

Secretary-General extends mandate of UN-backed Lebanon tribunal for three more years

22 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres extended for another three years the mandate of the tribunal set up to try those accused of carrying out the February 2005 attack in Beirut, which killed 22 people, including the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri, and injured many others.

The trial in absentia of four individuals indicted over the killing began in January 2014 at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which is based near The Hague in the Netherlands, and is currently ongoing.

The Tribunal's mandate has been extended from 1 March 2018 for a period of three years, or upon the completion of the cases before it if sooner.

"The United Nations looks forward to the completion of the mandate of the Special Tribunal in a timely manner," spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said in a statement.

The Tribunal also has jurisdiction over attacks carried out in Lebanon between 1 October 2004 and 12 December 2005 if they are connected to the attack of 14 February 2005 and are of a similar nature and gravity.

Sharp rise in refugee arrivals to Uganda as fresh violence flares in DR Congo – UN agency

22 December 2017 – Fresh violence in the Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) forced over 2,650 refugees to cross over into neighbouring Uganda this week, five times the usual number of arrivals, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

The new arrivals to Uganda, who are mostly women and children, are reportedly fleeing intercommunal violence in Djugu territory in Ituri province, Cécile Pouilly, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), told reporters in Geneva.

"Since Monday, there were reports of [houses being scorched](#) in the area, and people attacked with machetes and firearms," Ms. Pouilly said.

“More than 20 villages were abandoned due to the fear of reprisals. Services have been paralysed and panic engulfed the population.”

The majority of refugees cross Lake Albert on rickety fishing vessels to arrive to Sebagoro, a village some 270 kilometres northwest of the Ugandan capital, Kampala. About 650 refugees arrived in two boats this morning. This route is being used by a large number of refugees for the first time after a tragic shipwreck in 2014 that left over 200 dead.

“Refugees report that many more people are gathering on the Congolese side of Lake Albert waiting for their turn to cross, despite the journey’s high cost,” stated Ms. Pouilly.

UNHCR is stepping up its capacity inside Uganda to meet the refugees’ needs. “We are supporting the authorities to receive the new arrivals and transfer them to Kyangwali settlement, some 50 kilometers to the east. There, refugees are registered, medically screened and provided with hot meals and basic relief items,” Ms. Pouilly said.

However, the agency’s operation in Uganda is currently only 39 per cent funded, and more resources are urgently needed to upgrade the reception capacity and assist the new arrivals.

[New UN centre boosts use of real-time data to better respond to humanitarian crises](#)

22 December 2017 – With more than 135 million crisis-affected people across the globe in need of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations today opened a data centre that will give aid organizations and relief workers access to vital information they need to make responsible and informed decisions.

“Accurate data is the lifeblood of good policy and decision-making. Obtaining it, and sharing it across hundreds of organizations, in the middle of a humanitarian emergency, is complicated and time-consuming – but it is absolutely crucial,” said UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, speaking at the opening of the [Centre for Humanitarian Data](#) in The Hague in the Netherlands.

“This Centre will make that difficult task far easier, speeding up the flow of data from collection to application,” he added.

Managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), the Centre is focused on [four key areas](#): data services, to make data accessible; data policy, to ensure data is used responsibly; data literacy,

to improve how data is used; and network engagement, to ensure human-centred approach.

Accurate data is the lifeblood of good policy and decision-making
Secretary-General António Guterres

One of the primary activities of the Centre is managing the data-sharing platform, [Humanitarian Data Exchange](#) (HDX), and its data standard, the [Humanitarian Exchange Language](#) (HXL).

The goal of the HDX is to make humanitarian data easy to find and use for analysis. The HXL is based on spreadsheet formats (such as Excel or Comma-Separated-Values) and adds hashtags with logical information to allow software to validate, clean, merge and analyse data more easily.

“The idea of ‘a simple standard for messy data’ will appeal to anyone like me, who has worked with humanitarian statistics and not always very able to understand them,” expressed Mr. Guterres, highlighting the potential of the application of technologies on the ground.

SEE VIDEO: [Making the invisible visible, a short film about humanitarian data](#)

Recent examples of HDX deployment include the response to the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal, where it provided visualizations to illustrate whether humanitarian programmes were meeting people’s needs. The exercise resulted in significant changes to the humanitarian response.

It was also used in preparation efforts during the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region as well as in the response to the crisis caused by the arrival of over 600,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar into Bangladesh.

In his remarks, the UN chief also underlined the importance of keeping data secure and protected.

“Coming from UNHCR, I know exactly the value of sensitive data to be protected for the protection of people,” he said, noting that the Centre will make the work of humanitarians around the world easier.

The Centre is one of the major [initiatives](#) of the [Agenda for Humanity](#), unveiled ahead of the [World Humanitarian Summit](#) held in 2016 in Turkey.

[UN Mission welcomes agreement to revive South Sudan’s peace pact](#)

22 December 2017 – Welcoming the signing of an agreement on cessation of

hostilities and improving humanitarian access in South Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the country ([UNMISS](#)) has urged all parties to work collectively to ensure durable peace in the nation.

“The Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access is an important first step in the revitalization of the peace process,” said the mission in a [news release](#), Friday.

UNMISS is committed to supporting the peace process in line with its mandate through advancing reconciliation efforts, strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms, building national cohesion and engaging in regional and international peace initiatives, it added.

The Agreement was signed Thursday between the Government and opposing groups attending the High-Level Revitalization Forum in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

It aims to revitalize efforts to implement the 2015 peace agreement in South Sudan which came under increasing strain due to violence in the country.

Also in the news release, the UNMISS acknowledged the efforts of all actors involved in the Forum in reaching an agreement and thanked the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an eight-country trade bloc in Africa, for its leadership of the peace talks.

“[We] urge all parties to adhere to the Agreement and end the ongoing violence so that durable peace can be achieved in the interests of the people of South Sudan,” added the UN Mission.

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

[Security Council to consider set of elements in peacekeeping reviews](#)

21 December 2017 – The United Nations Security Council on Thursday expressed its intention to consider a set of elements when reviewing mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions.

Adopting a presidential statement, the Council outlined several elements related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace that would benefit the peacekeeping reviews, and expressed its intention to consider these elements “when and where relevant and on a case by case basis.”

Such elements include assessment of mandate implementation in all its dimensions, including cooperation of the host state; utilization of dedicated good offices and technical expertise within the missions to support national political processes; and existence of clearly defined goals and objectives guided by specific agreed upon milestones towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

When reviewing peacekeeping mandates, the Council will also consider elements, such as the conduct of periodic strategic and integrated analysis of the opportunities, risks and challenges faced by national and local authorities to build and sustain peace, as well as clarity on roles and responsibilities of UN peacekeeping operations, UN country teams and other relevant actors, including entities of the UN peacebuilding architecture and the UN agencies, funds and programmes for the delivery of prioritized support to a country.

In addition, peacekeeping reviews must take into account existence of an exit strategy that seeks to help lay the foundation for long-term and sustainable peace.

The Council took note of the intention expressed by the Secretary-General to conduct reviews of peacekeeping missions, requesting him to include, in his relevant reports, analysis of how recommendations on these elements are implemented.