and others on Wednesday, to further promote a global culture of peace.

In opening the forum, he underscored three points. “The first is time,” he stated, noting that peace “must be [built up](#) – block after block, layer after layer. And this must be done, not by the hands of internationals, but by the people on the ground; the people who were there – in their countries, and in their villages – when peace was not.”

The second, he said, could be summed up in the single word, “simplicity,” saying that “it is around us, every day. It’s in what we do...where we go...how we speak. And if peace is not a part of these everyday habits, then we simply do not have a culture of peace.”

“Hope” was the third element he cited, pointing out that “we have chosen not to accept” the conflicts, terrorism and intolerance permeating the world, which brings “a powerful message of hope.”

Mr. Lajčák spotlighted the 1945 [UN Charter](#) saying that peace “is embedded in every word” of the Organization’s founding document.

Moving “from reactive to proactive; from response to prevention; from concentrating on the effects of conflict to exploring the accelerators of peace,” the Assembly president noted that we are “all part of a larger cycle of sustaining peace. Not just in theory. But also, in practice.”

He listed the UN ongoing efforts toward this goal saying that the world body was:

- reforming the UN’s peace and security pillar
- investing more in mediation and peacebuilding capacities
- reviewing the way peacekeeping operations work on the ground
- looking at how efforts for Sustainable Development and human rights have a direct impact on the prospects for peace
- and moving the whole international system towards a culture of peace.

Mr. Lajčák highlighted the need to be thoroughly inclusive, emphasizing that “gender equality is crucial.”

He concluded by quoting the late Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Nobel Lecture, saying: “Peace must be made real and tangible in the daily existence of every individual in need.”

[Albinism: UN official welcomes latest developments in ‘landmark’ Malawi murder case](#)

The top United Nations representative in Malawi is urging the Government to

[promptly prosecute](#) those allegedly responsible for the death of a young man with albinism whose butchered body was found earlier this year.

MacDonald Masambuka, 22, went missing in February. His body was discovered in April. Local media reported that his legs and arms had been removed.

Maria Jose Torres, UN Resident Coordinator in the African country, has welcomed the end of investigations into his killing.

Twelve people—among them a police officer and a priest—have entered pleas on a series of charges that include murder and causing harm to persons with disabilities.

“We call on the Government to promptly prosecute the alleged perpetrators in this landmark case,” she said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

Ms. Torres added that the UN remains concerned about continued attacks against persons with albinism.

People with the condition are born with lighter than normal skin, hair and eye colour, making them sensitive to the sun and bright light. In some communities, they are attacked or even killed for their body parts which are erroneously believed to possess magical powers.

At least 10 people with albinism remain missing in Malawi, according to Ms. Torres.

She said the most recent case concerns Joseph Kashingwe, a 12-year-old boy who disappeared in July after attending independence celebrations. Another boy, aged five, narrowly escaped abduction just last month.

The UN official called on the national authorities to intensify efforts to resolve the outstanding cases and to step up protection and support to victims and their families.

She also urged them to prioritise investigations and prosecutions of crimes against persons with albinism, in line with commitments made at a [meeting](#) in June, convened by the UN in the capital, Lilongwe.

The global community has been working to fight stigma, discrimination and violence against persons with albinism, with 13 June celebrated each year as [International Albinism Awareness Day](#).

[UN media seminar on peace in the](#)

Middle East, highlights ‘power of words over weapons’

Engaging in debate over how best to advance peace in the Middle East and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is “a welcome reminder of the power of words over weapons,” said United Nations chief António Guterres on Wednesday.

That was a key part of the Secretary-General’s message delivered at the start of the two-day United Nations 2018 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, being held in Moscow.

It has been organized by the UN’s Department of Public Information ([DPI](#)) as part of the Special Information Programme on [The Question of Palestine](#), in collaboration with Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the support of the UN Association of Russia, and the Russian Peace Foundation.

In his message, delivered in the Russian capital by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, [Alison Smale](#), said that the seminar provided an “important platform to discuss media-related topics connected to the difficult and challenging situation in the Middle East” adding that it was “encouraging that it remains strong, 27 years after its inception”.

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains central to the Middle East quagmire. The recent tensions in Gaza are a painful reminder of how fragile the situation is,” she said, on behalf of Mr. Guterres.

“The people of the region and the world cannot afford another escalation of violence”, she added, noting that the UN remains “strongly committed to a just, comprehensive and lasting two-State solution that ends the 50-year occupation and resolves all final status issues. This is key for security and stability in the entire region”.

The event brings together more than 150 diplomats, journalists, media experts and youth representatives from Israel, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, Russia, the United States, Europe, and beyond.

Subjects for discussion and debate on Wednesday and Thursday include a look back at the legacy of the 1993 Oslo Accords; how journalists cover the whole Israel-Palestine conflict and can better protect themselves covering conflict; and the narrative of Palestine refugees, 70 years on from the Nakba, or “catastrophe” by which Palestinians commemorate their mass-displacement during the 1948-1949 war.

Major UN push for peace to end Yemen's 'hot war' begins in Geneva

Efforts are under way to bring a “flicker of hope” to war-weary civilians in Yemen with UN-organised consultations between the Government and the Houthi opposition in Geneva set to begin, the [UN's Special Envoy Martin Griffiths](#), said on Wednesday.

“The time has come to begin a new process, to relaunch a process which will lead to a resolution to this conflict, which has so tragically marked the life of so many Yemenis and continues to do so,” he told journalists.

Speaking at UN Headquarters in the Swiss city, the veteran diplomat noted that it had been “two years; two years too long” since the belligerents had last met to discuss a peaceful end to the brutal conflict, whose roots date back to uprisings in 2011.

Yemenis need to resolve their differences in order to build their nation – *Martin Griffiths, UN Special Envoy*

“This is quite a hot war, as you well know better than me, and a lot of bad things happen in a hot war and that's not been absent in the last weeks,” Mr Griffiths said. “So, to come to the table and to talk to your opponents, requires quite a lot of courage and quite a lot of confidence that it is worth it.”

Fighting in Yemen escalated in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily at the request of Yemen's President against “Houthi-Saleh” opposition forces – a reference to the now deceased former Yemeni President, Ali Abdallah Saleh.

Since then, thousands of civilians have died and around eight million are on the brink of famine, UN humanitarian agencies report. According to [UN Children's Fund, UNICEF](#), 76 youngsters have been killed in the war-torn country in July and August alone.

Martin Griffiths, UN Special Envoy for Yemen briefs the press on the Geneva Consultations on Yemen, Palais des Nations. 5 September 2018. □□□□□ UN Geneva/Violaine Martin

Although he was reluctant to share details of the agenda for the Geneva Consultations on Yemen, the Special Envoy explained that the aim of these meetings was “to lay the groundwork” for formal negotiations to be held at a future date. He added that the initial focus should be on building confidence between the parties.

By way of an example, Mr. Griffiths explained that the mass cholera vaccination programme carried out in Hudaydah governorate in recent weeks, had been shown to deliver “tangible benefits” to the people of Yemen.

Other trust-building measures will be explored in coming days, he added, including the issue of prisoner release “at scale” – something that both sides had been keen to see happen.

“What I think we can do this week, for example, assuming that the parties would agree to this, is agree on a way to do it together...Exchanges of prisoners obviously depends on cooperation, but it’s been remarkable how strongly the feeling has been conveyed to me that this must happen, and this must happen at scale.”

Asked about possible interference in the consultative process by other regional powers, Mr. Griffiths said he was guided by UN Security Council resolutions on Yemen.

Earlier in the day in New York, the UN Security Council members expressed their “full support” for the consultations to bring about a political settlement.

“There can only be a political solution to the conflict in Yemen,” the members of the Council said in [a Press Statement](#), which reiterated their call for full implementation of Security Council resolutions and statements, including [Resolution 2216](#) of 2015.

Back in Geneva, the UN Special Envoy insisted that the politics of Yemen was a matter for the Yemenis and the Council’s resolutions all pointed “in the direction of the reconstitution of the Yemeni state, based on an inclusive political settlement”.

“These are Yemeni-Yemeni discussions,” he said. “Yemenis need to resolve their differences in order to build their nation. It’s not for other countries to determine for them, their future.”