

## UN chief welcomes news crisis in Jerusalem's Old City has been 'defused'

27 July 2017 – After days of mounting tensions over the situation around Jerusalem's holy sites, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today welcomed news that the crisis in the Old City has been defused.

In a [statement](#) issued by a UN spokesman, the Secretary-General welcomed the news that the crisis has been defused in line with the status quo at the holy sites before 14 July.

The statement comes in the wake of a series of clashes and rising tensions in and around Jerusalem's Old City since mid-June, particularly near the holy site known as the Temple Mount and as Haram al-Sharif, where a deadly stabbing of two Israeli police officers occurred on 14 July.

News reports today suggest that metal detectors and other security measures around the holy sites have been removed or eased. According to media reports, the 1967 status quo is an accord between Israel and Jordan, which allows the Islamic Trust or Waqf to manage the holy site.

[The Secretary-General] hopes that the dialogue will continue and contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust amongst the communities," said the statement, adding, that the UN chief will remain engaged with all stakeholders to this effect.

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## Migrant workers in south-east Asia lack access to fair, responsive legal remedies – UN report

27 July 2017 – Access to justice is often out of reach for migrant workers in South-east Asia, the United Nations labour agency reported today in a study that shows non-governmental organizations assisting more often than Government officials or trade unions.

Barriers to accessing formal assistance are one of the key reasons why migrant workers are vulnerable to labour rights violations during recruitment and employment," said Tomoko Nishimoto, UN International Labour Organization's ([ILO](#)) Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, in the forward to the report [Access to justice for](#)

## [migrant workers in South-east Asia.](#)

The report found that while the estimated 20.2 million migrant workers originating from South-east Asia have equal access to labour rights and social protections in the countries in which they work, they frequently experience unequal and discriminatory treatment in practice.

Lack of written evidence, high cost of legal assistance, fear of retaliation and language barriers are among the challenges to accessing justice noted in the report.

The authors argue that there is a substantial and largely unmet demand for fair and responsive remedies in the countries surveyed.

The study is based on complaint case data gathered by Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) from 2011 to 2015. Detailed information on over 1,000 cases involving more than 7,000 women and men migrant workers was documented in Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, establishing the largest regional dataset of migrant complaints compiled within South-East Asia.

Migrant workers' [vulnerability to exploitation](#) is exacerbated by the absence of fair, efficient and accessible means to resolve grievances when they occur, said Ben Harkins, ILO Technical Officer and lead author of the report.

Most migrant workers who are faced with situations of exploitation and abuse seek practical resolutions, such as disbursement of unpaid wages, deployment to destination countries and return of identification documents, ILO reported.

It is clear that these demands are not adequately met through enforcement of labour and human trafficking laws currently and that greater efforts are needed to ensure that migrant workers are provided with just remedies, said Mr. Harkins.

Its release comes ahead of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, marked annually on 30 July.

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## [UN expert urges two Koreas to discuss human rights](#)

27 July 2017 – The proposed resumption of dialogue between the two Koreas is an opportunity to discuss and improve the human rights situation in the North, a United Nations expert has said at the end of his second visit to the South.

The Republic of Korea's new President has proposed the resumption of dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on military and humanitarian issues.

“While I welcome the initiative by the administration of President Moon Jae-in to resume dialogue, it is important that that engagement serves as a platform for North Korea to discuss ways to improve human rights,” [said](#) Tomás Ojea Quintana, the Special Rapporteur on human rights in DPRK.

During his [five-day mission](#) to Seoul, from 17 to 21 July, the Special Rapporteur met senior Government officials as well as representatives of civil society and other groups. His requests for access to the North have not been granted.

The Special Rapporteur reiterated his deep concern about human rights violations in the North, including allegations of arbitrary detention, human trafficking and enforced disappearances, as well as sexual and gender-based violence against women detained in holding centres in the border areas.

“The information I have been receiving points to different violations that continue to affect the lives of ordinary North Koreans and even foreigners,” he said.

Pyongyang has recently rejected a call by Seoul to resume family reunions, which have not been held for two years, after DPRK resumed nuclear tests and long-range missile launches.

The Special Rapporteur met with a man who wishes to return to DPRK where his wife and son live, despite the risk of being punished for leaving for ROK three years ago.

“If anything, these cases highlight the complexity of the family separation issue that started 70 years ago, and the fact that it continues to take new forms and affect people in the Korean peninsula in profound ways,” he said.

The expert highlighted a surge in the number of Koreans from the North caught in China. They are detained or sent back. Usually harsh labour sentences await them upon their return.

“North Koreans who leave their country are caught in a horrendous cycle of physical and psychological violence, and I received information that some take their own lives when they find out that they are scheduled for repatriation,” said Mr. Ojea Quintana.

The expert noted that China has a responsibility to abide by the principle of non-refoulement in international law. “I appeal to the Government of China to halt the policy, protect those in custody and engage with my mandate and with relevant UN agencies to think of alternatives,” he stressed.

The Special Rapporteur will report his findings and recommendations to the UN General Assembly in October 2017.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

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## In Mosul and beyond, sustained efforts needed to support millions of displaced Iraqis – UN official

26 July 2017 – Witnessing “complete devastation” in districts of Mosul, a senior United Nations relief official visiting Iraq lauded the massive humanitarian effort under way while indicating that the crisis is “far from over,” including for millions of Iraqis displaced throughout the country.

“I commend the achievements of the humanitarian operation in Iraq and wish to highlight the impressive national response,” said Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in a press [statement](#).

“One of the things that impressed me the most was the exceptional level of cooperation between national counterparts, UN agencies and front-line NGOs [non-governmental organizations],” she added.

From 24 and 26 July, Ms. Mueller met with senior officials and ministers from the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as members of the international and humanitarian communities.

She saw first-hand the complete devastation of districts in western Mosul’s old city. “I saw homes and entire neighbourhoods destroyed; no doubt, countless tragedies remain untold among the rubble,” she explained.

With almost one million people fleeing Mosul, humanitarians’ “worst-case” estimates were surpassed.

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Despite escalating needs, humanitarians adjusted their response and kept pace “with emergency sites and camps built in record time; over 18,000 people treated at trauma stabilization points near the front lines; and a quarter of a million adults and children received psychological first aid and psychosocial support.

The deputy UN relief coordinator also pointed out that beyond Mosul, sustained efforts are also needed to support the millions of Iraqis displaced across the country.

“Hundreds of thousands of people will try to return home in the coming months, and must do so in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner,” she emphasized. “Others will be unable to return home for some time due to the levels of destruction and contamination by explosive hazards in their communities.”

Ms. Mueller also met with representatives from the Yazidi community and visited displaced communities.

“Protection remains a top priority for minority groups in Iraq. The targeting of women – regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation – with rape, enslavement and other forms of violence, is a particularly disturbing feature of this crisis,” asserted Ms. Mueller.

A key take-away from the visit was that “the humanitarian crisis there is far from over.”

“Families lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods,” she continued. “I urge the international community to maintain its full commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance in Iraq, and I pledge that the United Nations will continue to stand with and support the Iraqi people.”

While Ms. Mueller thanked the international community and donors for generously providing 3.5 million highly vulnerable Iraqis with assistance so far this year, she emphasized that the \$985 million funding requirement for Iraq’s 2017 humanitarian operations is not yet half met.

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## **Burundi: UN envoy reiterates inclusive dialogue, regional support to political process**

26 July 2017 – The United Nations Special Envoy to Burundi today urged African leaders, in solidarity with the UN, to support an inclusive dialogue between the Government and the opposition in a country where political upheaval has resulted in insecurity since April 2015.

Addressing the UN Security Council, Michel Kafando, recounted his recent efforts to support the inter-Burundian dialogue, including through a visit to President Pierre Nkurunziza last month.

“We would like to see an atmosphere of peace in Burundi. But under what

conditions and at what price can this be achieved? he asked the Council in New York.

The first requirement is to give priority to inclusive dialogue, a prerequisite for any resolution of the crisis. It becomes imperative that the Government of Burundi accedes to the request of the countries in the sub-region and the African Union, supported by the United Nations, to engage in an inclusive dialogue; that means involving the exiled opposition as well as the opposition in the country.

He underscored the importance of regional efforts, in particular by former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, the East African Community's mediator heading the inter-Burundian dialogue.

Mr. Mkapa was due to brief the Council alongside Mr. Kafando but was unable to do so due to health reasons, the UN official said.

Mr. Kafando noted that authorities in Burundi and the opposition have diverging views on the political situation in the country, in a difficult socio-economic context, but consider the situation calm and seek to preserve their national sovereignty in managing internal affairs.

He did note, however, that representatives of the political opposition and some of the civil society are concerned about what they call authoritarian moves by the Government.

Mr. Kafando had met with civil society leaders and political parties during his second recent visit to Burundi, from 7 to 13 July.

Highlighting his discussions during that visit, Mr. Kafando reiterated calls for greater involvement of the regional and the international community in favor of an inclusive dialogue, without preconditions, and with the participation of all Burundians.

I deeply believe in the sub-region's commitment to work for peace in Burundi with the support of the African Union and I strongly recommend that the United Nations accompany them and resolutely support these efforts. In the end, even if we still need a little patience, we will certainly arrive at a dynamic compromise, the Special Envoy said.

In late June, Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun told the Council that the security situation in the country was fragile and noted a series of grenade attacks in the capital, Bujumbura.

Insecurity has been a concern in the country since 2015, when violence emerged around the President's decision to run for a third consecutive term. Some three million people are in need of humanitarian aid, with some 2.6 million others hungry, and more than 600,000 displaced from their homes.