

UN condemns killing of two peacekeepers in Central African Republic

26 July 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the United Nations Security Council have condemned yesterday's killing of two peacekeepers in the Central African Republic's (CAR) south-eastern city of Bangassou.

"This incident brings to nine the number of peacekeepers killed in service in Bangassou since the beginning of the year," [said](#) a statement issued this morning by Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

According to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic ([MINUSCA](#)), two of its Moroccan peacekeepers were killed in an ambush in Bangassou by suspected anti-Balaka fighters, while another peacekeeper was slightly injured. The incident followed the killing of a Moroccan peacekeeper on Sunday.

In the statement, the Secretary-General offered his condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families and to the Government of Morocco, and urged the Central African authorities to swiftly investigate this incident and all previous killings without delay and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Secretary-General "is deeply concerned" at the fighting in the country's southeast, heightened inter-ethnic tensions and efforts by spoilers to derail the stabilization process.

"If allowed to continue, the prevailing situation risks undermining the hard-won gains achieved towards lasting peace. The Secretary-General calls on all parties to cease violence and to take action to avoid a further deterioration of the fragile security situation in the country," the statement added.

The UN Security Council also joined in the condemnation of the attack. In a press statement, the Council expressed its readiness to apply sanctions against individuals and groups responsible for acts of undermining peace, stability or security in the country, including attacks against MINUSCA peacekeepers.

The 15-member body also called on all parties to cease violence immediately, and underlined the need for the Central African authorities, the sub-region and the international community to work in a concerted manner to avoid a further deterioration of the situation.

DR Congo: UN rights chief names international investigators in Kasai abuses

26 July 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today named three international experts to investigate reports of killings, mutilations, rapes and other abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) restive Kasai provinces.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein [named](#) Bacre Ndiaye, a Senegal national, to lead a team of experts that includes Luc Côté, a Canadian who has worked on human rights violations in the DRC, and Mauritania's Fatimata M'Baye.

The team of experts is expected to collect and preserve information, to determine the facts and circumstances in accordance with international standards and practice, and while ensuring the protection of all persons who will cooperate with the team, in cooperation with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as stipulated in a mandate by the UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 22 June 2017.

The cooperation with the Government includes facilitating visits and access to the country, sites and persons, concerning alleged human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law in the Kasai regions, according to the Council.

The resolution refers to reports of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, sexual and gender-based violence, destruction of houses, schools, places of worship, and State infrastructure by local militias, as well as of mass graves.

The team's findings are due to be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2018.

Ahead of the report, the High Commissioner is scheduled to present an oral update on the situation in the Kasais to the Human Rights Council in March of next year.

Violence flared up in the DRC's Kasai regions in August 2016, when a customary chief was killed by Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), as DRC's armed forces are known. The Kamuina Nsapu militia (named after the chief) then set about avenging the killing, committing widespread atrocities as well as recruiting children into its ranks.

The gravity of the situation was further underscored by the discovery (in April, this year) of forty-two mass graves by OHCHR and the UN mission (known by its French acronym, MONUSCO).

More than 1.3 million people have since been displaced within the country as

well as thousands forced to flee across its borders.

Security Council urges progress on political agreement

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council today warned that unless politicians in DRC demonstrate renewed efforts to deliver on an agreement to hold elections by the end of this year, the country and the wider region faces an increased risk of instability.

The Security Council further calls upon all political parties, their supporters, and other political actors to remain calm and refrain from violence of any kind, according to the statement signed by Ambassador Liu Jieyi, who holds the rotating presidency for the month of July.

The presidential statement which has a tone similar to a Security Council resolution but is not legally binding expresses concern about the slow implementation of the 31 December agreement.

The agreement facilitated by Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) mediators, and reached in DRC's capital, Kinshasa, on 31 December 2016 allowed President Joseph Kabila to stay in power beyond the end of his term.

In today's statement, the Council also welcomed progress made in the voter registration process led by the National Electoral Commission (CENI), and called for continued efforts to ensure that voters throughout the country, including in the Kasai provinces, are duly registered.

The Council also called on the Government to set aside a budget for the elections and come up with a timetable for preparations.

In the same agreement, the Council reiterated its condemnation of the violence in the Kasai region and expressed serious concern about cases of sexual violence and recent reports of more alleged mass graves.

The Security Council underscores the primary responsibility of the DRC Government for ensuring security in its territory and protecting its population, with respect for the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law, the statement said, cautioning that some of the reported violations could constitute war crimes under international law.

Malnutrition and cholera 'a vicious combination' in war-torn Yemen – UN

agency chiefs

26 July 2017 – In Yemen, the world's worst cholera outbreak is unfolding amid the world's largest humanitarian crisis, crippling health, water and sanitation facilities in the country, and creating ideal conditions for diseases to spread, according to the heads of three United Nations agencies.

The country is [on the brink of famine](#), with over 60 per cent of the population not knowing where their next meal will come from, said UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Executive Director Anthony Lake, World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) Executive Director David Beasley and World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Wrapping up their joint visit to the crisis-torn nation, the agency chiefs pointed out that nearly two million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, and malnutrition makes them more susceptible to cholera; diseases create more malnutrition [...] a vicious combination.

Together in Yemen they witnessed the scale of the humanitarian crisis, observing that over the last three months, 400,000 cases of suspected cholera and nearly 1,900 associated deaths have been recorded.

At one hospital, we visited children who can barely gather the strength to breathe. We spoke with families overcome with sorrow for their ill loved ones and struggling to feed their families, they lamented, adding that as they drove through the city, we saw how vital infrastructure, such as health and water facilities, have been damaged or destroyed.

Thousands of health workers, unpaid for nearly a year, still show up for duty

Amid the chaos, some 16,000 volunteers go from house to house, educating families on how to protect themselves from diarrhoea and cholera while doctors, nurses and other health staff work around the clock to save lives.

Highlighting that in spite of not having been paid for over 10 months, many of the 30,000 health workers continue to labour, the senior UN officials said they have asked the authorities to pay them.

As for our agencies, we will do our best to support these extremely dedicated health workers with incentives and stipends, they stated.

We also saw the vital work being done by local authorities and NGOs (non-governmental organization), supported by international humanitarian agencies, including our own. We have set up more than 1,000 diarrhoea treatment centres and oral rehydration corners, they noted.

The UN agency heads underscored that the delivery of food supplements and medical supplies is ongoing, as is the rebuilding of infrastructure, including hospitals, health centres and the water- sanitation network.

We are working with the World Bank in an innovative partnership that

responds to needs on the ground and helps maintain the local health institutions,” they continued.

While the UN officials also offered hope – noting that more than 99 per cent of cholera-infected people with access to health services are surviving and the number of children afflicted with severe acute malnutrition this year was estimated to be 385,000 – they maintained that as thousands fall sick every day, the situation remains dire.

They flagged that nearly 80 per cent of Yemen's children need immediate humanitarian assistance, underlining the importance of sustained efforts to stop the spread of disease.

Drawing attention to their meeting with Yemeni leaders in Aden and Sana'a, the UN officials pressed for humanitarian access to fighting-affected areas and urged for a peaceful political solution.

“The Yemeni crisis requires an unprecedented response,” they stressed, explaining that the three agencies have teamed up with the Yemeni authorities and other partners “to coordinate activities in new ways of working to save lives and to prepare for future emergencies.”

“We now call on the international community to redouble its support for the people of Yemen. If we fail to do so, the catastrophe we have seen unfolding before our eyes will not only continue to claim lives but will scar future generations and the country for years to come,” concluded the UN heads.

[UN refugee agency seeks \\$9.5 million to assist self-organized Nigerian returnees from Cameroon](#)

26 July 2017 – The UN refugee agency is seeking an additional \$9.5 million to scale up its activities in northeast Nigeria, as a result of an unexpected surge in self-organized returns of Nigerian refugees mainly from Cameroon since the beginning of the year.

“This is a new emergency, which requires urgent attention,” [said](#) Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), in a press release.

Between January and June 2017, nearly 135,000 refugees returned to Nigeria, mainly women and children. The majority left Minawao and Kolofata refugee settlements, in the Far North Region of Cameroon.

Many of these returnees are unable to go back to their homes due to security concerns and end up being displaced again, in dire humanitarian conditions," he added.

The situation is particularly difficult in the town of Banki, where many are forced to live outdoors and have limited access to drinking water, food and medicine.

During my recent visit to the region, I was not only appalled by the scale of the humanitarian needs, but also deeply shocked at the level of trauma, social division and distrust," said Mr. Türk, who visited both Nigeria and Cameroon over the past three weeks.

We urge the international community to pay more attention to this highly complex and challenging humanitarian and security situation," he added.

As vulnerabilities increase over time, funding is, unfortunately, lagging behind needs. So far, UNHCR has received \$41.1 million from donors out of a total funding requirement of \$179.5 million for 2017 for Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

Additional funding would allow UNHCR to increase its presence in border locations and improve border and protection monitoring. The agency also plans to expand reception facilities and launch mass information campaigns to ensure that Nigerian refugees in Cameroon's Far North have accurate and updated information on the situation prevailing in areas of return in Nigeria.

Mr. Türk said that the Governments of both countries gave him assurances that action has been taken to stop involuntary returns.

The first meeting of the Tripartite Commission, comprising representatives from UNHCR, Nigeria and Cameroon, is expected to take place early August. The Commission was set up after the signature, last March, of a tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees.

It will be "a positive step forward," Mr. Türk said.

Amid rising tensions in Jerusalem, UN envoy warns of 'grave risk' of escalation in Middle East

25 July 2017 – The United Nations envoy on Middle East peace has warned that developments over the past 11 days at holy sites in the Old City in Jerusalem

have demonstrated the grave risk that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could become a religious conflict that could ultimately engulf the rest of the region.

While recognizing that Israelis and Palestinians fortunately have not succumbed to the torrent of violent upheaval that has engulfed the region in recent years, Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, nevertheless told an [open debate](#) in the UN Security Council that: "For nearly a century, despite myriad peace efforts, one conflict has evaded solution."

His briefing highlighted the [latest clashes](#) and rising tensions over the past two weeks in the Old City in Jerusalem. Violence has resulted in deaths on both sides.

These developments demonstrated the grave risk of dangerous escalation that exists, a risk of turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one and dragging both sides into the vortex of violence with the rest of the region, Mr. Mladenov said, stressing the need for all parties to show restraint and promptly end this crisis.

Noting that the final status issue concerning Jerusalem needs to be negotiated and decided by the two sides, he urged Israel to fulfill the responsibility to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law. He also urged Palestinian leaders to avoid provocative statements that further aggravate an already tense environment.

The latest incidents have taken place against a backdrop of other developments, the envoy stressed.

Throughout the month, Israel continued to advance its plans to construct settlements in East Jerusalem. "I must once again emphasize that settlement activity in occupied territory is illegal under international law, and undermines the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution," he warned.

On a positive note, an interim power purchasing agreement between the two sides was signed on 10 July, which set the stage to negotiate a more comprehensive power purchasing agreement towards Palestinian energy independence. In addition, an agreement was reached to increase water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he reiterated that the political standoff between two Palestinian factions "Fatah and Hamas" has taken the two million people living in the tiny enclave "hostage."

Since violently seizing control of Gaza, Hamas has tightened its grip on power and suppressed dissent, he explained.

The "punishing measures" taken against Hamas, including electricity cuts, have worsened the humanitarian situation in Gaza. "Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should pay the price," Mr. Mladenov underscored, calling on

Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the split.

Finally, he said recent events are a reminder of how easy it could be to reach a dangerous escalation, and he, expressed hope that Israel's agreement with Jordan and positive engagement with religious authorities would result in actions that would circumvent violence in the future.

“We must not lose focus on the need to restore a political perspective, on the need to bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive to negotiations on a final status arrangement and avoids turning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one,” he emphasized.