

Hunger rates remain high amid conflict, climate shocks, warns UN food security report

Increased hunger and food insecurity, fuelled by conflict and climatic challenges, continues to inflict suffering on populations in different parts of the world, forcing them to remain dependent on humanitarian assistance, a new United Nations report has warned.

According to the [Crop Prospects and Food Situation](#) report, issued Monday by the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), the need for external food assistance in 37 countries – either affected by conflict or adverse climate shocks – remains unchanged compared to the situation three months back.

“Civil war and insecurity are direct reasons for high hunger rates in 16 of those countries, ranging from Burundi to Yemen,” said FAO in a [news release](#) announcing the findings.

“Conflict is displacing millions of people, hampering agricultural activities and, in many cases, also driving basic food prices up sharply,” it added.

At the same time, inadequate and erratic rainfall is also posing a growing threat to food security in southern and eastern Africa, where many rural households have suffered from four consecutive drought-affected agricultural seasons.

In Somalia, aggregated cereal production for the country’s “deyr” rainy season is estimated at 20 per cent below average, and similar pattern in rainfall and yields has been observed in north-eastern Tanzania.

Furthermore, prices of staple cereals such as wheat, millet or sorghum continued to remain high as a result of removal of subsidies, increased demand, and weakening of currencies.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, inflation pushed prices to more than double in 2017 to a 42 percent annual rate.

Another factor driving up prices was the disruption of traditional trade routes due to violence, such as in and around the Sahel, as a result of which countries dependent on these routes (such as Libya) witnessed much higher prices as well as facing food shortages.

The FAO report lists the following 37 countries as currently in need of external food assistance: Afghanistan; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Chad; Congo; Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Djibouti; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Guinea; Haiti; Iraq; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mozambique; Myanmar; Niger; Nigeria; Pakistan; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South

Sudan; Sudan; Swaziland; Syria; Uganda; Yemen; and Zimbabwe.

[Aid convoy for Eastern Ghouta should arrive on Monday, UN and partners announce](#)

The United Nations and its partners plan to deliver much-needed relief assistance to the besieged Syrian enclave of eastern Ghouta this week, the global organization's humanitarian wing [said](#) on Sunday.

A convoy of 46 trucks carrying health and nutrition supplies, along with food for 27,500 people, should arrive in the city of Duma on Monday, the UN humanitarian affairs office, [OCHA](#), has reported.

"We hope that the convoy may proceed as planned and will be followed by other convoys. Our teams on the ground are ready to do all that is needed to make this happen," said UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Ali Al-Za'tari.

Nearly 400,000 people in Eastern Ghouta, located near the capital, Damascus, are trapped in what UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) has characterized as "[hell on Earth](#)."

On 24 February, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a [resolution](#) calling for a 30-day nationwide ceasefire in Syria, in addition to other measures including the lifting of sieges, particularly in eastern Ghouta.

However, UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Panos Moumtzis, who is based in Jordan, noted that one week later there has yet to be a cessation of hostilities, while violence has escalated in some areas.

"Instead of a much needed reprieve, we continue to see more fighting, more death, and more disturbing reports of hunger and hospitals being bombed. This collective punishment of civilians is simply unacceptable," he said in a [statement](#) issued on Sunday.

"The UN and humanitarian partners stand ready to assist the 13.1 million of people in need inside Syria, but cannot do it alone. We certainly cannot do this while the fighting continues."

OCHA reported that the UN and partners have received approval to deliver assistance for 70,000 people in need in Duma.

The UN has received assurances that the remaining supplies for all approved people in need will be delivered on 8 March, according to a press release

issued by the UN office.

So far this year, the only UN aid delivery to eastern Ghouta was on 14 February, when a convoy with supplies for 7,200 people reached the town of Nashabiyah.

Meanwhile, the UN has called on all parties in Syria to facilitate unconditional, unimpeded, and sustained humanitarian access to all people in need throughout the country.

The Syrian conflict began in March 2011 and has generated what has been described as the worst humanitarian crisis of our time.

Despite the ongoing violence, the UN continues to provide millions of people in need with life-saving assistance on a monthly basis.

[UN chief, Security Council, strongly condemn Burkina Faso terrorist attacks](#)

The two deadly terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso's capital, Ougadougou, on Friday have been strongly condemned by the United Nations.

The attacks against the country's military headquarters and the French Embassy resulted in at least 16 deaths and scores of injuries, according to media reports.

In a phone call that day to President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) expressed solidarity with the country's Government, according to a [statement](#) issued by his spokesperson.

The UN chief encouraged the authorities to launch an investigation into the incidents and bring the perpetrators to justice.

He also expressed his profound sympathy to the families of the victims in addition to wishing a speedy and full recovery to the injured.

Mr Guterres reiterated the UN's commitment to support Burkina Faso in its efforts to fight violent extremism and terrorism and create the conditions for sustainable peace and development, among other measures.

Burkina Faso is among a group of five Sahel countries, together known as the G5, which are facing complex interconnected security and development challenges.

The others are Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

“The Secretary-General renews his call for an urgent and concerted effort by the international community in support of the countries in the region to tackle, in a holistic manner, the peace and security, development and humanitarian challenges affecting the Sahel, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the full operationalization of the G5 Sahel Joint Force,” the statement concluded.

The members of the UN Security Council have also condemned the attacks in the strongest terms, describing them as “barbaric and cowardly.”

The Council has issued a statement underlining that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, “regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed.”

The 15 ambassadors expressed their solidarity with Burkina Faso in its fight against terrorism and also stressed the need to intensify regional and international efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism, which may be conducive to terrorism.

[Nigeria: UN chief condemns killing of aid workers by Boko Haram insurgents](#)

United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) has condemned the killing of three aid workers Thursday night in Rann town in Borno state, Nigeria, following an attack by suspected Boko Haram insurgents.

According to the UN, at least one other aid worker remains critically injured and another three are still missing. Eight members of the Nigerian national security forces were also killed.

At the time of the attack, over 40 humanitarian workers were in Rann. All humanitarian personnel have been evacuated from Rann, and all humanitarian deliveries in the area have been temporarily suspended.

“The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences to the affected aid workers, their families and to the Government and people of Nigeria,” said a [statement](#) from UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, adding that Mr. Guterres wishes those injured a swift recovery.

The UN chief recalled that attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure violate international humanitarian law.

“Those responsible for these and other atrocities in Nigeria must be apprehended and prosecuted,” said the statement, adding that the Secretary-General calls on all the parties to ensure at all times the protection of all

civilians in Nigeria.

[On World Wildlife Day, UN joins call for protection of planet's big cats](#)

Big cats, the planet's most majestic predators, are under increasing threat – mostly caused by human activities – and this year's World Wildlife Day, the United Nations is joining the world in raising awareness to their plight and galvanizing support for the many actions already under way to save these iconic species.

"This year," United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said in his message on the Day, "the spotlight falls on the world's big cats," which include species such as cheetahs, pumas and snow leopards, found from Africa to Asia and the Americas.

"These charismatic creatures are universally revered for their grace and power, yet they are increasingly in [danger of extinction](#)," he continued, noting the massive decline in their numbers.

Just over a century ago, some 100,000 wild tigers roamed Asia, while fewer than 4,000 remain today. All the big cats are collectively under threat from habitat loss, climate change, poaching, illicit trafficking, and human-wildlife conflict.

"We are the cause of their decline, so we can also be their salvation," Mr. Guterres asserted. "The Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) include specific targets to end the poaching and illegal trafficking of protected species of wild fauna and flora."

Last year, UN Member States adopted the third in a series of resolutions tackling wildlife decline.

"Ultimately, the solution to saving big cats and other threatened and endangered species is conservation policy based on sound science and the rule of law," noted the UN chief, adding the need that local people be given full consideration.

"When local communities and economies benefit from wildlife conservation, strategies are much more likely to succeed," he elaborated.

By protecting big cats we also protect the landscapes they inhabit and the life they harbour, "it is a gateway to protecting entire ecosystems that are crucial to our planet's health," Mr. Guterres pointed out.

"Wildlife conservation is a shared responsibility," he concluded, calling on

people around the world to “help raise awareness and to take personal action to help ensure the survival of the world’s big cats and all its precious and fragile biological diversity.”



A Cheetah mother with her two cubs in Kenya. (Image used under license from Shutterstock.com)

In his message, Yury Fedotov, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)), said that while “the cheetah is the world’s fastest land animal [...] like other big cat species, it cannot outrun the threat of extinction.”

Mr. Fedotov maintained that this year’s theme: ‘Big cats: predators under threat,’ is bringing much-needed attention to the urgent challenges faced by these majestic animals.

“Across the world, lions, tigers, leopards and jaguars, as well as many other big cat species, are under pressure [due to poaching](#), lost habitats and disappearing prey,” he detailed.

UNODC is working to help countries criminalize wildlife poaching and trafficking as a means of protecting animals, including big cat species, and halting their tragic disappearance into history.

“Our collective roar of defiance must be aimed at the poachers, traffickers and all those who would destroy our natural heritage. We must not let them succeed,” he exhorted.

Mr. Fedotov wrapped up his message calling on everyone to “work with the international community to stop wildlife crime and prevent the world’s big cat species from sliding into extinction,”

At an event at UN Headquarters in New York on Friday, co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Gabon, Germany, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand, and [UNDP](#), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ([CITES](#)), the UN

Environment Programme ([UNEP](#),) UNODC, African Parks, Panthera, WCS and WWF, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed explained that SDG 15 highlights actions to reverse the loss of biodiversity across all regions.

[“Biodiversity is disappearing](#) at a thousand times the natural rate,” lamented Ms. Mohammed, saying that the varied causes are all linked to the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

She observed that in many cases poverty, hunger and biodiversity loss are intrinsically connected.

“Protecting ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services by poor and vulnerable groups are therefore essential to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger,” he underscored.

Calling conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological diversity “an effective anti-poverty strategy,” Ms. Mohammed emphasized the need to better maintain the natural resources on which billions of people depend – especially the world’s rural poor.

“We must work resolutely to improve biodiversity conservation and to eliminate the associated mismanagement, illicit trade, corruption and trafficking,” she said.

“They say cats have nine lives. Our big cats are on at least number eight,” she held sway, highlighting the need for a new paradigm to conserve and sustainably manage their habitats, one that “acknowledges that economic growth is not in direct conflict with conservation.”

“We need people-centred and planet-sensitive economic growth strategies that support environmental protection and wildlife conservation,” she affirmed.

Indicating that wildlife conservation is a shared responsibility in which consumers, communities, policy-makers and businesses all have a role to play, she urged people all around the world to help raise awareness.

“Let us act together to help ensure the survival of the world’s big cats and all of our planet’s precious and fragile biological diversity,” concluded Ms. Mohammed.