

South Sudan: Ceasefire violations, hostile propaganda undercut regional peace push, Security Council told

24 January 2018 – While the signing last month of a ceasefire accord among South Sudan's warring parties is a great stride forward, it is just a first step toward peace and stability, the United Nations peacekeeping chief said Wednesday, warning that the 21 December deal has already been violated numerous times.

"These violations by the parties and the continuing hostile propaganda undertaken against one another are worrisome, as they illustrate a lack of genuine commitment to honour their words, and de-facto undermine the regional and international efforts to revitalize the peace process," said Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix told a Security Council briefing.

The world's youngest country has spent much of its short life mired in conflict, as what began as a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar, erupted into full-blown war late in 2013.

The [Agreement](#) on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access among the warring South Sudanese parties was brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an eight-country trade bloc in Africa.

"The South Sudanese parties must realize that the international community and the region will not continue to tolerate Agreements being signed, only to be violated in total impunity," he said, urging 15 Council members to speak out very clearly against these violations, and to take the decisive actions necessary to impose real consequences for the violators.

IGAD's High-Level Revitalization Forum is expected to resume on 5 February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to focus on governance, transitional security arrangements and the permanent ceasefire.

"It will be crucial for the South Sudanese parties to participate in the Forum in good faith and with a view to make the necessary compromises required for South Sudan to return on the path to a sustainable peace," Mr. Lacroix said.

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USG Jean-Pierre Lacroix

On the security situation in and around Juba, he expressed concern over the

attacks by unknown armed elements on Government security installations on 4 January. The same day, there were also shooting incidents between security forces and criminal elements near the 'protection of civilians' sites adjacent to the headquarters of the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)) in Juba.

UNMISS immediately reinforced those sites with additional uniformed personnel to prevent any entry.

During the reporting period, inter-communal violence also escalated in the Jonglei, Lakes and Warrap areas, causing roughly 160 fatalities, including at least 24 women. UNMISS reacted swiftly to these incidents by mobilizing community leaders and peace actors to de-escalate inter-communal tensions, and promote dialogue and reconciliation.

UNMISS will formally inaugurate a new base in Yei in Central Equatoria on Thursday. This base will allow the UNMISS force to project presence, to build confidence and restore stability to an area which has witnessed an exodus of the population to Uganda as a result of recent conflict.

Turning to human rights, he warned that the gravity of conflict-related sexual violence is deplorable and constitutes an emergency in its own right.

In 2017, there were 2,670 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related incidents perpetrated by both State and non-State actors.

Unfortunately, these human rights violations are compounded by impunity, with perpetrators not being held to account, he said, calling on President Silva Kiir to end this impunity.

Also addressing the Council was Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, who [noted](#) that the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan seeks to assist six million people, more than half the population, and requires \$1.7 billion.



Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Some 1.5 million people are in emergency-level food insecurity, just one step away from famine, and around 20,000 people are already in famine conditions, she said, warning that the next lean season, which begins in March, is likely to see food security worsen, and could see famine conditions spread to several new locations across the country.

Access challenges have continued to delay and interrupt the humanitarian response. Last month, in Unity state, truck drivers delivering humanitarian supplies by road from Juba reported a total of 66 checkpoints, she said.

In 2017, at least 28 aid workers were killed in the line of duty, and over 1,100 incidents were reported, the highest annual count since the conflict started in 2013.

[Bring human rights to discussion tables and into decisions at Davos, UN experts urge](#)

24 January 2018 – With world leaders converging in Davos, Switzerland, for the annual World Economic Forum, a group of United Nations human rights experts has called on government and business leaders to use the occasion to decide on concrete actions to bring about positive change.

“What we are seeing in the world today is the economically disenfranchised yearning for a fairer economic system that spreads the rewards of economic development to all,” Anita Ramasastry, the chairperson of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, [said](#) on Tuesday.

“The inclusion of human rights objectives into political and economic decisions are crucial if economic reforms are to tackle the root causes of populism, global unrest, climate change and inequality,” she added.

In particular, the experts underscored the need for Governments and businesses to act in accordance with the UN [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) by respecting the rights of workers across supply chains and avoid business operations that cause or contribute to adverse human rights impacts.

Welcoming a session of this year’s World Economic Forum on *Global Prospects for Human Rights*, they called on all participants to remind each other that human rights are not a fringe issue but are at the centre of the most pressing global risks and challenges, and therefore must be the focus of efforts to address those issues.

They also stressed that Governments and business leaders meeting in Davos wield the “power and influence” to set the world on a more inclusive and sustainable path and called on them to realize the commitments world leaders made “to realize the human rights of all” and “to leave no one behind.”

They reiterated their appeal on business leaders to support those pledges.

The Working Group on Business and Human Rights was established by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council in 2011.

Composed of five experts, the Working Group promotes the effective

dissemination and implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights through promoting sharing of good practices and lessons learned, integrating a gender perspective, and suggesting recommendations.

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.

Afghanistan: UN chief ‘appalled and deeply saddened’ by deadly attack on aid partner

24 January 2018 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has spoken out against the fatal attack on the Afghan offices of renowned international non-governmental organization Save the Children, saying that he was “appalled and deeply saddened” by the casualties.

In a statement issued Wednesday by his Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, the Secretary-General expressed [his deep sympathy](#) to the families of the victims.

According to initial reports, the attack on the offices of Save the Children in Jalalabad killed two people and wounded dozens, including children.

“Humanitarian organizations provide life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable men, women and children in Afghanistan. Aid workers, and their premises and assets, should never be a target,” the statement said.

“The Secretary-General reiterates that all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan are obliged under international law to protect humanitarian workers and civilians,” it added.

At Davos forum, UN agency launches report spotlighting benefits of investing in better migration data

24 January 2018 – Investing in value-based migration data that squarely focuses on impact can benefit the world to the tune of \$35 billion dollars,

according to a new report launched Wednesday in Davos, Switzerland, by the United Nations migration agency.

A study by the International Organization for Migration's ([IOM](#)) Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), working with the McKinsey Centre for Government, found that better use of data will help turn human mobility into an asset worth tens of billions of dollars.

"Too often, data are seen as the abstract business of experts operating in backrooms," IOM Director General William Lacy Swing told the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, draws thousands of top business and global political leaders to discuss the most pressing issues facing the world.

"Yet [data are essential](#) to produce real-life results, such as protecting migrants in vulnerable situations, fill labour market shortages and improve integration, manage asylum procedures, ensure the humane return of migrants ordered to leave or increase remittance flows," he added.

The report, entitled *More than Numbers: How migration data can deliver real-life benefits* illuminates how investing in migration data can bring huge economic, social and humanitarian benefits.

Providing detailed calculations of benefits across a range of policy areas in both developed and developing countries, *More than Numbers* demonstrates clear examples of how better data can help manage migration more effectively.

The report also provides guidance to countries interested in realising these benefits and suggests ways in which they could develop their own strategies to improve data on migration.

For example, many European Union (EU) migrants have skills that do not match their jobs. The report calculates that using data to reduce over-qualification would increase their income by six billion Euro.

Better data can also save labour migrants \$6 billion in recruitment fees for jobs abroad, or increase the money that migrants send home by \$20 billion worldwide.

But it is not only about money.

Smart use of data can double the success rate of identifying human trafficking cases, speed up asylum applications or promote humane, voluntary returns.

"We are at a crucial moment," said Mr. Swing.

UN Member States have started 2018 negotiations towards adopting a [Global Compact](#) for safe, orderly and regular migration. Consultations leading up to them have highlighted the importance of improving evidence on migration.

UN countries have also committed to several migration-related targets linked to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Without better data, it will be hard to assess progress towards these common targets.

“The time to invest in better migration data is now,” Mr. Swing underscored.

“Just looking at the examples we have illustrated in the report would see a boost in \$35 billion towards the opportunities and challenges that migration presents,” he concluded.

[The Last Swiss Holocaust Survivors: Keeping the memory alive](#)

24 January 2018 – After the Second World War, 90 per cent of the Holocaust survivors were between 16 and 45 years old. Today, the youngest survivors, who were born in the last phase of the war, are over age 70.

Some endured concentration and extermination camps, while others escaped by fleeing or hiding.

For the majority, returning to their homeland was not an option, so they emigrated to Israel or the United States.

It wasn't until the investigations of the Bergier Commission on dormant assets in the late 1990s that the public became aware of the Holocaust survivors living in Switzerland – most of whom travelled to the country only after the war.

The number of survivors is steadily decreasing.

Switzerland – which now presides over the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance that unites governments and experts to strengthen and promote Holocaust education and remembrance globally – sponsored the exhibition on survivors at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Portraits of Holocaust Survivors tells the stories of individuals who are among the last survivors and how they carried on with their lives in Switzerland after the war. The exhibition is one of several events surrounding the annual commemoration of the [International Day of Commemoration](#) in memory of the victims of the Holocaust (27 January).

VIDEO: Dr. Ruth Westheimer, a German-born Jew who fled to Switzerland during World War II, shares her story at the opening of the ‘Last Swiss Holocaust Survivors’ exhibit at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The memories of the survivors

Anita Winter, President of the Gamaraal Foundation, which helps alleviate financial distress of Holocaust survivors, is the child of survivors. Seeing the difficulty with which the survivors spoke of their experiences, she felt deeply thankful to them for sharing their stories.

According to Ms. Winter, many told her personally that they felt it was their duty to speak on behalf of the six million who can no longer speak for themselves. For her, their resilience is amazing.



Portrait of Nina Weil. Photo: Gamaraal Foundation/Beat Mumenthaler

Born in 1932, Nina Weil lived in what is today Czech Republic. In until 1942 she was deported to Theresienstadt and later arrived at Auschwitz with her mother, who died at age 38 of exhaustion. Ms. Weil survived a "selection" by camp doctor Josef Mengele as well as a labour camp.

Ms. Weil shared her distress: "They tattooed me: 71978. I cried a lot. Not because of the pain, no, because of the number. Because I had lost the name, I was just a number. My mother said, 'Do not cry, nothing has happened. When we get home, you visit the dance school and get a big bracelet so no one sees the number.' I never went to dance school and never got the bracelet."

Ms. Winter recalls an unsettling story Ms. Weil shared with her about a trip to the hospital during which she had bloodwork done by a young technician.



Portrait of Eduard Kornfeld. Photo: Gamaraal Foundation/Beat Mumenthaler

Eduard Kornfeld survived both Auschwitz and Dachau camps. He grew up in Bratislava, Slovakia, and was arrested in 1944 while hiding with his brother in Hungary.

After the war, in which he lost his entire family, he arrived in Davos weighing only 27 kilos, or 60 pounds, weak and sick from exhaustion. There Swiss doctors saved his life.

Mr. Kornfeld said, "We were deported in a cattle car, the journey took three days. When the train suddenly stopped, I heard someone shouting outside in German, 'Get out!' I looked out of the carriage and saw SS officers beating people they thought were moving too slowly. A mother wasn't moving quick enough because she was trying to take care of her child, so the SS officers took her infant and threw him in the same truck they put the old and sick. Those people were sent to be gassed immediately."

Ms. Winter remembered him telling her about his emaciated state when he first arrived in Switzerland.



Portrait of Klaus Appel. Photo: Gamaraal Foundation/Beat Mumenthaler

Klaus Appel was born in 1925 in Berlin. After his father, Paul, and his older brother, Willi-Wolf, were arrested and sent to Auschwitz, he and his sister came to England in one of the last Kindertransport humanitarian programmes. After the war, Klaus married a Swiss woman, moved to western Switzerland and worked as a watchmaker. He died in April 2017, 10 days before this exhibit was launched in Switzerland.

Mr. Appel explained, "We were at home when the doorbell rang. They had come to arrest my father. 'Are you Mr. Appel?' they asked him. 'Then come with us.' My father just calmly turned to me and said, 'You are going to school.' That was the last thing he ever said to me. I never saw him again."

Ms. Winter reminisced how Mr. Appel worked hard to share his experiences with young people visiting schools and universities.

AUDIO: President and Founder of the Gamaraal Foundation, Anita Winter, shares short stories about three of the survivors Nina Weil, Eduard Kornfeld and Klaus Appel.

This exhibition is part of a series of events at that will culminate on 31 January with a Holocaust Memorial Ceremony in the General Assembly Hall.