

[UNESCO condemns deadly attack on World Heritage site that claimed seven lives in DR Congo](#)

The lives of six guards and their driver were taken Monday during an attack on the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in the Virunga Park, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) World Heritage site in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – drawing condemnation from the UN agency.

“I [condemn this deadly attack](#) on six guards of the Virunga National Park and their driver,” said Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on Wednesday.

“I call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take all the necessary legal measures to put an end to these repetitive attacks,” added.

The Director-General paid tribute to the courage of the guards who risk their lives to ensure the protection of this heritage.

Since 1996, attacks in the Virunga National Park have claimed over 175 victims, UNESCO said.

This marks the third attack this year against the staff of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in the Virunga Park and follows similar acts on other World Heritage sites in the country, namely in Dja and Sangha Tri-National.

The Director-General called on the international community to help the Institute ensure the safety of local people and staff.

With the support of the European Union, UNESCO has, for several years, been investing in strengthening human capacity and resources of World Heritage Sites in the countries of central Africa that are facing security challenges.

[UN chief condemns attacks against peacekeepers in Central African Republic](#)

The United Nations chief has condemned the latest killing and wounding of the world body’s peacekeepers in the Central African Republic during an exchange

of fire with armed groups on 10 April.

A statement issued overnight by UN Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, recalling that attacks against UN peacekeepers “may constitute a war crime,” called on the country’s authorities to [investigate them](#) and swiftly bring those responsible to justice.

A Rwandan peacekeeper serving the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was killed and eight others of the mission were injured during the incident in the capital, Bangui.

The incident followed a joint operation launched on 8 April by MINUSCA and the Central African forces and police to disarm and arrest heavily armed criminal groups, Mr. Dujarric said, noting that the Secretary-General offered his deepest condolences to the family of the bereaved, as well as to the Government of Rwanda, and wished a swift recovery to the injured.

The Central African Republic has been [plagued by decades of instability and fighting](#). A renewed violence erupted in December 2012 when the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition launched a series of attacks. A peace agreement was reached in January 2013, but the rebels seized the capital, Bangui, in March, forcing President François Bozizé to flee.

A transitional government has since been established and entrusted with restoring peace. The conflict, however, has taken on increasingly sectarian overtones as the mainly Christian anti-Balaka movement took up arms and inter-communal clashes erupted again in and around Bangui.

[Security Council fails to adopt three resolutions on chemical weapons use in Syria](#)

Days after alleged chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma, the United Nations Security Council failed to adopt two competing resolutions that would have established a mechanism to investigate use of such weapons in Syria, as well as another concerning a fact-finding mission in the war-torn country.

Had one of the two mechanisms proposed in the drafts been approved, it could have filled the vacuum left by the Organisation for Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) when its mandate

expired last November.

The [first draft considered today](#) – penned by the United States – which would have established a new investigative mechanism for one year, as well as identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, was rejected owing to a negative vote from Russia.

The draft received 12 votes in favour, two against (Bolivia and Russia) and one abstention (China).

A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council’s five permanent members – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States – blocks passage of a resolution.

Today’s meeting marked the twelfth time Russia has used its veto to block Council action on Syria.

Similarly, [a competing draft](#) – penned by Russia – which would have established the mechanism for one year as well but would have given the Security Council the responsibility to assign accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, was also not adopted.

This draft received six Council members’ vote in favour (Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan and Russia), seven against (France, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States) and two abstentions (Cote d’Ivoire and Kuwait).

The Council rejected a third text – also proposed by Russia – which concerned the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM).

The draft received five votes in favour (Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia), four against (France, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States), and six abstentions (Cote d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, and Sweden).

Ahead of the Security Council [meetings](#) today, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) had repeated his call on 15-member body to “[find unity](#)” on the issue of use of chemical weapons in Syria and ensure accountability.

“The norms against chemical weapons must be upheld. I appeal to the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility and find unity on this issue,” he said.

“I also encourage the Council to redouble its efforts to agree on a dedicated mechanism for accountability.”

[UN report documents horrors faced by](#)

thousands held in arbitrary detention in Libya

Armed groups in Libya are holding thousands of people in detention where they are being submitted to torture and other human rights violations, according to a United Nations [report](#) published on Tuesday.

The study by the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), and the UN Support Mission in the country, known as [UNSMIL](#), estimates that some 6,500 people are being held in official prisons while thousands more are in facilities nominally under the authorities or that are directly run by armed groups, some of which are affiliated with the State.

“This report lays bare not only the appalling abuses and violations experienced by Libyans deprived of their liberty, but the sheer horror and arbitrariness of such detentions, both for the victims and their families,” said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

One facility, believed to be the largest of its kind in western Libya, houses 2,600 people who face torture, unlawful killing, denial of adequate medical treatment and poor detention conditions.

“Men, women and children across Libya are arbitrarily detained or unlawfully deprived of their liberty based on their tribal or family links and perceived political affiliations,” the report stated.

“Victims have little or no recourse to judicial remedy or reparations, while members of armed groups enjoy total impunity.”

The report’s findings are based on first-hand accounts and other information gathered from sources inside Libya.

Some detainees have been held since 2011 in relation to the armed conflict that led to the overthrow of former President, the late Muammar Gaddafi, and a surge in armed groups.

The report further stated that since renewed hostilities broke out in 2014, armed groups on all sides have rounded up suspected opponents, critics, activists, politicians and others, while hostage-taking for prisoner exchanges or ransom is also common.

“Rather than reining in armed groups and integrating their members under State command and control structures, successive Libyan governments have increasingly relied on them for law enforcement, including arrests and detention; paid them salaries; and provided them with equipment and uniforms,” the report said.

The authors are calling on the Libyan authorities to condemn torture, ill-treatment and summary executions of those detained, and to ensure

accountability for these crimes.

“These violations and abuses need to stop – and those responsible for such crimes should be held fully to account.”

[UN Security Council urges an end to recurring cycles of instability in Africa's Great Lakes region](#)

The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday called for an end to the recurring cycles of violence and instability in Africa's Great Lakes region, as a senior UN official reported that some armed groups are continuing attacks on civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“The negative forces, including the Allied Democratic Forces, continue to attack and terrify the population, causing suffering and displacement, and fuelling mistrust between the countries of the region,” said the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, Said Djinnit.

The UN has long been engaged in efforts to bring peace and stability to the vast region, stretches across Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

It has been plagued by decades of political instability and armed conflicts, porous borders and humanitarian crises, as well as tensions over natural resources and other potentially destabilizing factors.

A key step has been the adoption of a UN-brokered accord in February 2013 aimed at stabilizing the DRC and the region.

In today's briefing, Mr. Djinnit told the Council that while implementation of this accord, formally known as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, has been slow and requires greater political will, it remains a vital tool to bring stability to the region.

One of the root causes of conflict in the region is exploitation of natural resources from the DRC.

“Continued illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources from the DRC contributes, as we know, to financing negative forces and deprives the country of critical sources of growth and development,” he said.

He also said that in the DRC, tensions persist between the Government and the opposition despite progress in preparations for the elections.

Mr. Djinnit noted that in Burundi, the political and human rights situation remains of great concern as the country heads towards a referendum for constitutional changes.

Further, human rights violations and impunity remain central to the instability across the region, he added, stressing that the humanitarian situation there also requires greater attention.

In a press statement issued after the briefing, the Council reaffirmed that the accord “remains an essential mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability” in the DRC and the region, and called on all signatories to fulfil their respective commitments to address the root causes of conflict and promote lasting regional development.

The accord was signed by 11 countries, namely Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the DRC, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The UN, the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) act as guarantors of the accord. In early 2014, Kenya and Sudan became the 12th and 13th signatories of the accord, respectively.