

# UN renews push for political solution as Yemen marks three years of all-out conflict

Three years after a Saudi-led coalition intervened in the Yemen war, and hours after reports that Houthi rebels fired missiles at cities in Saudi Arabia, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Monday urged restraint on all sides, saying military escalation is not the solution.

The UN has also dispatched an envoy to meet with warring parties in its quest to facilitate a negotiated political settlement to the crisis, which has left an estimated 22.2 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

“The Special Envoy [[Martin Griffiths](#)] is in Sana’a this week to meet with various Yemeni parties,” Farhan Haq, UN Deputy Spokesperson, told reporters at the world body’s New York Headquarters.

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*UN spokesperson*

“The Secretary-General emphasizes that a negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue is the only way to end the conflict and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” Mr. Haq added.

The Former Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, who had been brokering talks between the parties since 2015, stepped down last month.

On 26 March 2015, a coalition of countries led by Saudi Arabia [intervened militarily](#) at the request of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi to secure the return of the Government to Sana’a, which had been seized by Houthi militias and allied units of the armed forces when the conflict initially erupted in 2014.

Three years on, the fighting is raging and the ensuing humanitarian crisis has only deepened in a country that was already one of the region’s poorest. On Sunday, missiles were fired toward Saudi Arabia.

“The Secretary-General strongly condemns the launch late yesterday of a series of missiles claimed by the Houthis toward cities in Saudi Arabia, including Riyadh, as he does consistently with all attacks against civilians,” said Mr. Haq.

Calling for restraint amid mounting tensions, the UN chief stressed that military escalation is not the solution, the spokesperson added.

Also on Monday, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that three years of war has killed thousands of children and seriously injured thousands more.

"In 2017 alone, we've seen children continue to be killed and seriously injured at a rate of a minimum of five children every single day," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, upon returning from a field visit to Yemen to assess the impact that the brutal war and decades of chronic underdevelopment is having on 11 million Yemeni boys and girls.

"In 2017, we have seen outbreaks of deadly cholera and deadly diphtheria. Many hundreds of children have been killed as a result of that as well," he added.

Yemen was once called 'Arabia Felix' – happy Arabia – but there is not much happiness there today –*UNICEF Regional Director*

He also said that UNICEF has been able to verify that 2,500 schools today that are no longer serving for educational purposes. They were destroyed by the war or being used for military purposes, or for hosting displaced people.

"Yemen was once called 'Arabia Felix' – happy Arabia – but there is not much happiness there today. Happiness will only come back to Yemen, if we invest in children, stop the brutal war and invest in education," he said.

Since the uprisings in Yemen broke out in early 2011, the UN has been engaged in helping Yemenis to find a peaceful solution.

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## [Papua New Guinea: A month after deadly quake, UN on the ground delivering life-saving aid](#)

One month after a powerful earthquake hit Papua New Guinea, the United Nations warns that "children's lives are in danger" as access to the affected remote and isolated villages across vast and rugged terrain remains a huge challenge.

According to the Government, an estimated 270,000 people are still in need of urgent assistance, including 125,000 children, in the wake of a 7.5 magnitude earthquake on 26 February that killed at least 100 people and injured many more in landslides and collapsing houses across four remote provinces of the Pacific island nation.

Children's lives are in danger. With limited access to basic necessities, families are struggling to survive in crowded shelters, or to rebuild homes and food gardens.

"Children's lives are in danger," said Karen Allen, UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Representative for the country. "With limited access to basic necessities, [families are struggling to survive](#) in crowded shelters, or to rebuild homes and food gardens."

Last week alone, UNICEF delivered 23 metric tons of relief supplies to the nation, including tents and tarpaulins, water purification tablets, hygiene kits, blankets and learning kits.

To date, UNICEF has already delivered 12,000 packets of therapeutic food and enough vaccines to protect 31,700 children against the increasing risk of disease outbreak and malnutrition.



UNICEF/Bell

UNICEF staff unload emergency supplies in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for earthquake response efforts.

Papua New Guinea already had low vaccination coverage and the world's fourth highest rate of chronically malnourished children.

UNICEF is working with the Government and partners to ensure humanitarian supplies are distributed to affected communities as quickly as possible. UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)), [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and [UN Women](#) are also [on the ground](#).

UNICEF needs \$14.6 million to provide humanitarian assistance to children and families affected by the earthquake over the next nine months.

The island nation, on a volatile seismic fault system, has been experiencing

a spark of activity, with the latest strike by a 6.6 magnitude quake several hours ago, according media reports.

[The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) 2015-2030, adopted at the UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, aims to substantially reduce global disaster mortality and the number of affected people by 2030.

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## **On International Day, UN chief urges greater protection for Organization's staff**

Drawing attention to the dangers United Nations personnel face while serving the world's most vulnerable, Secretary-General António Guterres has called for greater protection for the Organization's staff to allow them to carry out their mission safely.

"Whether in their countries of origin or far from their families and homes, United Nations personnel work tirelessly to help the world's most vulnerable," Mr. Guterres said in his message on the International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members.

["Let us strengthen our resolve and our means to protect UN staff](#) as they work tirelessly for peace, sustainable development and human rights for all," he added.

The Secretary-General also noted that the Organization continues to monitor cases of its staff having being arrested or detained as well as pursue their release.

Today, 29 UN civilian personnel are in detention. Eight are being held without known or clear charges or without the Organization being given any reasons for their arrests.

Mr. Guterres also noted that only 92 UN Member States are party to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel, and that only 32 have ratified the 2005 Optional Protocol, which extends protection to UN personnel delivering humanitarian, political or development assistance.

"I urge all countries that have not joined these instruments to promptly do so," he said, stressing, "the safety [UN staff] need to carry out this vital mission should be our priority."

The [International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members](#) is marked each year on 25 March, the date of the abduction of Alec Collett,

who was taken by armed gunmen in 1985 while working for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). His remains were finally found in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley in 2009.

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## UN chief honours those who suffered shameful Transatlantic slave trade, urges respect for dignity of every human being

Honouring those who suffered the brutalities of the Transatlantic slave trade, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said the International Day set aside to remember this “epically shameful” chapter of human history is an opportunity raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

“More than 15 million men, women and children from Africa were enslaved,” Mr. Guterres pointed out in a video message for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, explaining its *raison d'être* “[to acknowledge a brutal chapter](#) in human history, and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today.”

Every year on 25 March, the Day of Remembrance offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system, borne of the largest forced and legally sanctioned movement of people in human history.

“As we mark the 70th anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) this year, let us honour those who perished or suffered under slavery,” the UN chief continued.

To permanently honour the victims, the United Nations in 2015 erected a [memorial](#), *The Ark of Return* by Haitian-American architect Rodney Leon, at its Headquarters in New York.

The Ark of Return, the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, located at the Visitors' Plaza of UN Headquarters in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Also, from 5 to 28 March, UN Headquarters will host a temporary exhibition entitled [Remember Slavery: Say it Loud](#). It features the work of 11 male and

11 female architects of African descent, whose perseverance, creativity and unique perspective have given them a voice on how public spaces are presented and utilized.

Again this year, the Day is being commemorated during the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), which runs from through 2024.

“Let us celebrate the gains of people of African descent,” Mr. Guterres concluded, “and let us press, every day and everywhere, to defend the dignity of every human being.”

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## [Earth Hour: UN joins iconic landmarks ‘going dark’ globally with a call to protect environment](#)

The United Nations this evening turned off the lights at its iconic Headquarters in New York as well as at other facilities around the world in observance of “Earth Hour” – a global event highlighting the need for climate action and sustainable energy consumption.

In a video message, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) urged people around the world to join him in “turning out the lights and turning up the pressure” for a healthy planet.

“Climate change is moving much faster than we are. Its alarming impacts are upon us; resources and ecosystems across the world are under assault. Earth Hour is an opportunity to show our resolve to change,” he said.

“Protecting the environment is preserving life itself,” stressed the UN chief.

Organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Earth Hour encourages individuals, companies, organizations and Governments throughout the world to switch off their lights for one hour at 8:30 p.m. local time.

This year, Earth Hour is stressing the link between climate change and biodiversity loss, as thousands of plant and animal species are threatened with extinction as a result of increasing temperatures.

First launched in 2007 in Australia, Earth Hour has been commemorated every year since, mobilizing hundreds of millions of individuals to participate and growing to become one of the world’s largest grassroots movement for the environment and climate action.