

Security operations by Myanmar show 'established pattern' of domination over ethnic groups – UN expert

1 February 2018 – What Myanmar's Government has claimed are military and security operations are "actually an established pattern" of domination and aggression against ethnic groups, the United Nations independent expert on the rights situation there said on Thursday, reporting on her visit to nearby countries, including Bangladesh, which is hosting nearly 900,000 Rohingya refugees.

Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, has just wrapped up a mission that was limited to Thailand and Bangladesh, and did not include Myanmar as its Government has [denied her all access](#) to the country and withdrawn cooperation for the duration of her tenure.

[Speaking](#) at a press conference on her visit, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, Ms. Lee said that recent reports of attacks against civilians, homes, places of worship and villagers; sexual violence; arbitrary arrests; and torture and enforced disappearances "are acts that have been alleged against the military and security forces for generations."

"I was told repeatedly by the other ethnic groups I spoke to – be they Kachin, Karen, Karenni, or Shan – that they have suffered the same horrific violations at the hands of the *Tatmadaw* over several decades and – in the case of some groups – continuing today," she added.

"While reports from Rakhine state have rightly provoked international outrage; for many in Myanmar, they have elicited a tragic sense of *déjà vu*."

The UN Special Rapporteur also [highlighted](#) that the scale of violence in the ethnic areas of Myanmar was a continuing erosion of democratic space, and that the civilian Government has failed to bring about openness and transparency and is instead "persisting with repressive practices of the past."

Turning to possible returns of the hundreds of thousands of refugees hailing from the Muslim minority Rohingya community, she underscored that for returns to be ever realized in a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable manner is for the Rohingya to be treated as equals – "[as] citizens of Myanmar with all the rights that that status affords."

Equality, added the UN expert is critical for Myanmar to be free from violence that has affected its communities throughout the past.

She also called on the international community to pressure Myanmar to create conditions for the refugees before it is too late.

“This must be done in a principled way that prioritizes the need for these people to be recognized as Rohingya and as citizens of Myanmar,” she said.

Ms. Lee said she hoped to regain access to Myanmar and said that she remains ready to work with the Government and other stakeholders to promote and protect the human rights of all people in the country.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council – the highest UN intergovernmental body on all matters related to human rights – 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.

Human cost of conflict in South Sudan has reached ‘epic proportions,’ warns UN refugee agency chief

1 February 2018 – The human cost of South Sudan’s long-running conflict has reached “epic proportions” with the number of refugees set to rise beyond three million by the end of this year, potentially making it Africa’s largest refugee crisis since the mid-1990s, the head of the UN refugee agency said on Thursday.

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, together with UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, launched a \$3.2 billion appeal to help those forced to flee their homes, as fighting continues across the world’s youngest country.

They are appealing for \$1.5 billion to support refugees who have fled across the border into six neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR).

A further \$1.7 billion is needed to help those internally-displaced by the fighting, which has fuelled famine conditions, and a humanitarian crisis since conflict broke out between forces loyal to the President and Vice-President, in 2013.

Mr. Grandi said the violence was “purging South Sudan of the people who should be the greatest resource of a young nation.”

“They should be building the country, not fleeing it,” he added.

Mr. Grandi and Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, have been visiting newly-arrived refugees from the country, in UNHCR's Kakuma refugee camp, in northern Kenya.

Mr. Lowcock said that the conflict had taken a "brutal and deadly toll" and it was "in the interests of everyone to continue to provide generous and continuous support" to the refugees.

There are nearly 2.5 million South Sudanese who have already fled the country, and around seven million need humanitarian assistance.

[Giving voice to Yemen's voiceless: Jamie McGoldrick reflects on two years leading UN's relief effort](#)

1 February 2018 – This year's UN Response Plan for Yemen, describes the war-torn country as "the worst man-made humanitarian crisis" in the world, with more than 22 million people – around three-quarters of the total population – in need of help.

Since the escalation of violence in March 2015, when conflict broke out between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement, Yemen, already the poorest in the region, has been left on the verge of a humanitarian collapse.

Over the past few years, it's the voice of Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick, that has been drawing the world's attention the most loudly, and the most often, to Yemen's plight.

He had extensive experience as a senior manager with the UN humanitarian affairs office ([OCHA](#)), before arriving in Yemen, in December 2015, and for our latest UN News interview podcast, he explains why he's just stepped down from the job, and what it has been like to oversee one of the most difficult and challenging aid operations in the world.

Mr. McGoldrick tells *UN News* that to deliver aid to an increasingly desperate population in Yemen, there's "no point in getting angry, there's no point in getting frustrated, the point is to get smart."

AUDIO: Jamie McGoldrick, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, talks about why he's just stepped down from the job, and what it has been like to oversee one of the most challenging aid operations in the world.

Security Council stresses need of 'sustainable solutions' for millions displaced in Darfur

31 January 2018 – Despite improvements in the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, continued challenges remain, the United Nations Security Council has said, underlining the need for sustainable solutions for the region's 2.7 million internally displaced persons.

"The Security Council reiterates its demand that all parties to the conflict in Darfur create the conditions conducive to allowing the voluntary, informed, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons," said the 15-member body in a Presidential Statement it [adopted](#) Wednesday.

The Council also voiced concern that improvements in the security situation has not translated into a commensurate reduction in the level of human rights violations and abuses, such as sexual and gender-based violence, and serious violations against children, perpetrated with impunity.

Further, the Council also said that six years after the adoption of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, the people of Darfur had yet to fully benefit from it.

In that context, the UN body reiterated its support for the Doha Document as a viable framework for the peace process, and welcomed the signing of an African Union (AU) High-Level Implementation Panel road map by the Government and armed movements and urged them to make immediate progress on its implementation.

Turning to the AU-UN Mission In Darfur ([UNAMID](#)), the Council said it was "still too early to reach conclusions on the full impact of [the Mission's] reconfiguration" and requested that UNAMID and the UN country team closely monitor the reconfiguration's impact on the ground and to promptly report back on any adverse effects.

With phase two of UNAMID's [reconfiguration](#) due to begin on 31 January, the Council said it supported a recommendation by the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General for a review – prior to the renewal of UNAMID's mandate in June – that would consider a new mission concept with adjusted priorities reflective of trends and the situation on the ground.

Over \$46 billion lost to premature cancer deaths in BRICS economies, UN research finds

31 January 2018 – Over \$46 billion lost to premature cancer deaths in BRICS economies, UN research finds. Premature deaths as a result of cancer is costing major emerging economies tens of billions of dollars a year, a new United Nations health study has found, underlining the need for context-specific strategies for both prevention as well as treatment for those suffering from the disease.

The economic impact of cancer in fast-developing economies not only underlines the high cost of the disease in terms of the lives it claims and the impact on the economy, but also highlights the “[urgency of tackling preventable cancers in these countries](#),” said the study’s lead author, Alison Pearce.

Published in the medical journal *Cancer Epidemiology*, the [study](#) led by the World Health Organization (WHO) cancer research centre reveals that the total cost of lost productivity because of premature cancer mortality for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – collectively known as BRICS countries – was \$46.3 billion in 2012 (the most recent year for which cancer data was available for all these countries).

These countries together account for more than 40 per cent the world’s population and a quarter of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, these countries are also home to 42 per cent of the global cancer deaths.

“Although they have diverse levels of wealth, and health indicators, the BRICS countries have all undergone particularly rapid demographic and economic growth,” noted the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in a news release announcing the findings.

Each of the BRICS countries has a distinct cancer profile, and therefore a tailored approach to national cancer control policy is required. WHO IARC

These countries are all affected by infection-related cancers as well as cancers associated with changing lifestyles such as changes in diet, lack of physical activity, obesity and reproductive patterns.

“Yet each of these countries has a distinct cancer profile, and therefore a tailored approach to national cancer control policy is required,” added IARC.

The largest productivity loss at \$28 billion was recorded in China, a country particularly affected by liver cancer, with hepatitis B virus infections and exposure to aflatoxins primary factors for the loss.

Lifestyle-related risk factors in Russia, South Africa and Brazil – high consumption of alcohol, smoking and rapidly increasing obesity, respectively, added to the factors causing losses, noted the study.

Focusing on tobacco control, vaccination programmes, and cancer screening, combined with access to adequate cancer treatment, would yield significant health and economic gains for BRICS countries

Director of WHO IARC

In India, the use of chewing tobacco was a leading cause of economic loss due to premature mortality from cancers of the lip and oral cavity.

Policies to influence lifestyle changes and reduce cancer risk are, therefore, critical, highlights IARC.

“The study demonstrates the economic importance of targeted primary prevention activities embedded in national cancer control policies. Focusing on tobacco control, vaccination programmes, and cancer screening, combined with access to adequate cancer treatment, would yield significant health and economic gains for the BRICS countries,” said Christopher Wild, the Director of IARC.

“Investing in evidence-based preventive interventions as a part of national cancer control plans is not only cost-effective and life-saving but also a powerful lever for sustainable economic development.”