

Humanitarian aid in Middle East should not be held hostage to politics – UN political chief

Recurring cycles of violence in the Middle East highlight the need for international efforts to prevent hostilities, provide humanitarian aid and support Palestinian reconciliation, the UN's political chief told the Security Council on Wednesday.

Rosemary DiCarlo [briefed the 15 ambassadors](#) on developments over the past months, during which there has been an escalation in incidents between Israelis and Palestinians.

She added that the humanitarian situation in Gaza had also further deteriorated, though the re-opening of the only commercial goods crossing into the Strip was welcome.

Gaza has been under blockade for more than a decade after the militant group Hamas gained control of the enclave.

Israel closed the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza in July in response to Palestinians launching incendiary kites into its territory. Though it became operational again this month, another crossing for pedestrians has been shuttered except for humanitarian cases.

"As we work towards a full lifting of the closures on Gaza, in line with Security Council [resolution 1860](#) (2009), I call on all parties to ensure that urgently needed humanitarian supplies reach the Strip. These should not be held hostage to political and security developments," Ms. DiCarlo [said](#).

"I also reiterate previous calls by the Special Coordinator (the UN's [Nickolay Mladenov](#)) to Hamas to provide full information on the Israeli nationals who are being held in Gaza, as required by international humanitarian law."

Turning to Gaza's "crumbling" infrastructure, Ms. DiCarlo reported that the UN is increasing its capacity to better support projects in the areas of energy, water, health and job creation.

However, she expressed concern that funding for UN emergency fuel, which sustains roughly 250 critical facilities in the enclave, had run out, while essential medicine stocks were dangerously low.

Additionally, the UN agency that assists Palestinians, [UNRWA](#), has also been facing a cash crunch.

"The Secretary-General has warned that failing to address UNRWA's remaining \$217 million funding shortfall will have serious humanitarian and

developmental consequences, as well as implications for regional stability," she stated.

The political affairs chief reported that 13 Palestinians were killed by Israel forces in continued protests near the Gaza border fence, while 1,000 others were injured together with an Israeli soldier.

This week, the Israeli authorities announced that military police investigations will be held into the deaths of two Palestinians killed at the fence.

"While Israel has a duty to protect its citizens, it must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire, and refrain from using lethal force, except as a last resort. I further call on Hamas to avoid violence at the fence and refrain from putting children in harm's way. Children should never be targeted or instrumentalized in any way," she said.

[UN remembers Kofi Annan: A leader who put people at the centre of the Organization's work](#)

Former United Nations Secretary-General [Kofi Annan](#) was remembered on Wednesday as the embodiment of the global Organization that works to improve the lives of men and women worldwide.

During a wreath-laying ceremony in New York, the current UN chief [Antonio Guterres](#) led staff members in paying respects to the mild-mannered diplomat from Ghana who rose through the UN system to become its seventh leader in January 1997, serving two consecutive five-year terms.

"Kofi Annan's years in office were an exciting time. He put forward new ideas. He brought new people into the United Nations family. He spoke passionately about our mission and role. He created a renewed sense of possibility both inside and outside our organization about what the UN could do and be for the world's people," [said](#) Mr. Guterres.

"His most defining features were his humanity and solidarity with those in need. He put people at the centre of the work of the United Nations, and was able to turn compassion into action across the UN system."

That action included uniting world leaders to agree global targets on poverty and child mortality – linchpins of the landmark Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) – and to join with civil society and the healthcare industry to save lives from HIV/AIDS.

As his successor noted, Mr. Annan also did not shy away from addressing challenging issues.

“Kofi Annan faced up to the grave errors made by the United Nations in the 1990s – in its response to the [Rwanda genocide](#) and the Srebrenica killings – by shining a light inside the UN,” he said.

“The reports he commissioned aimed to make sure such terrible mistakes are never repeated, and set the international community on a new course in its response to mass atrocities.”

Kofi Annan died on Saturday following a short illness. He was 80.

As Mr. Guterres stated, his passing was “a personal loss” for many who work in the UN system.

While the UN flag outside Headquarters was flown at half-mast for three days following the announcement of Mr. Annan’s death, staff members have been filling a book of condolences with expressions of sympathy to his wife, Nane, and family.

UN personnel also have been sharing their memories of a man who was wise yet humble, courteous and charming.

Jean-Marc Ferré, a photographer with the UN Office at Geneva, recalled Mr. Annan’s humanity, but also his sense of humour.

“I remember when we were on mission in Oslo, there was a small work meeting in English and I wanted to be sure that I had understood everything, so I quietly asked Fred Eckhard (Mr Annan’s spokesperson) at which point Kofi stopped talking and asked me what was the matter,” he told *UN News* on Saturday.

“After apologizing for the interruption, I reminded him that I wasn’t very comfortable with English, to which he suggested that Fred could help me afterwards. Then before picking up where he had left off, he looked at me and said, ‘You know, it doesn’t show in your photos that you don’t speak much English.’”

[‘Stop and listen’ to victims of terrorism, UN chief urges in message marking international day](#)

Recognizing the impact of terrorism on the lives of ordinary people worldwide is the focus of the first observance of an [international day](#) that honours

victims and survivors.

As UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) stated, their courage in the face of adversity is a lesson to us all.

“Supporting victims and their families is a moral imperative, based on promoting, protecting and respecting their human rights,” the UN chief said.

His comments came in [a message](#) on Tuesday to mark the International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism.

“Caring for victims and survivors and amplifying their voices helps to challenge the narrative of hatred and division that terrorism aims to spread. We need to provide victims with long-term assistance, including financial, legal, medical and psychosocial support”.

Terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, and Mr. Guterres pointed out that the UN, too, is regularly targeted.

He recalled that this week marked [the 15th anniversary of the bombing of the organization’s compound in Baghdad](#) in which 22 people were killed, while some peacekeeping operations are under constant threat.

Although more countries are being affected by terrorism, the UN said most victims can be found in just a handful, namely Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

“But after terrorist attacks, we rarely hear about those who were killed and injured; the ordinary women, men, girls and boys, who were going about their daily business when their lives ended or were changed forever,” Mr. Guterres continued. “We rarely hear about their surviving families, friends and communities, who must learn to live with the burden of terrorism for their entire lives.”

The UN chief said the international day therefore serves as a reminder “to stop and listen to the victims and survivors of terrorism, to raise up their voices and recognize the impact terrorism has on their lives.”

[UN chief welcomes event reuniting families on the Korean Peninsula](#)

The decision to allow scores of people from South Korea to reunite with their relatives in the north has been [welcomed](#) by the UN Secretary-General.

The majority of those selected to take part in the week-long inter-Korean family reunion event, which began on Monday, are elderly.

Many have not seen each other since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

“(The Secretary-General) hopes that such reunion events will become routine and include many more people, including affected Koreans worldwide, allow participants to meet privately, and to remain in contact after the meetings,” his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said in a statement, issued on Monday evening.

The reunions, which are taking place in Mount Kumgang, North Korea, are the first to be held since 2015.

They stem from the historic summit held in April between the country’s leader, Kim Jong Un, and his South Korean counterpart, Moon Jae-in.

In the outcome document, the two leaders further declared “there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula”. They also “confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearisation, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”

The UN chief has welcomed the efforts by the two countries to continue their engagement and to take steps to build confidence and trust.

“The Secretary-General looks forward to discussing how he can further support the parties in their diplomatic efforts to bring sustainable peace, security, and complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during the upcoming high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly,” the statement continued

Secretary-General urges increased support to Lake Chad countries following latest Boko Haram attack

The recent killing of villagers in Nigeria’s Borno State has been [condemned](#) by the UN Secretary-General.

At least 19 people were killed when fighters with the terrorist group Boko Haram attacked the village of Malairi on Sunday, according to media reports.

UN chief António Guterres is calling for those responsible for their deaths to be brought to justice.

“The Secretary-General remains deeply concerned about the persisting violence

in the Lake Chad Basin region,” said his spokesman, in a statement issued on Monday evening.

“He commends national and regional initiatives to bring peace and stability to the area and to address the root causes of the conflict.”

The Lake Chad Basin region includes Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as well as Nigeria.

The Boko Haram insurgency began in north-eastern Nigeria nearly a decade ago, spilling over the border to the neighbouring countries.

The group’s activities, which include abductions and forcing captives to serve as suicide bombers, have displaced around 10 million people, as of 2017.

The Secretary-General again called on the international community to increase support to regional efforts to fight the militants, which include the establishment of a Multinational Joint Task Force.