

UN rights expert 'disappointed' by Myanmar's decision to refuse visit

20 December 2017 – The United Nations expert on the human rights situation in Myanmar on Wednesday expressed disappointment at the Government's decision to deny her all access to the country and withdraw cooperation for the duration of her tenure.

"I am [puzzled and disappointed](#) by this decision by the Myanmar Government," said UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee Ms. Lee. "This declaration of non-cooperation with my mandate can only be viewed as a strong indication that there must be something terribly awful happening in Rakhine, as well as in the rest of the country."

Ms. Lee had been due to visit Myanmar in January to assess the state of human rights countrywide, including the human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

The Special Rapporteur said she hoped Myanmar would revisit the decision.

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"Only two weeks ago, Myanmar's Permanent Representative informed the Human Rights Council of its continuing cooperation with the UN, referencing the relationship with my role as Special Rapporteur," she said.

"Now I am being told that this decision to no longer cooperate with me is based on the statement I made after I visited the country in July."

Ms. Lee had previously been afforded cooperation and access to Myanmar, and had maintained a relationship of mutual respect with the Government. The Government has now claimed that her end-of-mission [statement](#) in July was biased and unfair.

The Special Rapporteur's mandate requires two visits to Myanmar a year, in order to report to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. Since taking up the mandate in June 2014, she has visited six times.

While the Government had responded positively to past requests to visit, access to some areas had been consistently refused, with the authorities citing security concerns.

The Government is also not cooperating with the Human Rights Council independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, established in March 2017.

“It is a shame that Myanmar has decided to take this route,” said Ms. Lee.

“The Government has repeatedly denied violations of human rights are occurring throughout Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine state. They have said that they have nothing to hide, but their lack of cooperation with my mandate and the fact-finding mission suggests otherwise,” said the expert.

[Security Council calls for efforts to ensure stability in Lebanon](#)

20 December 2017 – Welcoming the return of Prime Minister Saad Hariri to Lebanon and his decision to continue his term, the United Nations Security Council highlighted the need to protect the country from crisis that are destabilizing the Middle East.

In a [statement](#) issued Tuesday, the 15-member Council called on all regional States and organizations “to work for the political, social, economic and financial stability and security of Lebanon.”

The Security Council also called upon all Lebanese parties “to implement a tangible policy of disassociation from any external conflicts, as an important priority.”

The members of Council also reaffirmed their support for ongoing efforts of Lebanese authorities to restore normal functioning of institutions and to prepare for the holding of legislative elections by May 2018.

They also urged the Government to speed up its reform programmes to ensure political and economic stability built on a functional, transparent and democratic State.

Further in the statement, the Council commended the efforts of the people and authorities in Lebanon to host Syrian refugees and encouraged the international community to continue and increase its support to the country, including for Lebanese host communities and refugees.

The Council also noted that any returns of refugees, when conditions allow, must be in full compliance with international law.

Also in the Statement, Security Council urged the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) to continue its work, in coordination with the office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon ([UNSCOL](#)), to seek opportunities to help address the challenges to Lebanon’s security and stability.

Two years on, Iran nuclear accord at a 'critical crossroads,' UN Security Council told

19 December 2017 – The United Nations political chief told the Security Council Tuesday that the UN Secretariat is not yet in a position to confirm whether the ballistic missiles launched at the Saudi cities of Yanbu and Riyadh were Iranian Qiam-1 missiles, as assessed by Saudi authorities.

“Almost two years after Implementation Day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we are at a [critical crossroads](#),” Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman [told](#) the Council.

On 20 July 2015, the Security Council [unanimously adopted](#) resolution 2231 (2015) endorsing the JCPOA. The action plan, between the Council’s five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous [mechanisms for monitoring](#) limits on Iran’s nuclear programme, while paving the way for lifting UN sanctions against the country.

Mr. Feltman recalled that since January 2016 the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) had reported to the Council nine times that Iran is adhering to its nuclear-related obligations. At the same time, in October 2017 the President of the United States decided not to certify to Congress that Iran was complying with the agreement.

“This decision has regrettably created considerable uncertainty about the future of the JCPOA,” he said, noting that the UN the Secretary-General is reassured that the US, during the recent 7th meeting of the Joint Commission, together with other participants, expressed its continued adherence to its commitments.

“Today’s meeting is an important opportunity to reflect carefully on what has been achieved and the challenges that lay ahead,” Mr. Feltman continued, presenting the main findings of the UN Secretary-General’s fourth report on the implementation of the provisions contained in annex B to resolution 2231.



Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey D. Feltman at the Security Council briefing on Non-proliferation. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Regarding the supply, sale or transfer to Iran of nuclear-related items undertaken in violation of the provisions of resolution 2231, Mr. Feltman said that the Secretary-General has again not received any report of such

flows.

As for the implementation of ballistic missile-related provisions, Mr. Feltman said the report contained preliminary observations indicating that the two missiles launched at the Saudi cities of Yanbu and Riyadh had similar features which suggested a common origin, and are consistent with missiles of the Scud family and had features known to be consistent with the Qiam-1 missile.

One of the missiles bore castings similar to that of an Iranian entity on the list maintained pursuant to resolution 2231, he added.

In terms of restrictions on arms-related transfers, the Secretariat is confident that close to 900 of the assault rifles seized by the United States in March 2016 are identical to those seized by France also in the same month, which the Secretariat had assessed were of Iranian origin and shipped from Iran, Mr. Feltman said.

The Secretariat is also confident that half of the 200 rocket propelled grenade launchers had characteristics similar to Iranian-produced RPG launchers.

Further, the Secretariat had received information on an unmanned surface vessel (USV) laden with explosives allegedly used against the Saudi-led coalition and had the opportunity to examine parts of its guidance and detonation systems, which included a computer terminal with a dual English/Farsi keyboard and characteristics similar to those of Iranian-produced terminals.

The Secretariat was also requested to examine two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), reportedly recovered in Yemen after Implementation Day. One of the UAVs – which Saudi authorities ascertain was similar to that of the Iranian-made Ababil-II – is similar to other drones reportedly seized in Yemen brought to our attention by the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Feltman said.

DR Congo: UN officials hail landmark convictions, life sentences in Kavumu child rape cases

19 December 2017 – The United Nations envoys dealing with sexual violence in conflict and the head of the Organization's peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have welcomed the conviction of 11 Congolese militia fighters for raping dozens of children – including an 18-month-old toddler – in the vast country's restive east.

The Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General, respectively on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, jointly welcomed the decision by military justice authorities in the DRC on the conviction of a provincial parliamentarian and members of the 'Army of Jesus' militia for the crimes against humanity of rape for dozens of children between 2013 and 2016 in Kavumu, which is located in DRC's South Kivu Province.

The South Kivu Military Court on Wednesday, 13 December, sentenced Frederic Batumike, a South Kivu provincial Member of Parliament, and 11 other persons to life in prison for the kidnapping and rapes of 38 children.

In addition to life sentences for crimes against humanity for rape and murder, the Court also awarded reparations to the victims.

"The child survivors of sexual violence in Kavumu, their families, and community have shown tremendous bravery throughout the trial process," Special Representative Patten said this past Friday. "I commend their courage and I hope today's judgment delivers a measure of justice for their suffering."

She noted further that the "judgment and life sentences rendered by military justice authorities is a significant step forward in ending impunity for sexual violence in the DRC."

The envoys also commended civil society actors for their role. "The case demonstrates that when there is political will, well-trained Government officials, civil society involvement, and an engaged press, there can be justice for sexual violence," said Ms. Gamba.

Ms. Patten added that: "I am pleased that the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict could be deployed to assist national authorities in the military justice system appropriately to ensure that the Kavumu case was prioritized in accordance with the Joint Communiqué signed by my Office with the Government of the DRC in 2013."

"The potentially life-changing judgments of reparations that were awarded by the court to the child victims must be paid for justice to be fully delivered and the sentences of the perpetrators must be carried out," they underscored.

For its part, the UN stabilization mission in the DRC, known by its French acronym, MONUSCO, on Saturday applauded the life sentences handed down by Congolese authorities and called the decision a "a major landmark in the fight against impunity for sexual violence in DRC."

MONUSCO chief Maman Sidikou [said](#) the decision sends a clear signal that "no one is above the law, whatever the rank."

The statement also noted that the UN provided logistics and security support which has enabled the Congolese judicial authorities to conduct the investigations and organize a fair trial in Kavumu.

Mr. Sidikou called the holding of the trial "the fruit of the collective and continued efforts made by the Personal Representative of the Congolese Head

of State in charge of the fight against sexual violence and child recruitment, as well as by the various actors engaged in the fight against impunity.”

He urged Congolese authorities “to pursue their efforts to bring to justice all those who violate human rights, international humanitarian law and commit other serious crimes.”

[UNICEF says 2017 has been a ‘very difficult year’ for children in Central African Republic](#)

19 December 2017 – For children and women in the Central African Republic, 2017 has been a very difficult year and sadly, the situation is not expected to improve in the coming months, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Tuesday.

“2017 has seen a dramatic increase in violence. The previously unstable regions, such as the center and the north west, have remained very tense. In addition, the entire south-west that had previously been spared by the crisis, is now the worst-hit region,” said Christine Muhigana, UNICEF Representative in the country, at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

Children and women are of course the first victims: half of the population in CAR is in need of humanitarian support, that is 2.5 million people, including 1.3 million children.

Currently, 20 per cent of the schools are closed because of insecurity, and those that are open have too many pupils and not enough teachers.

Reports of children’s rights violations are on the rise. In 2017, 50 per cent more documented incidents than the previous year, twice the number of children recruited into armed groups.

Immunization campaigns have been disrupted in several regions due to persistent insecurity, and basic healthcare needs are not met especially in regions where the NGOs are no longer able to operate.

“As UNICEF Representative, I am very concerned about the lasting impact this crisis is having on children. We have a whole generation at risk of growing up traumatized, without proper education, without healthcare and constantly exposed to the most horrific violence,” she said.

UNICEF has helped provide temporary learning spaces for over 50,000 children in 2017, and plans to do so for 85,000 children in 2018.

The agency also provided support for children released from armed groups to reintegrate into society.

Through a rapid response mechanism, UNICEF has been able to provide non-food items, such as mats, mosquito nets, blankets, and cooking supplies, to nearly 25,000 households and emergency water and sanitation interventions to almost 72,000 people.

At the same time, the agency received only 46 per cent of the funding needed to meet the humanitarian needs this year.

“In 2018 the needs are growing: we are going to need every support we can get, if we do not want the children of CAR to be left to a terrible fate,” she said.