

DR Congo: UN report indicates Government participation in ethnic massacres in Kasai

4 August 2017 – Violence in the Kasai provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) appears to be taking on an increasingly disturbing ethnic dimension, a United Nations human rights wing has warned, citing testimonies that Government forces have led ethnicity-based attacks.

“Survivors have spoken of hearing the [screams of people being burned alive](#), of seeing loved ones chased and cut down, of themselves fleeing in terror. Such bloodletting is all the more horrifying because we found indications that people are increasingly being targeted because of their ethnic group,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Rafad Al Hussein in a news release from his Office ([OHCHR](#)).

“Their accounts should serve as a grave warning to the Government of the DRC to act now to prevent such violence from tipping into wider ethnic cleansing,” he added, calling on the Government to take all necessary measures to fulfil its primary obligation to protect people from all ethnic backgrounds in the greater Kasai area.

The report is based on interviews with 96 people who had fled to neighbouring Angola to escape the violence in Kamonia territory in Kasai.

The UN team was able to confirm that between 12 March and 19 June, some 251 people became the victims of extrajudicial and targeted killings, including 62 children, of which 30 were aged under eight.

Interviewees indicated that local security forces and other officials actively fomented, fueled, and occasionally led, attacks on the basis of ethnicity.

The UN Mission in the DRC has identified at least 80 mass graves in the Kasais.

The fighting between the Kamuina Nsapu militia and the Government began in August 2016. The UN team was able to confirm that another militia, called the Bana Mura, was formed around March/April 2017 by individuals from the Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela ethnic groups. It was allegedly armed and supported by local traditional leaders and security officials, including from the army and the police, to attack the Luba and Lulua communities who are accused of being accomplices of the Kamuina Nsapu.

According to the report, the Bana Mura allegedly undertook a campaign aimed at eliminating the entire Luba and Lulua populations in the villages they attacked. In many of the incidents reported to the team, soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, known by its French

acronym FARDC, were seen leading groups of Bana Mura militia during attacks on villages.

Given the situation in the Kasais, the report highlights the need for the team of international experts on the situation in the Kasais, established in June by the UN Human Rights Council, to be granted safe and unrestricted access to information, sites and individuals deemed necessary for their work.

This report will be put at the disposal of the international experts, as well as any other judicial institution addressing the human rights situation in the Kasais, in an effort to advance accountability efforts in this regard.

Somalia: UN, Government join forces to increase national drought response capacity

4 August 2017 – In the wake of a severe drought in Somalia that has displaced more than 800,000 people, the United Nations migration and development entities are helping the Horn of Africa country enhance its national drought response capacity.

As part of such efforts, the Government, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) co-organized a four-day training session, which ended 4 August, to build displacement management capacity, focusing on Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), improved humanitarian coordination and information management, and early recovery.

This was the first-ever CCCM training in Somalia, run by the CCCM Cluster, which was activated in May 2017 to respond to growing displacement in Somalia.

“The CCCM Cluster is new in Somalia and I am excited to work with the Government, and other partners working in displacement sites, so that we can improve living conditions and ensure access to services for displaced individuals,” said Kathryn Ziga, IOM Somalia’s CCCM Cluster Coordinator.

“CCCM activities help ensure that communities have the space to voice their opinions, participate in service delivery and give feedback to humanitarian organizations.”

UNDP is engaged in building a resilient society in Somalia by minimizing human, economic and environmental losses from disasters and humanitarian crises, and by helping the sustainable recovery of people affected by crisis, including those displaced.

This requires mitigating both natural and human-induced hazards, reducing the exposure and vulnerability of at-risk communities, and building the capacity of government and other stakeholders including those from civil society, media, academia, private sector and communities.

The training started with the introduction of key CCCM concepts, the roles and responsibilities of various actors, and community participation and engagement. Participants were trained on engagement with informal settlement managers, communication with communities, plus early recovery and disaster management approaches.

[UN Standing Police Capacity fills critical need in peace operations, underscores outgoing chief](#)

3 August 2017 – Over the past 10 years, the United Nations [Standing Police Capacity](#) has filled a critical need in global peace operations by providing them with readily available police expertise, according to the outgoing head of the unit, who says she is proud to have played a part in putting the SPC “on the map,” while also highlighting the need to recruit more women officers to carry out this important work.

After the Security Council gives the green light to establish a new peace operation, the staff members serving with the SPC provide start-up capability for the police components within those missions. They also assist existing missions with a wide range of expertise, including in transnational organized crime, community-oriented policing and gender advisory services.

The experts serving with the SPC “assist the mission when there is a gap, maybe a key function that needs to be filled,” explained Maria Appelblom, who has served for three years as the Chief of the SPC and is one of the most senior police women in the Organization.

Tasks performed by the unit include helping to start up missions to assisting with elections. Ms. Appelblom noted, for example, that one of her team leaders filled the position of Police Commissioner of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia ([UNSOM](#)) for seven months.



Chief of the Standing Police Capacity, Maria Appelblom, at the Sierra Leone Police headquarters during an assessment mission in April 2015. Photo: UN/Won Hyuk Im

Women in Demand

Female police officers serving with the UN serve as role models for the local population and are vital for helping women in host communities feel secure, Ms. Appelblom stated, while underscoring the need for the Organization to recruit more women for these critical functions.

A strong gender advocate, Ms. Appelblom noted that after a woman has been raped she may not feel comfortable talking to another man. "And in some cultures, it is very difficult for a woman to talk to a man in general," she added. This is one reason why female police officers are so important within UN peace operations.

"One of the global efforts that the [UN] Police Division is working on is to have an increase in female officers. The aim is 20 per cent by 2020," she noted.

While some people might say there is too much focus on the numbers, Ms. Appelblom feels that it is important "that we focus on the figures as well as other mainstreaming initiatives because there needs to be a critical mass of women in order to actually influence the situation."

The Swedish national, who completes her assignment with the UN on 4 August, said she intends to remain involved with efforts to encourage the participation of women in peace operations.

"We have a wide range of initiatives in the pipeline where I am still going to be engaged, where we are going to do further research into the obstacles for female officers to join the UN, both on the national and the UN level," she stated, alluding to the possibility of piloting a mentorship programme.

She added that she wants to push countries, including her own, to send qualified police officers, especially women, to the UN.



Current and former senior police officers that served with UN police including Maria Appelblom, Chief of the Standing Police Capacity (second from left), Ann-Marie Orler, previous UN Police Adviser, Priscilla Makotose, Police Commissioner of UNAMID and Taptun Nasreen, Policy Coordination Officer. Photo: UN/Juergenliemk

Looking back, moving forward

The SPC has helped missions to implement their mandates by working on a host of issues. Ms. Appelblom recalled that the unit has helped with the establishment of police units at the national and local levels to tackle sexual and gender-based violence, and assisted with the recruitment of national police officers, just to name a few of its achievements.

She said she was proud to have her motto realized: "Putting SPC on the map."

“My greatest achievement is that I’ve been able to enhance the deployments, doing a lot of outreach, making the SPC known,” she said, adding that the requests for the unit’s services are constantly increasing.

Looking toward the future, she hopes that SPC can be a part of the mission “in all of its different phases,” such as peace negotiations, mission start-up, the transition, the drawdown and also working with the country team once the mission has departed.

Mauritania: UN rights office voices concern about unrest ahead of constitutional referendum

3 August 2017 – The United Nations human rights office today expressed concern about the ongoing unrest in Mauritania, ahead of the constitutional referendum scheduled for Saturday, particularly the apparent suppression of dissenting voices and the reported use of excessive force by the authorities against protest leaders.

Protests have been taking place daily since 21 July, led by opposition politicians calling for a boycott of the vote, [said](#) Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), in a statement.

The authorities reportedly did not respond to the majority of requests for authorization for the protests and actively dispersed gatherings. In several cases, protest leaders were reportedly beaten up and a number of them were arrested, she added.

An amendment to Mauritania’s constitution, which would abolish the Senate and change the national flag, is put to a vote in the referendum.

Mass protests are planned this afternoon in Nouakchott and reports suggest that the Senate building has been cordoned off by the police and the gendarmerie.

OHCHR urged the Government to ensure that its response to the protests is line with its obligations under international human rights law and to ensure that the rights to peaceful assembly, to freedom of opinion and expression are fully respected.

These rights are particularly precious in a pre-electoral context, she said, calling on all sides to refrain from the use of violence and to take measures to prevent the situation from escalating.

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the elections are held in conformity with the international human rights obligations of Mauritania, and should take all necessary measures to ensure free, transparent and credible elections, she stressed.

Amid 'political impasse' in Burundi, Security Council urges all parties to cease violence

2 August 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today expressed deep concern over the political situation in Burundi including increasing numbers of refugees and reports of torture, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings and strongly urged the Government and all parties to immediately cease and reject such violence.

In a statement read out by Ambassador Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta of Egypt, which holds the Council presidency for August, the 15-nation body underscored deep concern regarding the continued [worsening humanitarian situation](#), marked by nearly 202,000 internally displaced persons, three million people in need and more than 416,000 Burundians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries [...] resulting from the country's persisting political impasse.

The Council commended the host countries for their efforts, and regional governments to respect their international obligations relating to the status of refugees, and to ensure that their return is voluntary, based on informed decisions and in safety and dignity.

It also strongly condemned all public statements inciting violence or hatred towards different groups, including calls for forced impregnation of women and girls and urged the Government and all parties to cease all violence and to condemn any hate speech.

The Security Council stressed that the prevailing situation has seriously undermined the gains achieved through the 2000 Arusha Agreement, with devastating consequences for Burundi and the region as a whole.

The Council reiterated its intention to pursue targeted measures against all actors, both inside and outside of the country, who threaten the peace and security of Burundi and underlined the utmost importance of respecting the letter and the spirit of the Arusha Agreement that has helped to sustain a decade of peace in the nation.

The Security Council urges the Government of Burundi to reengage with

international partners, especially the United Nations, in a constructive manner based on mutual trust,” the statement said.

In that regard, the Council reiterated its concern over significant delays in the deployment of African Union human rights observers and military experts, noting that only 40 of the former and eight of the latter had been deployed to Burundi so far.

Reaffirming the Government's primary responsibility for ensuring security in its territory and protecting its population, with respect for the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law, it also called on States in the region to contribute to a solution to the crisis in Burundi and to refrain from supporting the activities of armed movements in any way.