

# UN launches global plan to strengthen protection of internally displaced persons

With multiple crises forcing millions of people away from their homes, United Nations agencies, Governments and partners have launched a set of measures to strengthen protection of internally displaced persons as well as find solutions to address their problems.

“Addressing the protection needs of the forcibly displaced and seeking solutions to their plight contribute to greater stability for countries and whole regions,” said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in a news release announcing the three-year Plan of Action.

“The consequences of our failure to resolve internal displacement can be devastating,” he stressed.

The framework, formally called the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People (2018-2020), calls on all relevant actors to step up efforts to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement.

The consequences of our failure to resolve internal displacement can be devastating – *High Commissioner Filippo Grandi*

It also proposes concrete activities to strengthen the participation of internally displaced persons in decisions concerning them, and expand national laws and policies on internal displacement as well as actions to improve data collection and analysis on displacements globally.

By the end of 2016, more than 40 million people were displaced within their own countries due to insecurity or rights violations. An additional 24 million were driven from their homes due to disasters. Every year, an estimated 15 million people are also displaced by development projects.

## **Bold and ambitious steps needed**

Given this complex conundrum, “bold and ambitious” steps are needed, underscored Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

“The Plan of Action seeks to galvanize a strategic dialogue, concerted action and adequate resources to address the plight of the internally displaced, while engaging them in the decisions that affect them,” added the independent expert.

In the same vein, Mark Lowcock, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs committed that the Organization will continue to work with affected Governments and displaced persons to ensure that their needs are addressed.

## **Leave no one behind**

“The international community has pledged to leave no one behind,” stressed Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, noting that this promise must extend to all those displaced.

The Plan of Action was drafted under the leadership of the Special Rapporteur, the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) and the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR).

Its launch coincides with the 20th anniversary of the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), widely accepted as being the global standard for protecting and assisting internally displaced people.

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## **End ‘daily tragedy’ for millions, tackle root cause of internals displacement, urges UN migration chief**

More than 40 million people are displaced by conflict and another 25 million annually by disaster – within the borders of their own countries – with children, on average, making up over half those numbers, the United Nations migration agency said Tuesday.

“In 1998, internal displacement was recognized as one of the world’s [greatest tragedies](#) and 20 years later, it still is,” said William Lacy Swing, who heads the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), marking the twentieth anniversary of the principles that identify the rights of internally displaced persons.

On 17 April 1998, the then-[UN Commission on Human Rights](#) took note of the [Guiding Principles](#) that identify the rights and guarantees of internally displaced persons, known as IDPs – effectively launching them as a global standard for States and humanitarian actors.

Twenty years later, the footprint of these Principles is clear. They are widely accepted as the standard for protecting and assisting internally displaced people, many States have incorporated them into national legislation, they have inspired regional agreements and they underscore all major work in this area.

“Twenty years on, the number of internally displaced people has nearly doubled due to ongoing new displacements, a lack of solutions for those being left behind in protracted crises and a chronic shortfall of almost 50 per cent of funding needed to meet basic humanitarian needs,” Mr. Swing continued. “The daily tragedy of internal displacement continues for millions.”

As the international community embarks on a year of reflection and action to mark the 20th anniversary, “everyone can and must do more,” he continued.

“More than a humanitarian imperative, it makes good economic sense and is socially advantageous to empower States and populations in their own preparedness, in strengthening their resilience, and in helping to resolve internal displacement,” Mr. Swing said.

“In the spirit of ‘leaving no one behind,’ the momentum behind the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) for 2030, greater attention must be focused on addressing the root causes of displacement and reducing risk,” he said.

According to Mr. Swing, when displacement is a life-saving necessity, concerted efforts must minimize its impact and resolve it as quickly as possible with safety and dignity, using means to prevent it from happening again.

“Throughout this year, with partners, we will use the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles as an opportunity to do three vital things: raise awareness on the centrality of the Guiding Principles to the assistance and protection of internally displaced people; call on Governments to incorporate the Guiding Principles into their national legislation; and strengthen partnerships that contribute to effective and accountable programming to help realize the untapped positive potential and agency of internally displaced people in their communities, including empowering them in their own responses and giving a platform to their voices,” he concluded.

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## **Syria: Sustained fighting taking ‘enormous’ toll on civilians, UN aid chief tells Security Council**

Despite the Security Council’s demand for cessation of hostilities in Syria, civilians in the war-torn country continue to bear the “enormous” cost of intense military activity by parties to the conflict, the top United Nations relief official said Tuesday.

“Since the passage of [resolution 2401](#), the Secretary-General has on many

occasions called for its full implementation,” stated Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, referring to the the Council text adopted in late February calling for a 30-day ceasefire across Syria.

“However, rather than implement the resolution of this Council, we have seen parties to the conflict sustain intense military activity at an [enormous human cost.](#)”

Briefing the 15-member Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, Mr. Lowcock said that UN agencies and relief partners have been delivering assistance to those in need but the response remains challenged by a number of factors, including severely limited resources.

“As we approach the conference in Brussels on 24-25 April, we have an immediate opportunity to progress on easing the humanitarian suffering by fully funding humanitarian operations,” he said, noting that the appeal for Syria is currently less than 15 per cent funded.

“I cannot overstate the importance of sustaining and scaling up the international response,” stressed the UN aid chief.

He also informed the Council that about 100,000 displaced persons returned to their homes in Raqqa since the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) was driven out last October.

However, conditions there are not conducive for people coming back as at area remains littered by unexploded ordinances, improvised explosive devices, and other explosive remnants of war, with children most at risk. Furthermore, there is widespread food insecurity among returnee households, and the health and education systems are in near ruin.

Mr. Lowcock also spoke of the situation in Rukban, eastern Ghouta and Idleb.

As to Afrin, in north-west Syria, humanitarian actors continue to struggle to gain sustained access to the area, and freedom of movement for internally displaced persons remains severely limited, he said.

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## [UN deputy aid chief shines light on plight of 400,000 Rohingya still inside Myanmar](#)

Although the massive outflow of Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh grabbed worldwide headlines, the international community must not forget that more than 400,000 of the minority group are living in dire situations at home, a senior United Nations official said Tuesday.

“There is a humanitarian crisis on both sides of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border that is affecting the world’s largest group of stateless people,” [Ursula Mueller](#), the UN’s deputy relief chief, told reporters in New York, following her recent visit to Myanmar.

“The unfolding tragedy in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar [Bangladesh] rightly captured the world’s attention, but we cannot, and must not, forget the plight of over 400,000 Muslim people still living in Rakhine State who continue to face a life of hardship and marginalization due to movement restrictions,” she added.

These restrictions severely compromise their rights and obstruct their access to health, livelihoods, protection, education, and other essential services, she said.

Prior to the press conference, Ms. Mueller, who is the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, spoke to *UN News* about what she had seen inside Myanmar and about a meeting with some top officials, including State Counsellor and Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“We discussed the importance of ending the violence, of stability and peace and reconciliation. I offered the support of the United Nations to address the humanitarian needs and the protection needs that are across the whole country, and advocated for access for humanitarian actors,” Ms. Mueller said of the meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi.

The UN deputy relief chief digs deeper into the crisis in our full interview [here](#):

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## [As conditions worsen in Yemen, new UN envoy hopes to rekindle peace talks](#)

The new United Nations envoy for war-torn Yemen called Tuesday for all parties to the conflict to abandon preconditions and begin negotiations, and said he would offer a new framework for talks within the next two months.

“A negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue is the only way to end the Yemeni conflict and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” Martin Griffiths, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, told the Security Council today.

“Peace becomes possible when we see the good in our foes, even though we can see clearly the cruelties of war,” he added.

In his first briefing to the Security Council since assuming his

responsibilities in March, Mr. Griffiths informed its members that he plans to develop principles for peace negotiations within the next two months.

The promised drive for a settlement comes as living conditions in Yemen become increasingly desperate, in what now the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Speaking alongside the Mr. Griffiths, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, said: "More than 22 million people urgently require some form of humanitarian help, including 8.4 million people who struggle to find their next meal."

Peace becomes possible when we see the good in our foes, even though we can see clearly the cruelties of war – *UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths*

While he said it was his perception that the warring sides in Yemen desire peace, Mr. Griffiths drew attention to the increased number of ballistic missiles launched towards Saudi Arabia, intensified military operations in north-west Yemen, and airstrikes in the capital of Sana'a and other cities that are causing civilian deaths and diminishing hopes for peace.

Conflict is ongoing there between an international coalition of forces supporting President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi on the one side, and Houthi militias and allied units of the armed forces on the other.

"The people of Yemen are in desperate need of signs that this war will soon end," Mr. Griffiths said.

Mr. Griffiths assumed his responsibilities on 11 March, succeeding Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed who had served as the Special Envoy since April 2015.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Martin Griffith, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, briefs the Security Council meeting on the situation in that country.

Efforts to provide humanitarian relief to millions of Yemenis has been severely hampered, Mr. Lowcock, the Organization's aid chief, said, because of bureaucratic obstacles imposed by authorities as well as restrictions on imports and customs clearance, and long delays and searches at checkpoints.

"Sana'a airport also remains closed to commercial traffic, preventing thousands of critically ill patients from travelling abroad to seek treatment unavailable in Yemen," Mr. Lowcock said.

### **Another risk of cholera outbreak**

Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, warned that another major outbreak of cholera looms, though aid workers are trying to take preventive measures and are pre-positioning supplies should it occur.

"A successful response requires safe unimpeded and unhindered access across and into Yemen for humanitarian staff and humanitarian supplies," he said, as well as predictable fuel imports to keep hospitals and water treatment plants running.