

Two years on, UN chief stresses 'sustained commitment essential for long-term success' of Iran nuclear deal

15 July 2017 – Marking the second anniversary of the historic agreement aimed at ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has commended the Gulf country for implementing its nuclear-related commitments.

Two years ago, Iran and the so-called 'E3+3' or 'P5+1' – composed of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – reached an agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was endorsed by the Security Council.

The JCPOA was a major achievement in the area of nuclear non-proliferation, [said](#) Mr. Guterres in his statement issued overnight.

It gives us all hope that the most complex issues in this domain can be addressed through dialogue, understanding and cooperation, he added.

He welcomed the recent recommitment expressed by the JCPOA stakeholders on 25 April to the full and effective implementation of the Plan, and called on them to continue to work together in good faith and reciprocity.

Their sustained commitment is essential for the long-term viability and success of the agreement, he said, also calling on all Member States to support further pursuit of this historic agreement and pledging that he will do the same.

It is in the interest of the international community that this achievement of multilateral diplomacy endures transitions and implementation challenges cementing our collective commitment to diplomacy and dialogue, he stressed.

Faith central to hope and resilience, highlights UN chief, launching initiative to combat atrocities

14 July 2017 – Voicing concern over the abuse of religion to justify

incitement to violence and discrimination, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today underscored the importance of religious leaders in preventing violence and contributing to peace and stability.

“Around the world, we see how [religion is being twisted](#) [and] cynically manipulated,” stressed the Secretary-General today, speaking at the launch of an initiative to prevent atrocity crimes, which include [genocide](#), [crimes against humanity](#), and [war crimes](#).

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres cautioned against the proliferation of hate speech both online and offline and said that such messages spread hostility and hatred, and encourage populations to commit violence against individuals or communities, often based on their identity.

“Hate speech sows the seeds of suspicion, mistrust and intolerance [and] over time, it can play an important role in convincing people that violence is logical, justifiable, even necessary,” added Mr. Guterres, joined by UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and a number of religious leaders from around the world.

Hate speech is one of the most common warning signs of atrocity crimes, Mr. Guterres said, noting that early action can be taken to prevent them from occurring and that religious leaders are key actors in that warning process.

Also in his remarks, Mr. Guterres highlighted the commitment expressed in the *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes* to promote peace, understanding, mutual respect and the fundamental rights of all people.

He said the Plan sets out a broad range of ways in which religious leaders can prevent incitement to violence and contribute to peace and stability.

“These principles summon us to show respect for all human beings, even those with whom we might profoundly disagree or whose cultures might seem alien,” he said, calling for the widest possible dissemination and implementation of the Plan of Action.

“Let us work together to prevent and end atrocity crimes and all affronts to human rights and dignity,” he stated.

The Plan of Action is the product of two years of consultations led by Special Adviser Dieng, that involved religious leaders and actors representing different faiths and faith-based organizations around the world.

Known more commonly as the “Fez Plan of Action” for the city in Morocco where it was drafted in 2015, the Plan called for monitoring of incitement, the development of alternative messages, engagement in dialogue, efforts to develop and revise education to include better mainstreaming of appreciation of all cultures, engaging in and strengthening inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue and activities to ensure understanding, respect and communication, engaging in dialogue on grievances, strengthening clarity of message and engaging with political leaders.

It was further developed over the past two years in discussions with religious leaders, as well as young people, women and civil society groups.

Mr. Dieng spoke to *UN Radio* ahead of today's launch. He said the Plan has been designed to counter the kind of ideology that led to the genocide against the Yazidi minority group at the hands of Islamic State (ISIL) militants.

AUDIO: Religious leaders find common ground to prevent future atrocities.

[Ahead of Sunday's consultation in Venezuela, UN voices concern for demonstrators](#)

14 July 2017 – The United Nations today expressed concern about the situation in Venezuela, where nearly 100 people have died since April and more than 1,500 were injured in connection with ongoing protests.

Briefing journalists in Geneva, a spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), noted that it has received accounts from several sources that some members of the Venezuelan security forces have "used repressive tactics, intimidating and instilling fear, to try to deter people from demonstrating."

In addition, thousands of demonstrators have reportedly been arbitrarily detained.

"We are [very concerned](#) that more than 450 civilians have reportedly been brought before military tribunals," OHCHR spokesperson Liz Throssel said.

"We urge the Government to immediately end this practice, which is against international human rights law, particularly due process guarantees. Civilians accused of a crime or an illegal act should appear before a civilian court," Ms. Throssel said, urging all those who have been arbitrarily detained to be released.

This Sunday, Venezuela is scheduled to hold a public consultation organized by the opposition-led National Assembly and other groups. Questions will include President Nicolas Maduro's plans to rewrite the constitution.

The OHCHR spokesperson urged authorities "to respect the wishes of those who want to participate in this consultation and to guarantee people's rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly."

An independent human rights expert today echoed the concerns, urging Venezuelan authorities to comply with international rights standards.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Annalisa Ciampi, said she was also worried about alleged intimidation of protesters and opposition members by police.

“Coercion is never an answer to the legitimate demands for democracy and to people’s expression of frustrations against the background of economic and social unrest triggered by increasing poverty and deteriorating living conditions,” Ms. Ciampi said.

As the situation in Venezuela continues, the number of asylum applications by citizens of that country has soared and is projected to continue growing, according to UNHCR.

Last year, there were some 27,000 Venezuelan asylum seekers worldwide; this year, over 52,000 have applied for asylum.

UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler said even this figure represents only a fraction of the total number of Venezuelans who may be in need of international protection, as many do not register as asylum seekers, despite fleeing because of violence and insecurity.

“Due to bureaucratic obstacles, long waiting periods and high application fees, many Venezuelans opt to remain in an irregular situation instead of using asylum or migratory procedures to regularize their stay,” Mr. Spindler told journalists in Geneva.

He added that the large influx of Venezuelans has posed challenges, including international protection and physical security considerations, lack of documentation and exploitation, among others.

“UNHCR is [also concerned](#) that indigenous groups living along Venezuela’s borders with Brazil and Colombia are being increasingly affected by the situation and have fled their home territories,” Mr. Spindler said.

“Particular attention to the rights of these communities as well as a differentiated and targeted protection and humanitarian response is required,” he added.

[DR Congo: UN refugee agency sounds alarm as displacement sees no end in](#)

Kasai region

14 July 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency has alerted the humanitarian community about the violence and continued displacement of civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from the Kasai region where the estimated number of displaced people now exceeds 1.3 million.

“Delivering assistance and protection to internally displaced people is a huge challenge, given the size of the area impacted – the Kasai region is about the size of Germany – but has difficult road conditions and lacks security,” [said](#) William Spindler, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), at the press briefing in Geneva.

The conflict in the Kasai region, which started in late 2016 between a local traditional leader – the Kamuina Nsapu – and state authorities, continues to expand, with other armed groups springing up and committing severe human rights abuses against civilians.

Mr. Spindler noted that during recent missions to two provinces bordering the main conflict region, Kwilu and Lualaba, UNHCR’s team met some extremely vulnerable new arrivals.

“Many said that they spent weeks fleeing through the dense forest without food, drinking water, medicine or clothes and saw people dying on the way, including women and children,” he said.

He warned that the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation makes the situation particularly worrying, as many children and women fled on their own and some unaccompanied minors are without proper foster care arrangements.

The majority of those displaced are being accommodated by host communities, despite limited resources.

UNHCR is strengthening its response on the ground, closely working with national partner organizations to distribute more than 267,000 hot meals daily in five provinces affected by the displacement, namely Kasai, Kasai Central, Kwango, Kwilu and Lualaba.

A first distribution of essential household items to some 20,000 vulnerable people in Lualaba province will also start in the coming days, Mr. Spindler said.

Guterres condemns deadly attack on

Israeli police officers in Old City of Jerusalem

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14 July 2017 –

United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has condemned this morning's deadly attack by three assailants that left two Israeli police officers dead and leaving a third one injured in the Old City of Jerusalem.

In a statement attributable to his spokesperson, the Secretary-General warned that this incident has the [potential to ignite further violence](#). He called upon all to act responsibly to avoid escalation.

To that end, Mr. Guterres welcomed the swift condemnation of the attack by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the assurances by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem will be respected.

The sanctity of religious sites should be respected as places for reflection, not violence, added the statement.

According to media reports the deadly attack took place near the holy site known as the Temple Mount and as Haram al-Sharif.

The thoughts and prayers of the Secretary-General are with the families of the victims, and he wishes a speedy recovery to the injured, it adds.