

Overcrowded boat capsizes off Yemen coast, 30 drowned; UN agencies condemn smugglers

26 January 2018 – At least 30 [refugees and migrants](#) drowned when their boat capsized off the coast of Aden, Yemen, the United Nations reported on Friday, saying the overcrowded vessel was believed to have been operated by unscrupulous smugglers who were trying to extort money from the passengers.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) expressed outrage and sadness over the incident, which occurred Tuesday.

“As we have been saying for almost five years now, the preservation of [human life is our utmost priority](#) everywhere,” IOM Director William Lacy Swing said Friday in Davos, Switzerland, where he has been part of the UN agency delegation attending the 2018 World Economic Forum.

“Yemen is no exception,” he added

Survivors of the incident have reported to the UN and partners that an overcrowded boat, packed with 101 Ethiopians and 51 Somalis, departed 23 January from the Al Buraika coast in Aden, headed across the Gulf of Aden towards Djibouti.

At least 30 people have died in this tragic incident. There have also been reports that gunfire was used against passengers.

“We are deeply troubled by reports of this latest incident,” Mr. Swing stressed.

IOM and partners are working with the Yemeni Coast Guard to further understand the incident and provide emergency assistance to survivors, including medicine, food, water and psycho-social support services.

IOM and the UN refugee agency have long been warning that prolonged conflict and insecurity in Yemen exposes vulnerable refugees and migrants to a heightened risk of human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrest, detention, trafficking and deportation.

Yemen is a traditional transitory and migratory hub in the region. Despite prevailing conflict and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions more than 87,000 migrants and refugees risked their lives on the high seas in 2017 – seeking to reach Yemen from the Horn of Africa by boat.

To raise awareness about the horrendous risks and dangers in Yemen, UNHCR launched a [Dangerous Crossings](#) regional awareness campaign last year to inform those contemplating the journey.

IOM, UNHCR and their partners are members of the Mixed Migration Working Group in Yemen, which has been responding to the needs of migrants and refugees there. The Group is appealing for more urgent support to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable in Yemen and to actively pursue solutions for refugees and migrants.

[Davos: UN rights chief stresses leading role of businesses in ending LGBTI discrimination](#)

26 January 2018 – With major companies joining the growing list of early adopters of United Nations standards to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, the UN human rights chief on Friday highlighted the private sector's crucial leadership role in ensuring the dignity and equal opportunities of LGBTI employees in the workplace and beyond.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that "companies that take action to end discrimination and support LGBTI communities can be a motor for change."

The standards, developed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), draw on good practice from around the world, setting out actions that can be taken by employers.

These include eliminating unfair treatment against LGBTI people in the workplace, making sure business operations do not contribute to discrimination against customers, suppliers or members of the public, and working with business partners to address discriminatory practices up and down the supply chain.

They also encourage companies to stand up for the rights of LGBTI people in the countries where they operate – including through advocacy and support for local organizations.

"These standards provide the most comprehensive set of benchmarks for responsible corporate behaviour on LGBTI issues. A company of any nationality, size and location or sector can find no better vehicle to correct inequities and end discrimination brought about by prejudice," Mr. Zeid said.

The High Commissioner was speaking at a panel discussion titled "Free and Equal: Standing Up for Diversity", which also included Vittorio Colao, Vodafone Group Chief Executive Officer, and Jin Xing, Choreographer

and Founder of the Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai, and was moderated by Zanny Minton Beddoes, Editor-in-Chief, of The Economist magazine.

The Standards of Conduct build on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. They are the product of a year-long process of consultations facilitated by the OHCHR and the Institute for Human Rights and Business.

Nineteen more companies have joined a growing list of early adopters, including Airbnb, Airbus, AXA, Barilla, Bloomberg L.P., Cisco Systems Inc., Gol, Hermes Investment Management, Lloyd's, Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics – North America, Marriott International, MAS Holdings, Nasdaq, New York Life, Santander Group, Tesco, Trillium Asset Management, Unilever, Vert Asset Management, and Xerox.

[Yemen: UN chief welcomes measures by Saudi-led coalition to ease access for humanitarian aid](#)

25 January 2018 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed news that five tankers carrying 180,000 litres of fuel reached Yemen's northern province of Marib on Wednesday as part of the Saudi-led coalition's wider plan to facilitate humanitarian action in the war-ravaged country.

"The coalition has committed to [increase humanitarian fuel deliveries](#) to one million litres per week over the coming weeks," Mr. Guterres said in a statement on Thursday.

He noted that in light of the dire, unrelenting humanitarian crisis, the fuel will be delivered, based on need, to health facilities and water stations to keep life-saving services running for local communities.

"I also welcome the generous \$1 billion pledge by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to support humanitarian action in Yemen, as well as their commitment to raise an additional \$500 million from other donors in the region," he stated.

The 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan ([YHRP](#)) was launched on 20 January and seeks \$2.96 billion to assist 13.1 million people across the country.

The Secretary-General urged all donors to channel their contributions through the YHRP and rapidly convert pledges into cash for aid agencies.

He renewed his call to all parties to cease hostilities and engage

meaningfully with the UN to achieve a lasting political settlement.

“The most effective way to address humanitarian suffering in Yemen is to end the conflict,” he stressed.

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.

The UN relief wing has more on the Yemen crisis [here](#)

[Largest yellow fever vaccination campaign in Nigeria's history under way – UN health agency](#)

25 January 2018 – The Nigerian Government launched a mass vaccination campaign in alliance with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) on Thursday, aiming to immunize more than 25 million people before the end of this year.

This drive is part of a global effort to eliminate the risk of yellow fever epidemics by 2026, which should be possible if 90 per cent of the population can be reached. The preventive campaign will use vaccines funded by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and will also be supported by the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

The [yellow fever](#) virus is mosquito-borne, and the disease can cause jaundice due to liver damage.

Nigeria's [current yellow fever outbreak](#) began in September, and by early January this year, a total of 358 suspected cases had been reported, with 45 deaths.

In late 2017, Nigeria vaccinated more than three million people in an initial emergency yellow fever campaign, with the aim of quickly containing the outbreak.

However, the virus continues to spread in parts of the country where people remain largely unprotected.

WHO is supporting the campaign by training thousands of healthcare workers, helping to track cases, and by providing coordination and logistical support.

“With a single dose of vaccine, an individual is protected for life against yellow fever,” Dr. Wondimagegnehu Alemu, WHO Representative in Nigeria, said on Wednesday. “This is a massive undertaking which took weeks of planning.

Nearly 3000 vaccination teams are being deployed across the four states participating in the campaign.”

Bronwen Cowley of *UN News* spoke to WHO Spokesperson Christian Lindmeier, for the latest.

AUDIO: WHO Spokesperson Christian Lindmeier provides an update on the health organization’s support to the campaign.

[Time to stop ‘managing’ Israeli-Palestinian conflict, show leadership to resolve it – Security Council told](#)

25 January 2018 – The United Nations, the Security Council and the wider international community all have fallen into a pattern of “managing, rather than resolving” the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the UN envoy on the Middle East peace process warned Thursday, saying it was time to end this paralysis, show political leadership and push for policies on the ground that rebuild trust.

“Twenty-five years after the Oslo Accords, we are at a critical point in the peace process,” said Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, at a Security Council briefing, referring to a set of agreements, the first of which was signed in 1993, establishing a timetable for achieving peace between the two sides.

The uncertainty and volatility of the current environment, he continued, is hardening positions and sharpening the rhetoric on all sides, “a situation that plays directly into the hands of extremists and increases the risk of another conflict.”

He said that absent a credible proposal that can become the basis of final status negotiations, the international community must continue to build the conditions necessary for a resumption of talks.

“We must also reaffirm the international consensus that the two-State solution remains the only viable option for a just and sustainable end to the conflict. We must be unwavering in this position,” he said.

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Mr. Mladenov noted that there are those who believe that the conflict can be solved through peaceful bilateral negotiations and compromises, by addressing the final status issues of borders, security, refugees and the status of Jerusalem on the basis of prior agreements and relevant UN resolutions.

Some believe in malting unilateral moves that can only lead to a one-state reality that is incompatible with the aspirations of both peoples. And there are those who believe in violence, he said.

“We – the United Nations, the Security Council, the international community – have a responsibility to prove that those who believe in violence and confrontation are wrong,” he said.

With this year marking the 25th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, it is time to push for policies on the ground that rebuild trust; to engage on final status issues on the basis of international consensus; to show political leadership to remove the obstacles to a sustainable solution.

This paralysis has elicited a heavy price: continued violence and insecurity; Israel’s ever-expanding, illegal settlement enterprise; a persistent Palestinian political divide; and a deteriorating, unsustainable situation in Gaza under the control of Hamas. Taken together, these elements kill hope, breed frustration, and increase radicalization on the ground, he explained.

While the Accords’ “daring” vision for peace remains to be fulfilled, “now is not the time to give up on Oslo. The alternative is not a better deal, but a worsening reality of occupation and humiliation,” he stated.