

UN rights chief urges Iran to halt executions of juveniles on death row

Expressing concern over a “surge” in the number of juvenile offenders being executed in Iran, the United Nations top human rights official called on the country to abide by its obligations under international law and immediately halt all executions of people sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were under the age of eighteen.

“The execution of juvenile offenders is unequivocally prohibited under international law, regardless of the circumstances and nature of the crime committed,” the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, said in a [news release](#) Friday.

“The imposition of the death penalty on people who committed crimes when they were under 18 is in clear violation of Iran’s obligations under two international treaties that it has ratified and is obliged to uphold – namely the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).”

[According](#) to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in January, three people – two male and one female – were executed for crimes they committed when they were 15 or 16 years old. A fourth juvenile offender, who was believed to be on the point of being executed on Wednesday, has reportedly received a temporary reprieve of two months.

In addition, a number of other juvenile offenders are also believed to be in danger of imminent execution, with a total of some 80 such individuals reported to be currently on death row, after being sentenced to death for crimes they committed when they were under eighteen.

“I am sad to say that Iran violates this absolute prohibition under international human rights law far more often than any other State,” expressed the UN rights chief, stressing that no other State “comes even remotely close” to the total number of juveniles who have been executed in Iran over the past couple of decades.

Mr. Zeid also said that Iran assigns criminal responsibility to girls as young as nine years old, whereas boys are not considered criminally responsible until they reach the age of 15.

This discrepancy between the two genders is “wholly unjustifiable on every level,” he stressed, adding that the application of the death penalty to any person, female or male, under 18 is “illegal and unacceptable.”

Some partial improvements in application of death penalty in

drugs crime

Also in the release, the High Commissioner noted that there had been some “partial” improvements in relation to other aspects of the application of the death penalty in Iran, most notably a bill amending the drug-trafficking law that was approved by the Guardian Council in October 2017.

As a result of the amendment, some drug offences that were previously punishable by the death penalty are now subject to a prison term, although the mandatory death sentence is retained for a wide range of drug-related offences.

According to OHCHR, the amendment provides for retroactive applicability, which means that all people currently on death row for drug-related offences which are no longer punishable by the death penalty should see their sentence commuted.

In this context, Mr. Zeid urged Iran to swiftly establish the modalities for the review of all individual cases sentenced to death under the drug-trafficking law, following the principles of transparency, due process and to ensure effective legal representation of all those sentenced.

At present, there are about 5,300 inmates on death row for drugs crimes in the country.

UN chief expresses ‘profound sadness’ at Florida gun massacre

Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed his profound sadness at the horrific gun massacre in Florida in a message he wrote to the Governor and to the United States’ Ambassador to the United Nations, UN spokesman said Thursday.

“It is wrenching to see so many young lives cut short – in a place where students should feel safe – as well as so many families torn apart, and yet another community thrown into shock,” Mr. Guterres wrote to Governor Rick Scott and US Permanent Representative to the UN, Nikki Haley.

“At this time of profound sorrow, we at the United Nations wish to say that our thoughts are with all those who have been touched by this tragedy,” Mr. Guterres added, according to his Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric.

News organizations reported that 17 people were killed and another 14 were wounded in the shooting that took place Wednesday at a high school in Parkland.

[Mali: \\$263 million sought to assist most vulnerable with humanitarian support, says UN relief official](#)

Aid agencies in Mali have launched the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan ([HRP](#)), asking for \$263 million to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people, a senior United Nations aid official in the country said

“Today, with this joint plan, the [humanitarian actors renew their commitment](#) alongside the Malian people,” Mbaranga Gasarabwe, Humanitarian Coordinator for Mali, said Wednesday.

The humanitarian community is focusing on food security and nutrition; protection; health services’ water; hygiene and sanitation; and education.

About 5.1 million people, or more than 27 per cent of the total population, live in areas affected by a security crisis – with food uncertainty affecting more than one-in-five people.

Between 2017 and 2018, the number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition jumped more than 10 per cent, from 142,000 to an alarming 165,000 – weakening their immune systems and increasing their chances of death by nine-fold should they fall ill.

Four million of these in the northern regions will not be self-sufficient enough to meet their basic needs – in Mopti and Macina and Niono cercles in Segou.

Moreover, in recent months schools have continued to close at a steady, significant rate, from 297 in 2016 to 500 at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

The HRP aims to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable by strengthening access to basic social services, improving livelihoods and resilience, and strengthening emergency preparedness.

It focuses on emergency response, while encouraging the adoption of sustainable solutions in connection with development actors – taking into account the changing political and security context and the ability of actors to intervene on the ground.

“The world must stop observing the crisis only through a purely security prism,” warned Ms. Gasarabwe.”

“The current politico-security crisis comes in particular juxtapose with a

chronic vulnerability inherent in natural hazards. Thus, the effects of climate change are perceptible with the rarefaction and irregularity of the rains, the early declines in the interior delta of Niger and the silting up of cultivable land. These factors promote food and nutritional insecurity and cause forced displacement of populations with the risk of community tensions and the deschooling of children," she added.

[UN agency evacuates more than 1,000 refugees from Libya over past three months](#)

More than 1,000 highly vulnerable refugees have been evacuated out of Libya since November by the UN refugee agency which is searching for "durable solutions" for these people in third countries.

The agency reported that the latest flights left the capital, Tripoli, this week, carrying 128 refugees to Niger on Tuesday while a second plane flew 150 others to Italy on Wednesday.

Overall, [1,084 refugees have been evacuated](#) in the three months since the start of the operation and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is calling on more countries to provide resettlement places for those still in Libya.

"These evacuations have provided a new chance at life for more than 1,000 refugees who were detained in Libya and suffered tremendously. By the end of 2018, we hope to evacuate thousands more," said Vincent Cochetel, the agency's Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean.

UNHCR said the 128 refugees evacuated to Niger are being accommodated in guesthouses in the capital, Niamey, thanks to cooperation from its partners and support from the Government.

They will receive assistance and psychosocial support pending resettlement or other durable solutions.

A total of 770 refugees have been evacuated to the country since November, including single mothers, families and unaccompanied or separated children.

The 150 refugees flown to Rome included children and women who UNHCR said had been held captive for lengthy periods.

The flight marked the second evacuation from Libya to Italy "and could not have happened without the strong commitment of the Italian authorities and

the support of the Libyan Government,” according to a statement by the UN agency.

So far, a total of 312 refugees have been evacuated directly to the European country.

[Alarming gaps in reliable data leave 28 million uprooted children unprotected – UN](#)

There are “alarming holes” in the availability, reliability, timeliness and accessibility of the data and evidence essential for understanding how children and their families are impacted by migration and forced displacement, United Nations agencies and their partners warned on Thursday.

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With *A call to action: Protecting children on the move starts with better data*, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed how crucial data are to understanding the patterns of global migration and developing policies to support vulnerable groups like children.

“Information gaps fundamentally undermine our ability to help children ,” said Laurence Chandy, UNICEF Director for the Division of Data, Research and Policy.

The report confirms that massive gaps in data covering refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced populations are endangering millions of children on the move.

“Migrant children, particularly those who migrate alone, are often easy targets for those who would do them harm,” he continued, adding “We can’t keep children safe and provide them with lifesaving services, both in transit and at their destination, if we don’t know who they are, where they are or what they need.”

While an estimated 28 million children were living in forced displacement in 2016, the true figure is likely much higher.

In many countries, available national data do not include information on migrants' and refugees' age, sex and origin, or if they travel unaccompanied or with their families.

Moreover, nearly a quarter of countries and territories do not have age disaggregated data on migrants, including 43 per cent of countries and territories in Africa and just 56 per cent of the refugee population under UNHCR's mandate has age information on record.

"Many refugee children have experienced or witnessed appalling violence and suffering in their countries of origin and sometimes also during their flight in search of protection and security," said Volker Türk, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

"They need and deserve care and protection but in order to provide this, we need data on their identity and needs. In no area is coordination on data and strengthening capacity more important than for children, especially the most vulnerable" he added.

The report underlines that differing criteria for age categories and for recoding data make disaggregation extremely challenging – particularly in estimating accurately how many children are on the move worldwide as well as those moving undocumented across borders, displaced or migrating internally, or left behind by migrant parents.

"We need reliable and better data on child migrants to protect them and guarantee their best interests," stressed IOM Director General William Lacy Swing.

"Data disaggregation by age, sex and origin can inform policymakers of the real needs of child migrants. This will ensure that no child is left behind and that they are not exploited. All migrant children are entitled to care and protection regardless of their migratory status," he affirmed.

The need for better data collection and analysis are key features of the related but distinct Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees currently being developed for adoption in 2018.

While there are ongoing efforts to strengthen data collection and analysis at both the global and country levels, far more needs to be done. If these gaps are not addressed, it will be impossible to implement and monitor the Compacts and the impact they could have for children on the move.

"We urge Member States to fill these gaps with reliable disaggregated data and to improve cooperation so that data is shared and comparable," concluded Mr. Chandy.