

## [Concerned about Liu Xiaobo, UN rights office urges access to jailed rights defender](#)

7 July 2017 – The United Nations human rights office today expressed great concern about the health of Liu Xiaobo and urged access to the jailed Nobel laureate and his wife, Liu Xia.

“We are very concerned at reports that Liu Xiaobo’s health has [seriously deteriorated](#) over the past 24 hours,” a spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), Liz Throssell, told reporters in Geneva.

She said OHCHR has been engaging with Chinese authorities about the situation of Mr. Liu and his wife, but has not received further information from the Government for more than 24 hours.

“The welcome request for medical support for Liu Xiaobo should be responded to urgently, and amid these latest reports of the deterioration of his health, we believe the UN should be granted access to both Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia,” Ms. Throssell said.

She added that given the urgency and seriousness of the situation, High Commissioner Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein will continue to closely follow developments in the situation.

Mr. Liu was jailed in 2009 after calling for political reforms in China. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 for “his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”

He is reportedly in grave medical condition and has been diagnosed with liver cancer.

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## [Rights defenders ‘must not be silenced,’ says UN office, urging Turkey to release activists](#)

7 July 2017 – The United Nations today voiced grave concern about the arbitrary detention and arrests of human rights defenders in Turkey and called on the Government to ensure that activists can carry out their work in a safe and enabling environment without fear.

“Human rights defenders must not be silenced,” Liz Throssell, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told a [press briefing](#) in Geneva.

OHCHR has received reports that eight Turkish human rights defenders and two international experts were detained on the Büyükada Island near Istanbul on Wednesday, 5 July, while taking part in a training workshop on digital security and protection for human rights defenders.

Their detention period has now been extended to seven days and they are reportedly being interrogated over allegations of “membership of an armed terrorist organisation,” noted Ms. Throssell.

“We fear they are now at significant risk of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,” she added.

The detainees include Idil Eser Ilknur, the Director of Amnesty International Turkey; Ilknur Üstün of the Women’s Coalition; Veli Acu and Günal Kursun of the Human Rights Agenda Association; Nalan Erkem, Seyhmuş Özbekli and Özlem Dalkiran of Helsinki Citizens Assembly; and Nejat Tastan of the Equal Rights Watch Association. One Swedish and one German national, who facilitated the training, were also detained along with the owner of the hotel where the workshop was taking place.

This new wave of detentions is “deeply worrying,” according to OHCHR, as it comes a month after the Chairperson of Amnesty International Turkey, Taner Kiliç, was arrested, along with 22 other lawyers. Mr. Kiliç and six others remain in custody.

The Office is also extremely concerned about two other human rights defenders – Nuriye Gülmen, a university lecturer, and Semih Özakça, a school teacher – who went on hunger strike in March in protest against their arbitrary dismissal in the context of last year’s sweeping purges.

“We call upon the Turkish Government to release and reinstate them in their jobs without delay, and to ensure adequate compensation for their unlawful arrest and dismissal,” said Ms. Throssell.

OHCHR said that in the context of the state of emergency, the Government seems to have criminalized the legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of opinion and expression, using emergency decrees that fail to meet international human rights standards.

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**[UN chief ‘deeply sorry’ as Cyprus](#)**

## talks conclude without agreement

7 July 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres says that he is “deeply sorry” that, despite very strong commitments and the engagement of all delegations, the United Nations-facilitated Conference on Cyprus concluded without reaching an agreement.

“Unfortunately [...] an agreement was not possible and the conference was closed without the possibility to bring a solution to this dramatically long-lasting problem,” Mr. Guterres [told the press](#) in the early hours of Friday in the Swiss town of Crans-Montana, where the talks took place.

However, he noted that, in spite of the closure of the Conference, initiatives can still be pursued and developed in order to address the issues that were being discussed.

“The UN role is the role of a facilitator and we will always be at the disposal of the parties willing to come to an agreement, if that would be the case,” he added.

The Conference [had begun](#) on 28 June in the hopes of reaching a comprehensive settlement to the conflict that has divided the Mediterranean island for more than four decades.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres also expressed his appreciation to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders as well as to the representatives of the guarantors – Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom – and the European Union, which served as an observer.

He also thanked the UN team, led by Espen Barth Eide, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, for doing everything possible to bring closer together the positions of the different delegations.

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## Funding shortfall threatens education for children in conflict, disaster zones – UNICEF

7 July 2017 – Some 9.2 million children living in emergency countries will miss out on schooling unless the international community contributes an additional \$820 million, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned at the start of today’s G20 summit.

Without education, children grow up without the knowledge and skills

they need to contribute to the peace and the development of their countries and economies, [aggravating an already desperate situation for millions of children](#),&#8221 said Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF’s latest &#8211 and youngest &#8211 Goodwill Ambassador, speaking from Hamburg, Germany, where she is representing UNICEF at the summit.

&#8220For the millions of children growing up in war zones, the threats are even more daunting: not going to school leaves children vulnerable to early marriage, child labour and recruitment by armed forces,&#8221 Ms. Almellehan said.

The UN agency has requested \$932 million for its education programmes in conflict and disaster zones, but has received less than \$115 million.

The greatest needs are in the Central African Republic and Yemen, where the funding gaps are above 70 per cent.

Students are missing out on opportunities to learn in Iraq and Syria, as well. According to a survey cited by UNICEF, pursuing educational opportunities was mentioned as one of the factors leading families and children to flee their homes.

A survey of refugee and migrant children in Italy revealed that 38 per cent of them headed to Europe to gain access to learning opportunities. In Greece, one in three parents or caretakers said that seeking education for their children was the main reason they left their countries for Europe.

UNICEF said that for children who have experienced the trauma of war and displacement, education can be life-saving.

&#8220When I fled Syria in 2013, I was terrified I would never be able to return to school. But when I arrived in Jordan and realized there was a school in the camp, I was relieved and hopeful,&#8221 said Muzoon.

&#8220School gives children like me a lifeline and the chance of a peaceful and positive future.&#8221

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres is also participating in the two-day summit of the G20, which includes leaders from 19 countries and the European Union.

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## [UN Member States set to adopt ‘historic’ treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons](#)

6 July 2017 – In what is set to be a “historic” moment at the United Nations,

Member States will adopt on Friday a legally-binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“After our final review of the text yesterday, I am convinced that we have achieved a general consensus on a robust and comprehensive prohibition,” said Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, who serves as the President of [the conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons](#).

“This will be a historic moment and it is the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty to be concluded in more than 20 years,” she told a news conference at UN Headquarters.

According to the draft text, the treaty covers the full range of nuclear-weapons-related activities, prohibiting undertaking by any State party to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The prohibitions also include any undertaking to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The treaty will be open for signature to all States at UN Headquarters in New York on 19 September 2017, and enter into force 90 days after the 50th instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession has been deposited.

To date, however, a number of countries have stayed out of the negotiations, including the United States, Russia and other nuclear-weapon States, as well as many of their allies. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has not joined the talks either.

In a recent interview, the newly appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, told UN News that “nuclear-weapon States and some of their allies are not able to join the negotiations at the moment, but hopefully a treaty will be something they will be able to join eventually.”

She said that “the door must be open to all States, and this inclusiveness will have to be built into the treaty.”

The draft treaty does include various pathways for nuclear-armed States to join. For instance, a State must first eliminate its nuclear weapons programme prior to joining. That State would then need to cooperate with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) in verifying the correctness and completeness of its nuclear inventory, thus following the same path as South Africa in the 1990s.

“Since this is a negotiation, no delegation can leave having gained everything they asked for from their national perspective,” noted Ms. Gómez, while adding that she was confident that “the final draft has captured the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of those participating in the conference, including civil society, whose enthusiasm, knowledge and collective experience have been a key driver of this process.”

In response to questions, Ms. Gómez stressed the importance of putting an international legal norm in place as a first step towards achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world, explaining that when conditions later become ripe for those nuclear-armed States to join, an architecture by which to do so exists.

All humanity expects that nuclear-armed States join the treaty “sooner than later,” but “I have no dates,” she said.

Asked about the impact on the negotiations of the current tensions over the DPRK’s nuclear programme and ballistic missiles activities, she said that having a norm in place does influence the behaviors of a State. It also plays a fundamental role in shaping a new security paradigm for the 21st century, she added.

“The treaty, no doubt, will compliment and strengthen the global architecture on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. This is a historic event for humanity.”