

ICC to open separate initial examinations of Philippines 'war on drugs;' Venezuela protests

8 February 2018 – The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced on Thursday that she will open preliminary examinations into the so-called “war on drugs” campaign launched by the Government of the Philippines and, separately analyze alleged crimes committed by Venezuela related to the demonstrations and ongoing political unrest there.

“Following a careful, independent and impartial review of a [number of communications](#) and reports documenting alleged crimes potentially falling within the jurisdiction of the [Court], I have decided to open a [preliminary examination](#) into each situation,” ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced.

Since 1 July 2016, it has been alleged that thousands of people in the Philippines have been killed for their alleged involvement in illegal drug use or dealing. While some killings have reportedly occurred in the context of clashes between or within gangs, it is suspected that many incidents involved extra-judicial killings in the course of police anti-drug operations, according to the Court.

In Venezuela, the ICC will analyze alleged crimes committed since at least April 2017, in which State security forces frequently used excessive force to disperse and quell demonstrations, arresting and detaining thousands of opposition members – a number of whom would have been allegedly subjected to serious abuse and ill-treatment in detention.

Reports also affirm that some protestors resorted to violence, killing and injuring security forces, said the Court.

While under the ICC’s founding Rome Statute, to which both Philippines and Venezuela are party, national jurisdictions have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute those responsible for international crimes, Ms. Bensouda emphasized that a preliminary examination is an information-examining process to determine whether there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation pursuant to Rome Statute criteria.

“Specifically,” she explained “under article 53(1) of the Rome Statute, I, as Prosecutor, must consider issues of jurisdiction, admissibility and the interests of justice in making this determination.”

In line with the Rome Statute’s requirements, Ms. Bensouda said her Office would engage with the relevant national authorities to discuss and assess any pertinent investigations and prosecutions.

“In the independent and impartial exercise of its mandate, my office will also give consideration to all submissions and views conveyed to it during

the course of each preliminary examination, strictly guided by the requirements of the Rome Statute," she continued, noting that a preliminary examination was not subject to statutory timelines.

Depending on the facts and circumstances of each situation, ICC Prosecutor will decide whether to initiate an investigation, subject to judicial review as appropriate; continue to collect information to establish a sufficient factual and legal basis to render a determination; or decline to initiate an investigation if there is no reasonable basis to proceed.

"I reiterate that my office undertakes this work with full independence and impartiality in accordance with its mandate and the applicable legal instruments of the Court," she underscored, adding: "We hope to count on the full engagement of the relevant national authorities in the Philippines and Venezuela."

The ICC investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

[UN seeks \\$1.06 billion to help fragile countries create 'firewall against hunger'](#)

8 February 2018 – Ongoing conflicts and climate-related shocks have left millions of people on the brink of starvation, the United Nations agriculture agency warned on Thursday as it launched a \$1.06 billion appeal to save lives and livelihoods, and tackle acute hunger in 26 countries.

"The reality is that while the lives of millions of people were saved thanks to rapid humanitarian response in 2017, millions more remain on the very [edge of starvation](#)," Dominique Burgeon, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Emergency and Rehabilitation Division said Thursday. "Maintaining food production and rebuilding agriculture are fundamental to preventing loss of life from severe hunger and to providing a pathway towards resilience in the midst of humanitarian crises," he added. With donor support, FAO hopes to employ a range of interventions to rapidly restore local food production and enhance nutrition for over 30 million agriculture-reliant people, to include by providing seeds, tools and other materials for crop farming. Climate-related shocks are escalating humanitarian needs, which are largely caused by persist and intensified violence and conflict. "This is why FAO focuses on transforming vulnerability into resilience – so that when something bad happens families are better able to cope and feed themselves, people don't have to sell off their assets or flee, and communities can rebuild more quickly after the crisis passes," Mr. Burgeon elaborated. FAO's

[2018 humanitarian appeal](#) focuses on assisting crisis-hit, vulnerable people in 26 of the world's most food insecure countries, including Yemen, the Democratic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Syria, and Somalia.

Firewall against famine

The latest [UN report on global hunger](#) found that after years of steady declines, the ranks of the malnourished are on the rise, totalling 815 million people. Continued conflict – including in Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen – and new outbreaks in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Myanmar have played a major role in driving hunger up. Caribbean hurricanes left lives – and livelihoods – in tatters, while in the Horn of Africa ongoing drought has taken a heavy toll. Across all of Africa, the Fall Armyworm pest is threatening the crops of millions of farmers. Last year, famine was contained in South Sudan and averted in three other at-risk countries thanks to a massive response by the humanitarian community on multiple fronts – including large-scale support to agricultural and pastoral communities that tilted the balance away from the worst-case scenario.

[UN launches appeal to fund relief work in Nigeria's restive north-east](#)

8 February 2018 – With the crisis in north-east Nigeria – a region devastated by the Boko Haram insurgency – into its ninth year, United Nations agencies together with humanitarian partners today launched a \$1 billion appeal to fund life-saving and emergency assistance programmes in the region.

The humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's north-east, that has spilled over into the Lake Chad region, is one of the most severe in the world today, [said](#) Edward Kallon, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the country.

This crisis is a protection crisis first and foremost that has also evolved into a food security and nutrition crisis, [added](#) the UN relief official.

According to estimates, nearly eight million people are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in the restive region, with the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe the worst impacted.

Fully funded, the [2018 Humanitarian Response Plan](#) will reach some 6.1 million most vulnerable, providing them with food, protection, water, shelter and sanitation, medicines, as well as with healthcare, education and agricultural support.

In addition to catering to immediate needs, the Plan also includes a multi-year strategy aligned with national development and recovery efforts as well as with the [UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework](#) in the country.

Altogether, some 60 humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies and non-governmental organizations will be implementing the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2018.

“It is a step towards strengthening the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, in line with the New Way of Working and commitments made at the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) in May 2016,” said Mr. Kallon.

Underscoring the importance of strong coordination and generous funding, the UN official recalled humanitarian efforts in 2017, which delivered life-saving assistance to millions across the region, helped contain a deadly cholera outbreak, and supported children go to school.

However, despite the achievements, many challenges remain and conflict continues to force people from their homes. And while humanitarian assistance has stopped people from slipping further below emergency thresholds, a lasting political solution is critical, said Mr. Kallon.

[Bangladesh ‘fully committed’ to UN peacekeeping as vital element of global peace and security – UN Force Commander](#)

7 February 2018 – UN peacekeeping is a “very important component” of keeping the world safe and secure, and Bangladesh remains “fully committed” to contributing men – and increasingly women – to serve.

That’s according to Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh, who is currently the Force Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which goes by the acronym UNFICYP.

Maj. Gen. Humayan began his long and distinguished UN career in the hostile environment of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), in Bosnia, serving in the capital Sarajevo, which was besieged by Bosnian-Serb forces during the mid-1990s.

He also served as a Military Observer with the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), from 2002 to 2003.

He has served as Brigadier General and Director of Military Operations for

the Bangladesh Army, and is currently Commandant of his country's Military Academy.

Highlighting Bangladesh's commitment to foster women peacekeepers and police, and increase the numbers who serve by 2020 and beyond, he told UN News from his base in Cyprus that it was "virtually impossible" to protect civilians who rely on UN peacekeeping missions around the world, without the participation of women.

He said there were 157 Bangladeshi women peacekeepers currently serving, and more than 1,400 had been deployed throughout the world in total over the years, including an all-female Bangladeshi Formed Police Unit that served in Haiti between 2015 and 2017.

"Personally, I believe that it's very important that you have gender parity, particularly the participation of female peacekeepers," he said.

He added that in today's modern "multi-dimensional" peacekeeping missions focussing on civilian protection, "your situational awareness is much better and naturally your performance will also be better."

He said that majority-Muslim Bangladesh was committed to having what he called a "female engagement platoon" in every mission where they contribute troops and police.

Maj. Gen. Humayan said there was widespread public support for women playing an active role in public service across a wide range of sectors.

Women officers began serving in the Bangladeshi Army back in 2003.

He also praised the "tremendous" support that Bangladeshi blue helmets receive at home, for their work across ten peacekeeping missions, as it currently stands.

"The Bangladesh Government is always more than willing to make sure that the contingents who are deployed; they are properly trained, properly equipped so they are fit for purpose – fit for the mission."

He said that despite suffering the loss of 135 peacekeepers on active duty over the years, Bangladesh was proud of the fact that it is consistently among the top three troop-contributing countries, or TCCs.

"Bangladeshi people are aware of what kind of contributions" are being made each day, "ensuring peace and stability in the global perspective, and I think they are very proud of us."

AUDIO: Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh, Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, highlights the decades-long commitment of troops and police contingents from his country to UN Peacekeeping.

Kosovo: Despite differences, potential for trust among political leaders remains, Security Council told

7 February 2018 – Even though significant differences persist between political leaders in Kosovo, the potential for trust and more forward-looking decision-making to address the challenges there should not be underestimated, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council today.

“I am convinced these leaders have a broader understanding of the nature of the challenges that need to be overcome, and equally, not to continuously postpone action to another day,” [said](#) Zahir Tanin, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and the head of the UN Interim Administration Mission there ([UNMIK](#)), on Wednesday

Briefing the Council via a video-link, the senior UN official also informed Council members of new strategy of the European Union (EU) for the Western Balkans, launched on 6 February, and said it is “the most ambitious and far-reaching framework for engagement” since 2003.

“2018 can present a new momentum for this dialogue, and as the EU High Representative herself highlighted yesterday, the dialogue could be positively concluded, given sufficient will from the leaders, and adequate encouragement from the international community,” he added.

Further in his briefing, Mr. Tanin stressed the importance of solving the 16 January assassination of one of Kosovo’s most prominent Serbian politicians Oliver Ivanovic.

Identifying those responsible and holding them accountable would prove another important test of the Kosovo institutions, he added.

The senior UN official also spoke of recent examples of cooperation between Pristina and Belgrade, including in the immediate aftermath of the Ivanovic murder and subsequent Kosovo visit of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic.

“It is important to note that the leaders in Belgrade and Pristina have reacted to this event in a prompt and responsible manner,” he said

Mr. Tanin also informed the Security Council of ongoing challenges in ensuring the rule of law; strengthening the role of women and youth in politics, responding to the economy and social conditions in Kosovo; and building trust between its communities, and underscored the importance of strong political will and unity to overcome the obstacles.