

United States: Planned execution of seriously ill man may amount to torture, warn UN experts

Two United Nations human rights experts have urged the Government of the United States to halt the execution of a seriously ill person stressing that given his health condition, the use of lethal injection could possibly amount to torture.

In a [news release](#), Agnes Callamard, the UN [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#); and Nils Melzer, the UN [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#), also expressed concern that Doyle Hamm, who is due to be executed in the state of Alabama on 22 February, may not have received a fair trial.

The execution is set to go ahead even though Mr. Hamm has cancer and medical professionals have previously had difficulty accessing his veins, the release added.

“We are seriously concerned that attempts to insert needles into Mr. Hamm’s veins to carry out the lethal injection would inflict pain and suffering that may amount to torture,” said the UN rights experts.

The release also noted that judges have ordered a fresh medical report to be delivered by 20 February, two days before the scheduled execution.

“We urge the authorities to halt [Mr. Hamm’s] execution, annul his death sentence, and hold a re-trial that complies with international standards, as we have received information indicating that his original trial did not fully respect the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees,” they added.

The Special Rapporteurs also said that the planned method of execution, using Alabama’s “three-drug protocol,” may also have torturous effects, because the sedative used is incapable of keeping a convict unconscious in the presence of the “excruciating pain” likely to be induced by the other drugs.

Further, Ms. Callamard and Mr. Melzer said that imposing the death penalty in a manner that constitutes torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment would render the execution arbitrary in nature and thus be in violation of the fundamental right to life.

The news release also noted that the human rights experts have written to the US Government to express their concerns about the case.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or

a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

[‘We are not out of the woods yet’ on drought relief efforts, warns top UN aid official in Somalia](#)

The top United Nations humanitarian official in Somalia has commended the drought relief and recovery efforts of the authorities in the northern state of Puntland, while cautioning that the current humanitarian crisis is far from over.

“We took stock, together with [Puntland’s] leadership, of the drought response as it has been so far, looking back to what has been a good year in terms of close cooperation and a very successful drought relief effort,” the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, said in Puntland’s capital, Garowe, on Saturday, in the wake of a series of meeting with officials, including the Federal Member State’s President Abdiwali Mohamed Ali.

“At the same time, we talked about the remaining challenges because we are not out of the woods yet by any stretch of the imagination,” he added.

Mr. de Clercq – who also serves as the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia and the UN Resident Coordinator – was visiting Puntland to meet with security, planning and humanitarian officials from the local government, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, to discuss the current drought response and other challenges in the region.

Speaking on the collective response so far to the drought that has affected Puntland and the rest of Somalia for over five failed rain cycles, Mr. de Clercq said that, while 2017 was a good year in terms of close cooperation to avoid the worst impact of the drought, further effort would be needed.

He added that, in areas like Sool and Sanaag, there are still massive needs and a strong possibility that famine-type conditions would develop. The two areas, located on the north-eastern tip of the Horn of Africa, form part of a disputed region claimed by both Puntland and neighbouring ‘Somaliland.’

Mitigating the effects of the drought and helping the people who have been displaced by it was one of the main topics covered in the UN official’s meeting with President Mohamed Ali. “Our discussion was frank and candid, very fruitful,” the President noted afterwards.



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

Peter de Clercq, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia and UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator accompanied by officials from the UN and Puntland administration interacts with residents of drought-hit Salaxley village., by UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

At the end of the visit, which included discussions at the ministries of security and planning, together with Puntland's disaster management agency, Mr. de Clercq said that it was important to get the right resources to the right place and work with the right partners, such as the Puntland authorities, and to consider longer-term factors.

"We try to address the underlying causes of the crisis, like food insecurity and livestock depletion, and to think of alternatives for people to make a living and to rebuild their lives," he said.

In 2017, drought-related famine was averted through the efforts of Somalis and their international partners. However, the risk is not yet overcome as there are 5.4 million people in Somalia needing life-saving humanitarian assistance. Work is being done in all regions, including Puntland, to build and sustain resilience in all communities, especially the populations affected the most by the recurring cycle of drought and famine risk, such as pastoralists, displaced persons and fishing communities.

There is a resilience and recovery framework in Somalia, to help it transition from humanitarian intervention to sustainable recovery and disaster preparedness. Led by the authorities and supported by the United Nations and the World Bank, it is tightly linked to its development plan. It enables the national and regional governments to take the lead in medium- and

long-term developments solutions, going to the root of communities' vulnerability to droughts, and helping them withstand recurrent shocks.

[Korean nuclear crisis, Middle East quagmire eroding global security, UN chief tells Munich summit](#)

A nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula and a quagmire in the Middle East are “two qualitative changes” that further eroded global security over the past year, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told an annual conference on international security policy in Munich, Germany.

“Conflicts are becoming more and more interrelated and more and more related to a set of a new global terrorism threat to all of us,” Mr. Guterres said in his [keynote address](#) at the opening ceremony on Friday of the Munich Security Conference.

For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the world is facing the threat of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), which he called “a development made in total contradiction to the will of the international community and in clear violation of several resolutions of the Security Council.”

He said that it was essential to maintain “meaningful pressure over North Korea” to create an opportunity for diplomatic engagement on the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula within a regional framework.

“The two key stakeholders in relation to this crisis, the United States and [DPRK]” must be able to “come together and have a meaningful discussion on these issues,” he said, adding that it is “important not to miss the opportunity of a peaceful resolution through diplomatic engagement as a military solution would be a disaster with catastrophic consequences that we cannot even be able to imagine.”

The situation in the broader Middle East, which the UN chief said had become a “Gordian knot,” was also eroding global security, with that are crises that are “crossing each other and interconnected.”

Pointing to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya, among others, Mr. Guterres said the entire Middle East has “became a mess,” with varied and intersecting fault lines.

He warned of the absence of a common vision in the region and said that even if interests are contradictory, the threats these conflicts represent would

justify some efforts to come together.

Turning to cyber-security, Mr. Guterres called for a serious discussion about the international legal framework in which cyberwars take place.

“I can guarantee that the United Nations would be ready to be a platform in which different actors could come together and discuss the way forward, to find the adequate approaches to make sure that we are able to deal with the problem of cybersecurity,” he said, noting that artificial intelligence provides “enormous potential for economic development, social development and for the well-being for all of us.”

The Secretary-General said that Governments and others have been unable to manage human mobility. He warned that this had created mistrust and doubts about globalism and multilateralism.

“This is a reason why,” he said, “we need to be able to unite, we need to be able to affirm that global problems can only be addressed with global solutions and that multilateralism is today more necessary than ever.”

Efficient national tax systems critical for sustainable development and inclusive growth, urge UN, partners

Countries need to strengthen the effectiveness of their tax regimes to unleash much-needed domestic resources to ensure the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the promotion of inclusive economic growth, United Nations and as key international economic and financial organizations have urged.

At a three-day conference, from 14-16 February, held at UN Headquarters, in New York, under the theme of taxation and SDGs, the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also urged support for developing countries to address tax transparency and base erosion and profit shifting, including on treaties.

“I call upon the international community to establish effective mechanisms to combat tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows, so that developing countries could better mobilize their own resources,” the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said at the opening of the forum

In the same vein, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde underscored that funding the global development goals is an economic and ethical imperative and that it has major implications for taxation.

“Countries themselves need to raise more revenue in an equitable way. And the entire international community needs to eradicate tax evasion and tax avoidance,” she noted.

Domestic resource mobilization presents a challenge for developing countries, who need to raise tax revenue of at least 15 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to be able to provide basic services, such as infrastructure, health care and public safety.

Presently, in almost 30 of the 75 poorest countries, tax revenues are below this threshold.

At the same time, more advanced economies need to pay greater attention to spillovers from their tax policies and step up their support for stronger tax systems in developing countries.

All countries and stakeholders need to continue working together on establishing a fair and efficient system of international taxation, including efforts to fight tax avoidance and tax evasion, the organizations urged.

At the same time, good governance is also critical.

According to Jim Kim, the President of the World Bank Group, fair and efficient tax systems, “combined with good service delivery and public accountability, build citizens’ trust in government and help societies prosper.”

“Effective taxation is essential to promote a more inclusive and sustainable growth. It is fundamental to making globalisation work for all,” added Secretary-General of the OECD, Ángel Gurría, noting that this is crucial for achieving the global development goals.

The conference, organized by the Platform for Collaboration on Tax (PCT), also provided a unique opportunity to address topics related to eradication of poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all.

It also provided an avenue to discuss the social dimensions of taxation, such as income and gender inequality and human development, as well as capacity development and international tax cooperation.

In a statement issued at the end of the conference, the four organizations announced the establishment of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax.

Subject to resource availability, the Platform intends to undertake or continue work in a range of areas, including strengthening international tax cooperation, building Institutions through medium term revenue strategies, and promoting partnerships and stakeholder engagement.

They also announced a list of immediate and concrete actions in these three

areas, including the launch of a multi-year tax and SDGs programme, that will include components on taxation and health, education, gender, inequality, environment, and infrastructure; as well as establish a regular dialogue between the Platform and stakeholders – including, most importantly, the developing country.

- **Read the full conference statement [here](#).**
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Haiti: UN determined to support authorities in strengthening rule of law

Strengthening the rule of law and improving the national police and the judicial system in Haiti will require political will on the part of the authorities, and the United Nations is determined to support this goal, said Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita.

Ms. Keita, who took up her post last September, traveled to Haiti from 5 to 9 February to support the efforts of the new UN Mission for the Support of Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), to discuss the Mission's mandate with the Haitian Government and other partners, and to ensure that human rights are at the heart of the country's sustainable development agenda.

Established in October 2017, MINUJUSTH succeeded a previous UN peacekeeping mission, known as MINUSTAH, with a smaller mandate from the Security Council, focused on helping the Haitian Government strengthen its rule-of-law institutions.

In an interview with *UN News*, Ms. Keita said that the Security Council has given the Mission a brief two-year timeframe, starting in April 2018, to help Haiti overcome “systemic problems” and “to ensure that fundamental progress is taking place in the justice sector, the judiciary, security and human rights.” She added that all interlocutors in Haiti agreed that the judiciary was the weakest of the three branches of Government.

Her visit focused mainly on discussing the milestones, or benchmarks, that will make it possible to measure the gradual assumption of responsibilities by the Haitian authorities of those critical rule-of-law issues, to allow the Security Council to withdraw the peacekeeping presence all together by Spring 2020.



MINUJUSTH/Leonora Baumann

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita (2nd from left) meets with President Jovenel Moïse of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.

The Assistant Secretary-General also made a field visit to Jeremie, in the south-west of the country, to see and hear for herself the realities on the ground, where MINUJUSTH mobile teams engage with the local communities to hear how the justice system works in practice. She described her “emotional” visit to a civilian prison, where she saw the living conditions of the prisoners, the majority of whom are on pre-trial detention.

“The overall system is really showing the symptoms of a sick system and dysfunctional system ... It’s been years since the diagnosis was made. What we need now is a real political will to address the issues that will allow to deliver real change and create trust between the people and the justice system,” she said.

The next steps for MINUJUSTH and Haiti, as Ms. Keita said in her joint statement on 9 February with President Jovenel Moïse, is to move forward in partnership and seize the opportunity of the Mission’s presence over the next two years to consolidate gains and to redouble efforts to achieve ambitious but realistic common goals, thus preparing the exit strategy for the peacekeeping operation.

Efforts will focus on the fight against impunity and corruption, on improvements to the judicial system, and on measures in the field of preventive detention.

According to Ms. Keita, strengthening the institutions of the rule of law is a long-term goal. In the short term, however, the goal is to “show visible results” so that people can regain confidence in the will of the authorities “to do things with the support of the international community.”