

[UN peacekeeping chief visits injured Tanzanian 'blue helmets' in DR Congo](#)

13 December 2017 – The head of United Nations peacekeeping operations today thanked individually peacekeepers who fought to hold off an attack on 7 December in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“Thank you very much for your service. I wish you well,” Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told each service member, speaking with them at their bedsides at the Nakasero Hospital in Kampala, Uganda.

At least 14 peacekeepers were killed when a UN Stabilization Mission ([MONUSCO](#)) Company Operating Base at Semuliki in Beni territory, in DRC’s restive eastern North Kivu province, was attacked by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements. It was the worst on UN ‘blue helmets’ in recent history.

Mr. Lacroix will meet with families of those killed during a visit to Tanzania later this week.

The bodies were repatriated with honours on Monday, and received by Tanzanian defence and military officials.

The ADF are suspected in the attack. [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has said that the attack constitutes a war crime.

[With 'so much at stake' in crisis-torn South Sudan, UN and partners launch \\$1.72 billion appeal](#)

13 December 2017 – The United Nations relief wing and the humanitarian community in South Sudan launched on Wednesday a \$1.72 billion appeal to assist six million people affected by conflict, displacement and hunger.

“There is [growing need for humanitarian assistance](#) with displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, violence and economic decline taking a toll on the health, safety and livelihoods of people in need,” stated Alain Noudéhou, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“Today, we are calling for [\\$1.72 billion](#) to continue providing life-saving

assistance and protection for six million people most in need in South Sudan,” he said, emphasizing the plan’s focus on protecting vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Since the conflict in began in December 2013, about four million people have been forced to flee their homes, including nearly 1.9 million internally displaced and about 2.1 million in neighbouring countries.

As the conflict continues in parts of the country, hunger and malnutrition rates have risen and, without early actions, thousands of people in multiple areas risk famine.

The UN relief wing has more on the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan [here](#)

According to the South Sudan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an earlier than normal start of the lean season will result in an estimated 5.1 million people, or 48 per cent of the population, being classified as severely food insecure between January-March 2018.

Moreover, nutrition surveys reveal that approximately half of all South Sudanese children under five experience acute malnutrition.

Despite these challenges, the South Sudan humanitarian operation continues to reach millions in need across the country. As of end-November, aid organizations had reached more than five million people since the year began.

Mr. Noudéhou thanked South Sudan’s donors, who contributed over 70 per cent of the plan for 2017 and called on all stakeholders to play their roles in alleviating the suffering. He highlighted the enormity of the challenge and the collective efforts for a rigorous prioritization to ensure the effectiveness of the response.

“With our collective and coordinated efforts, we will be able to effectively provide much needed assistance to the people in need. Children will remain in school. Many more will survive diseases. Livelihoods and hope will be restored. There is so much at stake,” stressed Mr. Noudéhou.

[Half the world lacks access to essential health services – UN-backed report](#)

13 December 2017 – At least half of the world’s population cannot obtain essential health services, and nearly 100 million people are being pushed into extreme poverty each year due to the out-of-pocket health expenses they must pay, according to a United Nations-backed study.

It is [completely unacceptable](#) that half the world still lacks coverage for the most essential health services," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), in a press release.

A solution exists: universal health coverage allows everyone to obtain the health services they need, when and where they need them, without facing financial hardship," Mr. Tedros added.

The study, [Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report](#), co-authored by the World Bank and WHO, notes that 800 million people spend at least 10 per cent of their household budgets on health expenses for themselves, a sick child or other family member.

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WHO Director-General

For almost 100 million people, these expenses are high enough to push them into extreme poverty, forcing them to survive on just \$1.90 or less a day.

The report makes clear that if we are serious not just about better health outcomes, but also about ending poverty we must urgently scale up our efforts on universal health coverage," said World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim.

Wide gaps exist in the availability of services in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. In other regions, basic health care services such as family planning and infant immunization are becoming more available, but lack of financial protection makes it difficult for families to pay for these services.

Even in more affluent regions such as East Asia, Latin America and Europe, a growing number of people are spending at least 10 per cent of their household budgets on out-of-pocket health expenses.

Inequalities in health services are seen not just between, but also within countries: national averages can mask low levels of health service coverage in disadvantaged population groups.

In low- and lower-middle income countries, only 17 per cent of mothers and children in the poorest fifth of households received at least six of seven basic maternal and child health interventions, while 74 per cent for the wealthiest fifth of households did so.

The report is a key point of discussion at the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017, currently taking place in Tokyo, Japan. In addition to Mr. Kim and Mr. Tedros, attendees include heads of State and ministers from over 30 countries. UN [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres will address the Forum on Thursday.

Myanmar can draw on UN expertise in tackling Rohingya returns, Security Council told

12 December 2017 – The United Nations can help repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, the Organization's top political official said Tuesday, stressing that the Asian country in democratic transition can also tap the UN's capacities and extensive experience in tackling other challenges.

"We hope Myanmar will draw upon the wealth of expertise the UN can offer," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman [told](#) the Security Council in his briefing on developments in Myanmar.

The estimated number of refugees who entered Bangladesh from Myanmar since 25 August now exceeds 626,000.

One of the major developments Mr. Feltman highlighted was a bilateral agreement on the issue of returns reached on 23 November between the two countries – a pact that recognizes the need for a comprehensive and durable solution through the safe, dignified, and voluntary return in accordance with international law.

Mr. Feltman said returns must be supported by reconciliation efforts, and central to this is the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations.

The Advisory Commission, established by Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, recommends that the Government take concrete steps, such as ending enforced segregation of Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims and ensuring full and unfettered humanitarian access throughout Rakhine state.



Jeffrey Feltman (center), Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Mr. Feltman said that during his October visit, he explored with the authorities potential UN support in key areas.

"We urge all Myanmar leaders, including in the military, to condemn incitement to racial hatred and violence. We encourage them to adopt measures to defuse tensions between communities and create an environment for safe and dignified repatriation, including through interfaith initiatives," he said.

“The origins and solutions to the Rohingya crisis rest in Myanmar,” he said. “Repatriation and reconciliation policies will fail without accountability and non-discriminatory rule of law and public safety measures to address the fears and distrust among communities in Rakhine.”

Mr. Feltman noted that the 2020 national elections will stand as an important test in the consolidation of the nation’s democratic institutions.

He noted that the General Assembly is expected to approve a resolution that requests the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy for Myanmar. This initiative can strengthen the partnership between the UN and Myanmar, in close consultations with interested Member States in the region and beyond.

Related article: [UN warns of trafficking, sexual abuse in shadow of Rohingya refugee crisis](#)

“We believe we have much to offer in working with Myanmar on a number of challenges the country faces, in full respect of Myanmar’s sovereignty,” he concluded.



Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Today’s meeting is a follow-up to the Council’s presidential statement on the situation in Myanmar adopted on 6 November, which requested the Secretary-General to brief on developments 30 days after its adoption.

Also briefing the Council was Pramila Patten, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who [visited](#) Bangladesh from 5 to 13 November.

[Armed hostilities on rise again in Ukraine, where conflict ‘never really stopped,’ says UN rights wing](#)



Entrance to Sloviansk city, Ukraine, pockmarked with bullets and shrapnel. Photo: UNICEF Ukraine/Pavel Zmey

12 December 2017 – An uptick in armed hostilities in Ukraine has resulted in more deaths and new damages to critical water infrastructure storing

dangerous chemicals – posing a grave threat to human life and the environment, according to a new United Nations report.

The [report](#) of the [Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine](#), published on Tuesday, warned that that daily ceasefire violations coupled with falling temperatures further aggravated a dire human rights and humanitarian situation on both sides of the contact line.

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