

## With 13 million inside Syria needing aid, UN relief chief says impact of crisis remains 'profound'

30 October 2017 – The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or D'aesh) may be largely pushed out of Syria's Raqqa governorate, but after years of oppression and nearly a year of intense fighting – marked recently by heavy airstrikes – humanitarian needs will continue to be large for some time, the top United Nations relief official told the Security Council Monday.

Since the beginning of the anti-ISIL offensive in November last year, airstrikes and clashes have resulted in more than 436,000 people being displaced from Raqqa to 60 different locations, including in neighbouring governorates, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator said [briefing](#) the Council via videoconference from Amman, Jordan.

One conclusion is obvious: the impact of the Syria crisis continues to be profound.

Expressing deep worry about the impact of fighting and airstrikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Raqqa governorate, with scores of civilians reportedly killed in recent months, he said he is also concerned for the safety and protection of civilians at risk from unexploded ordinance throughout Raqqa city, particularly those trying to return to their homes.

Despite the directive issued by local authorities for civilians not to return to the city until it is deemed safe, the UN anticipates that people will go back to try to check on and protect their homes and their personal assets, Mr. Lowcock explained.

Further to the east, in Deir Ez-Zor governorate, heavy fighting and airstrikes continue to result in civilian deaths and injuries. Large-scale displacement also continues, with the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) reporting some 350,000 people displaced since August, including more than 250,000 people in October alone.

As for eastern Ghouta, Mr. Lowcock daily shelling has continued to be reported in recent weeks. Humanitarian access to eastern Ghouta – one of the four de-escalated areas where nearly 95 per cent of Syria's besieged population lives – has been severely curtailed for months. Since the start of the year 110,000 people have received food assistance, out of an estimated population of nearly 400,000.

Today the UN and partners delivered food, nutrition and health assistance to 40,000 people, he told the Council, warning however that an alarming number of child malnutrition cases have been recorded there, and more than 400 people with health problems require medical evacuation.

Overall, he said that more than 13 million people inside Syria still need humanitarian assistance. 6.3 million of them are exceptionally vulnerable and in acute need because of displacement, hostilities, and limited access to basic goods and services. Conflict and violations of international humanitarian law continue to be the principal drivers of humanitarian need, with civilians in many parts of the country enduring massive suffering.

Against this background, the UN and our partners continue to implement in Syria one of the largest humanitarian operations in the world, said Mr. Lowcock who is the UN Under-Secretary-General for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, noting, by example that in September, the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) provided food assistance to more than 3.3 million people, the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) reached over 1.5 million people, and the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reached over 800,000 people.

He also went on to point out that cross-border assistance provided for in last year's Council [resolution 2165](#) has been a lifeline, allowing the UN to reach millions of people in need in northern and southern parts of Syria. On average, aid was delivered to 2.76 million people a month through cross-border operations between January and August of this year.

Our experience with cross-line operations from within Syria [...] leads us to believe that it would be impossible to reach those people in a sustained manner from within Syria. I therefore regard a renewal of resolution 2165 as essential. Millions of people depend on the activities it mandates, he underscored.

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## [UN agency chief warns of 'looming humanitarian catastrophe' in DR Congo's strife-torn Kasai region](#)

30 October 2017 – Some 3.2 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) conflict-ravaged south-central Greater Kasai region are severely food insecure, struggling to feed themselves and in urgent need of assistance, the head of the United Nations food relief agency warned Monday.

As many as [250,000 children could starve in Kasai](#) in the next few months unless enough nutritious food reaches them quickly, said World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) Executive Director David Beasley as he wrapped up a four-day mission to the vast central African country that included a visit to Kasai.

We need access to those children, and we need money urgently, he added.

Kasai's traditionally high malnutrition rates were exacerbated further after last year's inter-ethnic violence — characterized by large-scale killing, wholesale destruction of villages and crops, and targeting hospitals, clinics and schools. The region now accounts for more than 40 per cent of the DRC's 7.7 million severely food insecure.

WFP is ramping up emergency assistance there, planning to reach 500,000 of the most vulnerable by end-December — and many more by early next year. Dozens of staff are being deployed, 80 additional off-road trucks are being brought in to deliver food to remote areas, and the WFP-run UN Humanitarian Air Service is, presently flying aid supplies and workers to seven regional locations, is being expanded.

However, WFP's emergency operation, launched in August, has so far been financed by internal borrowings, and only one percent of the \$135 million required through mid-2018 has been secured from the international community.

Although violence in Kasai has diminished in recent weeks, banditry and extortion are commonplace. Moreover, in a region the size of Germany with multiple active militias and a road network that is largely impassable during the September-December rainy season, humanitarian access is set to remain a challenge.

What the brave people I met over the last few days want most of all is peace — peace to be able to grow their own food, to rebuild their lives and to build a brighter tomorrow for their children. It's a simple, powerful message WFP chief David Beasley

Mr. Beasley also witnessed WFP's work in eastern North Kivu province, which is also constrained by access challenges and limited funding. Just 250,000 of the province's one million displaced people — victims of two decades of conflict — are receiving assistance, and only half rations.

Much of DRC's population is dependent on subsistence farming, with competition for land often at the heart of the violence. Many conflict-displaced families who had returned to their villages in North Kivu and Kasai told Mr. Beasley they could not resume working their fields for fear of being attacked.

— I have met too many women and children whose lives have been reduced to a desperate struggle for survival —, Mr. Beasley pointed out. — In a land so rich in resources, that's heart-breaking. And it's unacceptable. —

The WFP chief acknowledged donor concerns about limited returns on investing in a better future for the Congolese, noting that some Governments have threatened to redirect such funding to countries where they say it will have more impact.

— I hear those concerns, — said Mr. Beasley. — But let's not hold innocent women and children responsible for the failings of others. —

“What the brave people I met over the last few days want most of all is peace – peace to be able to grow their own food, to rebuild their lives and to build a brighter tomorrow for their children. It’s a simple, powerful message. I have conveyed it to President [Joseph] Kabila and members of his Government, urging that they do more to help this come about,” he concluded.

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## [Tuberculosis world’s top infectious killer; UN health agency calls for political action to stop spread](#)

30 October 2017 – Progress has not been fast enough over the past year to reach global and regional targets on stopping the spread of tuberculosis (TB), or to make real headway in closing persistent gaps in TB care and prevention, the World Health Organization warned Monday.

The United Nations agency said that although efforts to combat [tuberculosis](#) have saved an estimated 53 million lives since 2000 and reduced the diseases’ mortality rate by 37 per cent, it nevertheless remained 2016’s top infectious killer, the main cause of deaths related to antimicrobial resistance and the leading killer of people with HIV.

“While the world has committed to ending the TB epidemic by 2030, [actions and investments](#) don’t match the political rhetoric. We need a dynamic, global, multisectoral approach,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, on the launch of the [Global TB Report 2017](#).

“The good news is that we finally have two great opportunities to move forward: the first WHO [Global Ministerial Conference to End TB](#), set to be held in Moscow [later this month], followed by the first [UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on TB](#), in 2018. These will build momentum, get different sectors engaged, and accelerate our efforts to make TB history,” he added.

The 2016 high global burden of disease and death; persistent gaps in care and financing; and the need for political commitment and multisectoral action are important highlights of the report.

### ***Number of deaths reveals ‘we are not accelerating fast enough’***

In 2016, 10 per cent of an estimated 10.4 million new TB cases worldwide were HIV-infected people. Additionally, multidrug-resistant TB is a public health crisis with 600,000 new cases resistance to rifampicin – the most effective first-line drug.

The sheer numbers of deaths and suffering speak for themselves – we are not accelerating fast enough,” said Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of the WHO Global TB Programme. “Prompt action towards universal health coverage and social protection, as well as breakthroughs in research and innovations will be critical to enable access to patient-centered care of the highest standards for all, especially the poorest, most disadvantaged people everywhere.”

Closing care and financing gaps, as well as progress in a particular subset of high TB burden countries are essential to tackling the epidemic, according to the study. Underreporting and underdiagnoses also continue to be a challenge, especially in countries with large unregulated private sectors and weak health systems.

Of the almost half a million reported cases of HIV-associated TB, 15 per cent were not on WHO recommended antiretroviral therapy. Additionally, most of the gaps related to HIV-associated TB were in the WHO African Region. While preventive treatment is expanding in the two priority risk groups of people living with HIV and children under age five, most people are not accessing TB preventive treatment.

“Shortfalls in TB funding are one of the main reasons why progress is not fast enough to be on track to reach the end TB targets,” said Dr Katherine Floyd, Coordinator of WHO’s Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at the Global TB Programme. “We have a double challenge. More domestic funding is needed in middle-income countries, and more international donor support is needed to support low-income countries.”

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## [UN chief urges Security Council to ‘be ambitious’ in supporting Sahel anti-terror force](#)

30 October 2017 – Stressing the urgent need to help Mali and other countries the Sahel address cross-border terrorism and organized crime, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Monday invited the United Nations Security Council to “be ambitious” in deciding how the UN supports the region’s newly-established joint force.

“The situation in Sahel challenges us all,” Mr. Guterres told the 15-member body, describing the difficult operational circumstances facing the joint force created by the Group of Five Sahel countries (G5) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – to combat terrorism and organized criminal activity, and to promote stability and development in the region.

Time is against us," he said, stressing the need to unite efforts to address the root causes of instability in the region. He warned that not acting could have severe consequences for the region and beyond.

At the outset, Mr. Guterres paid tribute to the three Chadian peacekeepers of the UN Mission in Mali, known by its French acronym MINUSMA, who were killed in an attack on Thursday, as well as to their wounded colleagues.

Their sense of sacrifice compels us to urgently find solutions to counter terrorism in Mali, while ensuring the security and safety of MINUSMA contingents," he said.

In his [16 October report](#) on the activities of the African-led joint force, the UN chief outlined four possible options to support the force, ranging from using the existing mandate of MINUSMA, to an expanded MINUSMA mandate, to the establishment of a dedicated United Nations support office.

Under the most ambitious plan, the office would provide full-fledged support, similar to that provided to the non-UN missions, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). A less ambitious option would limit the scope of the office's services to logistical and 'soft' support.

The Secretary-General says in the report that he firmly believes that only predictable and sustainable funding and support will enable the Joint Force to contribute to the lasting stabilization of the Sahel."

*'We must think of innovative actions in support of the G5 Sahel' UN chief*

At today's meeting, Mr. Guterres described how poverty, underdevelopment and climate change have contributed to humanitarian and security crises in the Sahel, and how the weak institutions, exclusion and marginalization of some groups are exploited by extremists and terrorists.

He also said that porous borders facilitate the trafficking of human beings, drug and arms trafficking, and other criminal activities and that the humanitarian crisis is getting worse, with nearly five million people displaced, and 24 million people need humanitarian aid.

Given the urgency of the situation, we must think of innovative actions in support of the G5 Sahel efforts in the security field, but also in the areas of development and governance," Mr. Guterres said.

I therefore invite this Council to be ambitious in the choice it has to make. Strong political support for the G5 Sahel and material and operational support commensurate with the challenges are essential," he added.

Since taking office, prevention is my top priority," he emphasized, explaining that in the Sahel, this means preventing the region from sinking into chaos, which could have dangerous consequences for the continent and the entire world.

Earlier this month, Security Council members visited Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso to assess the level and the nature of the threat posed by

terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel, as well as the status of the operationalization of the joint force. The visiting mission also delivered a message to the parties in Mali regarding the need to accelerate the implementation of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

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## [Carbon dioxide levels surge to new high in 2016, UN weather agency reports](#)

30 October 2017 – Levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) surged at record-breaking speed to new highs in 2016, the United Nations weather agency announced on Monday.

Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), issued the warning in Geneva, at the launch of the organization's [Greenhouse Gas Bulletin](#).

The report indicates that carbon dioxide concentrations reached 403.3 parts per million in 2016, up from 400 ppm in 2015.

"We have never seen so big growth in one year as we have been seeing last year in carbon dioxide concentration," said Mr. Taalas, telling journalists that it is time for governments to fulfil the pledges they made in Paris in 2015 to take steps to reduce global warming.

Emphasizing that the new figures reveal "we are not moving in the right direction at all," he added that "in fact we are actually moving in the wrong direction when we think about the implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) and this all demonstrates that there is some urgent need to raise the ambition level of climate mitigation, if we are serious with this 1.5 to 2C target of Paris Agreement."

The report's findings are based on observations taken around the globe by the WMO Global Atmosphere Watch Programme. It found that rapidly increasing atmospheric levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases have the potential to initiate unprecedented changes in climate systems, leading to "severe ecological and economic disruptions."

Population growth, intensified agricultural practices, increases in land use and deforestation, industrialization and associated energy use from fossil fuel sources have all contributed to [increases in concentrations of greenhouse gases](#) in the atmosphere since the industrial era, beginning in 1750.

Oksana Tarasova Chief of Atmospheric Environment Research Division at WMO,

explained that last year's elevated CO2 levels happened because of a combination of human activities and a strong El Niño event.

The climatic phenomenon is associated with warmer-than-average sea temperatures that is believed to be responsible for triggering droughts in tropical regions, as well as unprecedented hurricanes and wildfires elsewhere around the globe.

***Atmospheric change occurring 10 to 20 times faster than ever observed in the planet's history***

However, at 3.3 parts per million, the 2016 increase in carbon dioxide levels was significantly higher than an El Niño-influenced spike in 1998, which was measured at 2.7 ppm.

To put that into perspective, WMO says that before the industrial era, a CO2 change of 10 parts per million took between 100 and 200 years to happen.

“What we are doing now with the atmosphere is 10 to 20 times faster than ever been observed in the history of the planet,” Ms. Tarasova said.

According to the WMO report, which covers all atmospheric emissions, CO2 concentrations are now 145 per cent of pre-industrial levels.

After carbon dioxide, the second most important greenhouse gas is methane; its levels rose last year but slightly less than in 2014.

Nitrous oxide is the third most warming gas; it increased slightly less last year than over the last decade.

The release of the WMO report coincides with Tuesday's *Emissions Gap Report* by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), which tracks how governments are taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Together, both publications will serve as a scientific base for policy decisions at the UN climate change negotiations in Bonn, Germany, beginning Monday 7 November.