

On International Day, UN forecasts 14 million people made homeless each year by disasters

13 October 2017 – Sudden onset disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and tropical cyclones, are likely to displace nearly 14 million people worldwide each year, warns a United Nations-backed study released Friday – International Day for Disaster Reduction.

“This is an [important baseline](#) against which we can measure progress in reducing disaster risk. The findings underline the challenge we have, to reduce the numbers of people affected by disasters,” said Robert Glasser, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“Apart from death or severe injury in a disaster event, there is no more crushing blow than the loss of the family home which is often a place of work in many of the countries worst affected,” he added.

The numbers of internally displaced people, [refugees and migrants](#) are at an all-time high. Besides conflict, disasters trigger a significant percentage of such movements. Unless disaster risk is managed better, homelessness among people in the world’s most disaster-prone countries is predicted to continue rising.

The study, covering 204 countries and territories, shows that eight of the 10 countries with the highest risk of future displacement and loss of housing are in South and Southeast Asia.

In India, 2.3 million people face such risk, followed by China at 1.3 million; Bangladesh at 1.2 million; Vietnam at 1 million; the Philippines at 720,000; Myanmar at 570,000; Pakistan at 460,000; Indonesia at 380,000; Russia at 250,000; and the United States at 230,000.

INTERVIEW: [Few global issues as urgent as tackling climate and disaster risks – Robert Glasser](#)

The study was conducted by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction ([UNISDR](#)), using probabilistic risk models for disasters, developed by UNISDR, which have been used to calculate estimates of future economic losses from a range of natural hazards.

This is the first time that these techniques have been applied to forecast potential average numbers of people made homeless over long periods of time. Slow on-set disasters attributed to drought and sea-level rise are not included.

“The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) adopted by UN Member States two years ago has a key target for a substantial reduction in the numbers of

people affected by disasters by 2030 and these findings should spur efforts to improve land zoning and the quality of buildings especially in seismic zones and on land exposed to storms and floods.” Mr. Glasser said.

[UN rights office ‘deeply concerned’ over arrests of LGBT people in Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia](#)

13 October 2017 – The United Nations human rights office on Friday expressed deep concern about a wave of arrests in Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia of more than 180 people perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), many of whom have reportedly been mistreated by law enforcement officials.

Arresting or detaining people based on their actual or perceived [sexual orientation](#) or gender identity is by definition arbitrary and violates international law, including rights to privacy, non-discrimination and equality before the law, said Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), at a press briefing in Geneva.

In all three countries, authorities have alleged that those arrested were involved in sex work although in almost all cases the accused have denied such allegations or indicated that they were coerced into confessing involvement, he added.

Mr. Colville said that Azerbaijan, Egypt and Indonesia should take immediate action to release anyone detained on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, drop charges based on vaguely worded and discriminatory laws, and should repeal such laws in line with their legal obligations under international law and long-standing United Nations recommendations.

In Azerbaijan, more than 80 people presumed to be gay or transgender have been arrested in Baku since mid-September. In Egypt, more than 50 people have been arrested in recent weeks based on their assumed sexual orientation or gender identity. In Indonesia, more than 50 people were arrested at a sauna in Jakarta last Friday, based on their perceived sexual orientation.

Human rights challenges in Libya 'massive, but not insurmountable,' UN rights chief says after visit

12 October 2017 – After a brief mission to Libya, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on Thursday said the Government “can and should” lead efforts to urgently address arbitrary detention, torture and other grave violations that must be brought to an end in the crisis-torn North African country.

“No United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has ever made an official visit to discuss the human rights situation in Libya in the days of Muammar Gaddafi or in the years that have followed the end of its dictatorial regime,” Mr. Zeid said in a [statement](#) issued by his Office (OHCHR) at the end of his mission.

The High Commissioner travelled to Libya for one day, having not announced the visit in advance for security reasons. While there, he met with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Serraj, the Ministers of Justice and the Interior, and the head of the department responsible for the management of migrant detention centers.

Mr. Zeid was also able to make brief visits to one of the country's major prisons and a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs). “My trip was enlightened by a very useful meeting with Libyan civil society and women human rights defenders,” he said.

Despite the high hopes that followed the 2011 revolution, the human rights situation in Libya continues to be marked by widespread abuses and violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict with impunity, he stated, explaining: “Thousands of people are arbitrarily detained in detention centers across the country, some since the 2011 armed conflict, many of whom are subjected to torture and ill-treatment.”

He went on to note that armed groups are killing and illegally holding civilians and fighters hostage. “Civilian men, women and children are killed and injured every week by the indiscriminate use of weapons [...] Yet these aspects of the human rights situation in Libya rarely [make it into] the headlines.”

Displaced Libyans and representatives of civil society met by the High Commissioner presented him with a clear picture of the serious abuses committed by armed groups and the impunity they currently enjoy. “The actions of armed groups are hampering significant progress towards stability, development and peace in the country,” Mr. Zeid underscored.

Alarming situation of migrants

While in Libya, the human rights chief also spoke with authorities about the alarming situation of migrants in the country. “I call on the Government to establish alternatives to detention in Libya, to put an end to the practice of arbitrary detention and to report on abuses committed against migrants in detention centers,” he stressed.

Overall, he said that while the challenges facing human rights in Libya are “massive,” they are not insurmountable. At the same time, he recognized that the large-scale collapse of the judicial system, power and influence of armed groups and the many challenges facing the Government are very real.

“But the Government can and should lead. It can begin to combat the practice of arbitrary detention and to take back the powers conferred on armed groups. The situation in detention centers can be addressed,” Mr. Zeid stated, stressing that a concerted effort by the Government and all stakeholders, including the UN and the international community, can change and improve the situation.

[In Geneva, UN Member States and experts discuss demographic, economic dimensions of migration](#)

12 October 2017 – United Nations Member States began Thursday in Geneva the sixth thematic session of discussions on the proposed Global Compact on Migration, during which delegates and experts will examine the issue of labour mobility of migrants.

The talks, focused on the proposed [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) will explore, among others, comprehensive migration policies to address irregular migration and propose more regular pathways including family reunification, regularization, and transition from informal to the formal economy.

“The Global Compact on Migration is in fact the opportunity and the opportunity for States to face the challenges of migration,” said UN Special Representative for Migration, Louise Arbor, at the opening of the meeting.

Recalling the importance of migration as an engine of economic growth, UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák advocated for a global compact, “not just an agreement on paper, but concluded on the basis of a political program.”

According Mr. Lajčák, “whatever the nature of our passports, the citizens of the world have the same rights.”

Three panels are also exchanging ideas on how to reduce the costs of labour migration, promote fair and ethical recruitment and explore labour migration schemes between countries of origin and destination.

“While most migrations are well managed and undertaken through completely legal channels, not all people who wish to migrate find the right channel to do so,” Ms. Arbor pointed out.

A series of side events will complement these discussions by focusing on topics such as health, ethical recruitment and skills recognition.

At the same time, several intergovernmental meetings are also taking place in Geneva, including the Seventh Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of Consultative Processes on Migration, which focused on the regional inputs to the Global Compact.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) has provided support to the GCM consultations, particularly by extending the required technical and policy expertise, including the publication of

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Relief aid is saving lives, but world must tackle root causes of famine: conflict – UN chief

12 October 2017 – Until fighting stops and development takes root, communities and entire regions will continue to face hunger, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council on Thursday, underscoring the link between conflict and famine.

“Conflict in one country creates [demands on its neighbours](#) to provide food and basic services to refugees. This can lead to further instability, affecting the security of an entire region and beyond,” said Mr. Guterres.

Today’s briefing was in response to the [request made by the Council in August](#) for an analysis on country-specific impediments to an effective response to the risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-east Nigeria.

“Prevention, as always, must be our watchword,” he said, noting that early famine warning mechanisms have worked well in these places, given that the international community responded quickly to his appeals nine months ago with

donors coming forward to provide nearly 70 per cent of funds needed.

“But while we have succeeded in keeping famine at bay, we have not kept suffering at bay,” the UN chief said, adding that while humanitarian aid is saving lives, “we have not dealt with the one major root cause of these food crises: conflict.”

Some 80 per cent of the World Food Programme’s ([WFP](#)) funding is going to areas affected by conflict. Around 60 per cent of the 815 million people suffering from hunger today live in the shadow of conflict. Three-quarters of the stunted children in the world are in countries affected by conflict.

The parties to conflict in the four countries have stated their commitment to humanitarian and human rights law – but most of them have not followed through.

Specifically, Mr. Guterres asked the Council to continue to engage in and support the political process in Somalia, and encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to stabilize their relationship.



Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the Security Council meeting on Maintenance of international peace and security. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

In Nigeria, where aid agencies face obstacles because of ongoing attacks by Boko Haram, he encouraged the Government and its counterparts in the Lake Chad Basin to develop a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis.

In Yemen, he said, what is needed most is for the parties to return to the negotiation table and focus on agreement.

As for South Sudan, he urged parties to the conflict to come to terms urgently, to prevent increased food insecurity, refugee movements that threaten to destabilize the region, and continued human suffering and misery.

Calling for a system-wide approach which addresses the humanitarian-development nexus and its link to peace, Mr. Guterres appealed for an urgent commitment to scaling up aid funding and said: “In the long term, we must focus on what communities and countries need to emerge from protracted conflict and instability. We must help people not just to survive, but to thrive.”