

[UN rights chief decries ‘unacceptable attack’ on Al Jazeera and other media](#)

30 June 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today expressed strong concern about international demands that Qatar close down the Al Jazeera network and other affiliated media outlets as “extraordinary, unprecedented and clearly unreasonable.”

A spokesperson for High Commissioner Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein told press in Geneva that “whether or not you watch it, like it, or agree with its editorial standpoints, Al Jazeera’s Arabic and English channels are legitimate, and have many millions of viewers.”

Rupert Colville added that “the demand that they be summarily closed down is, in our view, [an unacceptable attack](#) on the right to freedom of expression and opinion.”

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar in early June. The countries last week gave Qatar 10 days to comply with a list of demands to end the diplomatic showdown, including the shutdown of Al Jazeera.

The Office of the High Commissioner ([OHCHR](#)) said the dispute has been “taken to a new level” with the inclusion of some fundamental rights and freedoms in the list of demands.

“To insist that such channels be shut down is extraordinary, unprecedented and clearly unreasonable,” stated Mr. Colville.

If Qatar were to comply, the move would “open a Pandora’s Box of powerful individual States or groups of States seriously undermining the right to freedom of expression and opinion in other States, as well as in their own,” he added.

The High Commissioner reiterated his call that all five Governments solve the ongoing matter in a calm, reasonable and lawful manner that does not impact on their own human rights, or those of other countries.

[UN refugee agency ‘extremely worried’ about renewed violence in Central](#)

African Republic

30 June 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency has voiced concern over a flow of people fleeing renewed violence in some parts of the Central African Republic, a country that has already seen a half million people internally displaced and another half million taking refuge in neighbouring countries.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) is extremely worried over the resurgence of violence being seen in parts of the Central African Republic, [said](#) UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic at today's press briefing in Geneva.

He said renewed violence has erupted in the towns of Zemio, Bria and Kaga Bandaro in southern and northern CAR as clashes are reported between self-defence groups and other armed groups. Civilians and humanitarian workers are also being targeted.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. Violence in CAR has uprooted some 503,600 people inside the country, including more than 100,000 in 2017, and more than 484,000 have been registered as refugees in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chad and the Republic of Congo.

Mr. Mahecic noted that in Zemio, close to the border with the DRC, UNHCR workers have reported intense heavy weapons fire since Tuesday. Some houses close to UNHCR's office were burnt down. Over 1,000 people have fled their homes. Many are seeking refuge in a Catholic church in the town, while some 66 people have sought safety in the UNHCR compound among them terrified women and children in fear of their lives, he added.

In the town of Bria, several hundred kilometres northeast of the capital, Bangui, clashes were reported on June 20 that continued for three consecutive days, he said.

Reports suggest a camp hosting some 2,400 internally displaced people in the Ndourou IV district is now completely empty with its whole population having fled the recent attacks.

Indiscriminate attacks in Bria have left some 136 people dead and 36 wounded, with 600 houses burned and an additional 180 looted.

In a separate incident, unidentified armed men tried to break into UNHCR accommodation in Kaga Bandaro in the north of the country on Wednesday night with the intention of attacking staff and looting belongings. The attack was thwarted by the UN peacekeeping forces there.

UNHCR teams were able to distribute relief items including plastic sheets, blankets, mats, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, buckets and soap to more than 5000 households in accessible parts of Bria over the past three weeks – despite the fragile security situation.

UNHCR renews its call on all parties to the conflict in the area to immediately end attacks against civilians and aid workers. UNHCR is also seeking immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to assist those affected by the recent wave of violence," Mr. Mahecic said.

[On Asteroid Day, UN space agency urges international planning for potential impact threat](#)

30 June 2017 – The potential impact of an asteroid or comet hitting Earth could be catastrophic, a top United Nations official today warned, urging the international community to come together to jointly raise awareness and develop a plan to mitigate the danger.

Marking the first observance of International Asteroid Day, the Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), said today was an opportunity to learn about the technological progress taking place around the world to both identify and counter asteroids.

"International cooperation is the best way to address the potential impact of an asteroid on our planet," said Simonetta Di Pippo.

"Join us to raise awareness of the value of space technology to address global challenges, no matter where they come from and let's work together for the benefit of all humankind."

The Day, which will be marked annually on 30 June, is meant to raise public awareness about the asteroid impact hazard and inform the public about the crisis communication actions to be taken at the global level in case of a credible near-Earth object threat," according to the dedicated [UN website](#).

The General Assembly chose 30 June to mark the date in 1908 when a massive explosion above Tunguska, in Siberian Russia, caused by an asteroid, hit a forested area reportedly flattening some 80 million trees.

The incident was "the Earth's largest asteroid impact in recorded history," according to the UN.

UNOOSA has said that it worked for many years to recognize asteroids or comets "both considered near-earth objects (NEOs) " as global issues demanding an international response.

"Addressing such a hazard, including the identification of those objects that pose a threat of impact and planning a corresponding mitigation

campaign, requires cooperative action in the interest of public safety on the part of the global community,” the UN agency said.

Among most recent NEOs entering the Earth's atmosphere, a large fireball disintegrated in the skies over Chelyabinsk on 15 February 2013. The fireball is said to have travelled at a speed of 18.6 km per second and was estimated to carry the equivalent of 440 kilotons of TNT explosives.

[Security Council renews steps against illicit Libyan oil exports; renews missions in Golan, Mali, Darfur](#)

29 June 2017 – The Security Council today adopted a series of resolutions by which it extended the mandates of United Nations missions in the Golan, the Darfur region of Sudan and Mali, and renewed measures against illicit oil exports in Libya.

In resolution 2361, which extends the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force ([UNDOF](#)), the Council condemned the use of heavy weapons by both the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the ongoing Syrian conflict in the area of separation between Israel and Syria, and underlined that there should be no military activity of the armed opposition groups in that area.

It also urged Member States to convey strongly to the Syrian armed opposition groups in UNDOF's area of operations to halt all activities that endanger UN peacekeepers and to accord them the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely.

UNDOF was established by the Council in May 1974 to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Syria, to supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces, and to supervise the areas of separation and limitation.

Mandate of UNAMID extended until 30 June next year

Similarly, the Council adopted resolution 2363, in which it extended the mandate of the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur ([UNAMID](#)) until 30 June 2018.

Among other things, the Council also decided that from 31 January next year, UNAMID's troop and police ceiling shall be reduced to consist of up to 8,735 military personnel and 2,500 police personnel, including individual police officers and members of formed police units.

Mandate of UN mission in Mali extended until 30 June 2018

Also today, the Council extended the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, known by its French acronym MINUSMA, through June 2018.

In adopting resolution 2364, the Council also decided that MINUSMA shall continue to comprise up to 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 police personnel and that its strategic priority shall remain to support the implementation by the Government, the *Plateforme* and *Coordination* armed groups, as well as by other relevant Malian stakeholders, of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Furthermore, the Council authorized French forces, within the limits of their capacities and areas of deployment, “to use all necessary means” until the end of MINUSMA’s mandate, “to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon request of the Secretary-General.”

Measures renewed against illicit oil exports in Libya

The Council also today renewed the measures against illicit oil exports from Libya as well as the mandate of the expert panel assisting the sanctions committee through November this year.

In adopting resolution 2362, the Council condemned attempts to illicitly export petroleum, including crude oil and refined petroleum products, from Libya, including by parallel institutions which are not acting under the authority of the Government of National Accord.

The Council also raised concerns about activities which could damage the integrity and unity of Libyan State financial institutions and the National Oil Corporation, and stressed the need for the Government of National Accord “to exercise sole and effective oversight” over the National Oil Corporation, the Central Bank of Libya and the Libyan Investment Authority.

In the same resolution, the Council decided that the Panel of Experts on the issue shall provide an interim report on its work no later than 28 February 2018, and a final report, with findings and recommendations, by 15 September of next year.

[Security Council updated on status of resolution on Iran’s nuclear programme](#)

29 June 2017 – Briefing the Security Council today, the United Nations political chief called on the participants of the plan of action on Iran’s nuclear programme as well as the wider international community to continue to support the full and effective implementation of the agreement.

"The Secretary-General believes that the [comprehensive and sustained implementation](#) of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will guarantee that Iran's nuclear programme remains exclusively peaceful, while allowing for transparency, monitoring and verification," said Jeffery Feltman, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

"It will also provide Iran with an opportunity for greater engagement with the international community and assist in increasing its trade and economic relations [as well as] bring forth to a satisfactory conclusion the consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue by the Council," he added in his briefing on resolution 2231, in which the Council endorsed the plan of action.

Mr. Feltman told the 15-member body that the Secretary-General had not received any report, nor is he aware of any open source information regarding the supply, sale or transfer to Iran of nuclear-related items undertaken contrary to the provisions of the resolution.

He also updated the Council on proposals under consideration of the procurement channels established by the resolution.

In relation to implementation of ballistic missile-related provisions, Mr. Feltman noted that on 29 January this year, Iran launched a medium-range ballistic missile following which letters were submitted to the Secretary-General by Iran and Israel, as well as jointly by France, Germany, the UK and the US concerning the launch.

"As in the case of the ballistic missile launches by Iran in March 2016, there was no consensus in the Security Council on how this particular launch related to resolution 2231 (2015)," said Mr. Feltman. Quoting from the third report of the Secretary-General on the resolution, he added that the Secretary-General called on Iran to avoid such ballistic missile launches "that have the potential to increase tensions."

The Secretary-General also appealed to all UN Member States to redouble their efforts to promote peace and stability in the region, noted Mr. Feltman.

Additionally, in relation to arms-related transfers, the Under-Secretary-General told the Security Council that the current report of the Secretary-General included additional information on the seizure of an arms shipment by the French Navy in the northern Indian Ocean in March 2016.

"After examination of the weapons and analysis of information provided, the [UN] Secretariat is confident that the weapons seized are of Iranian origin and were shipped from Iran," he said.

In January 2017, France had invited the UN Secretariat to examine the seized arms.

Concluding his briefing, Mr. Feltman also highlighted that as the JCPOA implementation enters its third year, the Secretary-General has highlighted the particular responsibilities of the agreement's participants towards its full and effective implementation.

“The Secretary-General is hopeful that all participants will continue to make progress in the implementation of the agreement, and in the process secure its durability,” he said.

Adopted unanimously in July 2015, resolution 2231 endorsed the JCPOA that was signed earlier that month by the five permanent members of the Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran.

The agreement set out a rigorous monitoring mechanism and timetable for implementation, while paving the way for the lifting of UN sanctions against Iran.

Also briefing the Council were Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi of Italy, in his capacity as the Security Council Facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, and Joao Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the UN.