

[Libya: Tawerghans must not be held hostage to political crisis, UN says, urging safe return](#)

The United Nations and its partners in Libya have called for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the population displaced from the northern town of Tawergha without a delay, expressing deep concern about the situation faced by these people living in makeshift-tented settlements in nearby areas.

“Hundreds of people, wanting to exercise [their legitimate right of return](#) have been stuck in open areas under difficult weather conditions and without access to basic services for over three weeks,” said Maria Ribeiro, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, in a statement issued Tuesday by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“Their voluntary, safe and dignified return should not be delayed any further and Tawerghans should not be held hostage to the political crisis in the country,” she added.

According to a [press release](#) from the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), the entire population of around 40,000 people in Tawergha was forcibly evacuated in 2011 as collective punishment for their perceived support for deposed leader Muammar Gaddafi, with their return blocked by armed groups.

An agreement for the return was finally signed in March 2017, which was followed by a Presidency Council decree in December 2017 to initiate the return process from 1 February.

The Libyan authorities have the primary responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction and to prepare the conditions for their safe return, including the clearance of explosive remnants of war, Ms. Ribeiro said, expressing the UN’s readiness to support these efforts.

[UN chief condemns abduction of school girls in north-east Nigeria, calls for their immediate release](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has denounced the abduction

of more than one hundred school girls by suspected Boko Haram insurgents during an attack on an educational institution in north-eastern Nigeria and called for their safe return to their families.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres strongly condemned the abduction and the attack which took place on 19 February on the Bursari Government Girls Science Secondary School, located in the town of Dapchi in Nigeria's restive Yobe state.

"The Secretary-General calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all missing girls and for their safe return to their families," read the statement.

The UN chief also urged Nigerian authorities to swiftly bring those responsible for the act to justice.

Also in the statement, Mr. Guterres reiterated UN's solidarity and support to the Governments of Nigeria and other affected countries in the region in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

[According](#) to the [Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#) – which works for the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict – schools in northeast Nigeria continue to be attacked at an alarming rate.

It is estimated that almost 1,400 of educational institutions have been destroyed since the beginning of the insurgency in 2009.

Virginia Gamba, the Special Representative expressed that "overwhelmingly, attacks focus on the abduction, forcible recruitment and use, killing and maiming as well as sexual abuse of innocent Nigerian girls whose only crime is to be female and to dream of an education."

"These abhorrent crimes must stop now. I call on all those with the means to engage to stop these violations and return our girls unharmed," she added.

[South Sudan: UN peacekeeping review urges emphasis on supporting political process](#)

A latest review of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in South Sudan has found that reaching a political solution to the ongoing conflict is the most effective way to protect civilians, a senior UN official said Tuesday, urging a renewed focus on supporting the political process.

“A sustainable political resolution of the conflict is also the only avenue to chalk out a viable exit strategy” for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita told the Security Council.

UNMISS was established in 2011 as a capacity building tool to assist a Government that lacked the capability to deliver services to its people, she said.

However, following the December 2013 outbreak of violence, UNMISS evolved into a Mission where protection of civilians, including from national security institutions, has become the main focus.

“This requirement unfortunately, remains valid,” she said, noting that tens of thousands of civilians are estimated to have been killed since the conflict began in December 2013 while over four million have been displaced, half of which are now refugees in neighbouring countries.

As documented once again by the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry which published its report last Friday, human rights violations and abuses, including horrific incidents of sexual violence, have reached alarming levels, and impunity for these crimes remains the norm, Ms. Keita said. Moreover, over 200,000 internally displaced peoples continue to be protected on UNMISS bases, with the assistance of humanitarian partners.

The review found that largely over 50 per cent of the Mission’s uniformed personnel are currently devoted to protecting these sites.

These sites only represent a fraction of the South Sudanese civilians in need of protection.

“There are no easy answers to this dilemma. There will never be enough troops to protect both the ‘protection of civilians’ sites and extend UNMISS’s protection footprint to other areas of large displacements, in a country as large as South Sudan,” she said.



OCHA/Charlotte Cans

People at a Protection of Civilians Camp in Malakal, South Sudan, peacefully demonstrating and carrying signs, waiting on the side of the road for a UN convoy to pass by. (file)

Increasing the effectiveness of protection efforts beyond these sites will need to continue being a major priority of the Mission, notably through the development of an integrated and 'people focused' system-wide protection approach, aimed at filling existing gaps, generating synergies and removing duplication and thus possible wastage of resources.

Since the Security Council decision in August 2016 to deploy the Regional Protection Force (RPF), the security conditions in Juba, have changed substantially. Today, while the risk of instability and violence remains, the threat of military conflict in the capital has considerably diminished.

The current environment of Juba, therefore, may call for some adjustment of the RPF mandate as currently scripted, Ms. Keita said.

Following the review, the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operation has ordered a military and police capability study to explore how less troops can be dedicated to the 'Protection of Civilians' sites, and more are projected throughout the country to protect other civilians under imminent threat of violence.

This capability study will also need to address the configuration of the RPF.

South Sudan came into being with extremely limited institutional capacity in all areas of governance and government services, with the exception of military forces. This situation has not improved in subsequent years.

Poor governance and economic collapse have compromised already weak rule of law institutions. In the current political and security environment, the review found that a full-scale return to capacity-building rule of law institutions is not warranted.

"It is our considered judgement that the most effective way to protect civilians in a sustainable way is to reach a political solution to this conflict," she said.

The four-pillared mandate of UNMISS remains valid, but the focus of the Council and the region should undoubtedly be on its fourth pillar, which is to support the political process, she said.

"Without progress on the political process, the Mission is likely to have to be deployed for a considerable amount of time, at a considerable cost to the international community," she concluded.

Syria: 'Actions, not words' needed to save lives in East Ghouta – UN humanitarian wing

Following Sunday's military operations in Syria's east Ghouta, which claimed 30 lives, including women and children, reliable reports indicate that fighting continued and that shelling between East Ghouta and Damascus was ongoing in both directions, the United Nations humanitarian wing reported Tuesday.

"The UN is ready to move convoys into East Ghouta, and to evacuate hundreds of casualties, as soon as security conditions permit," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), told reporters at Tuesday's regular press briefing in Geneva.

"In the current situation, that is not possible," he added.

Responding to questions, Mr. Laerke said that what people in East Ghouta and throughout Syria urgently needed is "the immediate implementation of the 30-day ceasefire, in accordance with the recent Security Council resolution," calling on all sides involved of the conflict to abide by its terms.

"Actions, not words, are needed to save lives in East Ghouta" he stressed. "Only a change in the situation on the ground will enable lifesaving programmes to be implemented."

Mr. Laerke maintained that if the Security Council-mandated ceasefire is not observed by all the warring parties, there can be no genuine cessation of hostilities.

At the same time, Alessandra Vellucci, Director of the UN Information Service in Geneva, said the Organization was ready to act but "had to be sure that there were no obstacles, physical or administrative standing in its way."

She echoed Mr. Laerke in saying that a ceasefire required the full implementation of the Council's resolution, reminding the press that it had been passed unanimously and needs to be fully implemented.

For his part, World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) spokesperson Tarik Jašareviæ said that a medical evacuation plan for East Ghouta had been drawn up in 2017, noting that "if and when the plan was implemented, the Syrian Red Crescent Society would be taking the leading role."

In response to a question, Mr. Jašareviæ said that more than 1,000 names had been listed of potential evacuees from East Ghouta – some 600 of whom had been classified as moderate or severe cases.

Mr. Laerke, added that Syrian government authorities would be involved when

the evacuations took place.

Responding to a question on the safety of persons being evacuated, Mr. Laerke said that all humanitarian actors agreed that the only way to guarantee their safety was for all sides in the fighting to accept the terms of the ceasefire.

With proposed reforms, UN closer than ever to a development system that is 'fit for purpose'

In his address to the opening of the annual [operational segment](#) of the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), Mr. Guterres warned that the world is facing a crisis of legitimacy, confidence and trust, rooted in legitimate fears

And while the benefits of globalization should be clear to all, “too many are being left behind.”

“Women are still far less likely to participate in the labour market – and gender pay gaps remain a global concern. Youth unemployment is at alarming levels. And inequalities are rampant – stretching the fabric of societies to the breaking point and undermining the social compact,” he stated, pointing out that “a handful of men hold the same wealth as half of humanity.”

Mr. Guterres underscored that exclusion resulted in frustration, alienation and instability.

“All of this compels us to do all we can to achieve inclusive and sustainable development – a goal in its own right, but also our best form of prevention against all kind of risks,” Mr. Guterres stressed.

An economic and social model that drives exclusion and environmental destruction cause deaths, missed opportunities, division and future conflicts.

“We need a global economy that works for all and creates opportunities for all,” he asserted.

According to the UN chief, the 2030 Agenda is crucial to rebuild the trust needed for fair globalization.

The Secretary-General flagged poverty eradication as the UN’s top priority, with the 2030 Agenda acting as its roadmap and the goals and targets its tools to get there.

He saw the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as outlining the Organization's commitment to expand dignity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet by empowering women, meaningfully including young people, reducing climate risk, creating decent jobs and mobilizing clean investments for inclusive growth.

"Finance is pivotal," espoused Mr. Guterres, pointing to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as stressing the importance of upholding Official Development Assistance commitments.

He underscored the need to support countries' efforts to mobilize domestic resources, which must be accompanied by the international community's commitment to fight tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows, which threaten development.

"We are focused on building a system that is demand-driven, oriented around achieving results at scale, and accountable in providing support to achieve the 2030 Agenda," Mr. Guterres said, mentioning a proposed a set of global adjustments to make operations on the ground "more cohesive, effective and efficient."

He encouraged all present to take inspiration from the 2030 Agenda to forge the future we want.

"We are now closer than ever to repositioning sustainable development at the heart of the organization and to having a development system that is an even stronger partner as we seek to deliver for people," said the UN chief.

"Together, let us make good on our shared promise to humanity – a future of prosperity, peace and dignity for all," he concluded.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

[Secretary-General António Guterres](#) (centre) and Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN and Vice-President of the UN Economic and Social Council (centre right) address the Council's operational activities for development, by UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Development system 'fit for purpose'

Opening the meeting, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations and Vice-President of ECOSOC said that repositioning the UN's development system would be a unique opportunity to create a more integrated, effective, efficient and accountable system that matches the world's commitments.

In short, he said, a development system that is "fit for purpose."

He referred to the 2030 Agenda as demonstrating the commitment of Member States to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on human rights, gender equality, empowerment of all women and girls, and free from poverty and fear and violence.

Mr. Pecsteen recalled the Secretary-General's vision and concrete proposals to realign and reinvigorate the UN development system, which is necessary for the adequate and timely response Member States expect from the UN in the 21st century to help deliver on the 2030 Agenda promises.

He thanked Mr. Guterres for his leadership, vision and determination "to take on a challenge that is not easy," adding that it was now up to the Member States to be "as bold in their desire to transform the system."

He detailed that the ECOSOC Segment for Development will lay the groundwork for the consensus that will be forged in the coming weeks.

Panelists include senior government representatives from capitals, board chairs, UN leaders and key partners in the system.

Also addressing the meeting, Amina Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, reiterated the importance of utilizing the opportunities offered by the 2030 Agenda to address the myriad challenges facing the world as well as to seize the momentum offered by it to ensure that the Organization is "fit to support" national efforts to realize the global goals.

In that context, she highlighted the important role that UN Resident Coordinators have to play.

"We know that if we want to strengthen our ability to support the 2030 Agenda in a cohesive, effective, accountable and efficient manner – then we must strengthen the Resident Coordinator system," underscored the deputy UN chief, noting that a "reinvigorated" Resident Coordinator system is at the core of the proposals to reposition the UN development system.

"And it is at the centre of the mandate of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review," she added.

The Policy Review is the mechanism through which UN Member States assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN development work. It also provides policy orientations for development cooperation at country level.

In her remarks, Ms. Mohammed also stated that strengthened Resident Coordinator system would ensuring a more accountable UN development system on the ground, one that is more responsive to national needs and more capable to deliver meaningful results.

“A system that can draw on the expertise across all entities – including non-resident entities, DESA [the Department of Economic and Social Affairs] and the regional economic commissions – to respond to country priorities,” she added.