

## Fresh violence empties city in Central African Republic; senior UN official urges more aid

26 May 2017 – A senior United Nations official is calling for additional humanitarian aid in the Central African Republic, where nearly the entire population of the city Bria was forcibly displaced last week.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) said that more than 41,000 people were forced out of their homes in “unprecedented violence between rival armed groups” between 15 and 18 May.

In those days, people searching for protection flooded seven sites for internally displaced camps, among them one near a base for the UN peacekeeping force in the country ([MINUSCA](#)).

“With the [emergence of an ethnic dimension](#) to the conflict, hundreds of houses were burned, property looted and ransacked,” said OCHA.

The resurgence of the last outbreaks of tension in the past two weeks has caused the displacement of about 100,000 people, 200 wounded and 300 dead, according to the Ministry of Social Health in the country.

Echoing the Government’s concerns, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country, Najat Rochdi, expressed concern at “this new outbreak of violence where civilian people are paying the highest cost.”

A lack of sufficient shelters is the main concern, as CAR is now in a rainy season, following by the need for food and clean water.

OCHA said that shelters and food rations have been convoyed from Bangui and Bambari to Bria, but insecurity and the poor conditions of roads have delayed their arrival. The humanitarian community is also working to meet the needs in terms of supply of drinking water and sanitation.

Diseases are also increasing, spread by “promiscuity and poor hygiene,” OCHA said.

The senior UN official has called for additional resources. Halfway through the year, funding for the 399.5 million dollars Humanitarian Response Plan is only at 64.8 million.

CAR is emerging from civil conflict which began in 2013, with clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian.

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# Civilians in Syria must be spared from anti-ISIL airstrikes – UN rights chief

26 May 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today urged all warring parties in Syria to take every feasible measure to spare the civilian population from the effects of the armed conflict, noting that civilians are increasingly caught in fighting between the Government forces and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorist group.

In particular, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein urged the air forces of the Government and other States fighting ISIL in Syria to take much greater care to distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilians.

The rising toll of civilian deaths and injuries already caused by airstrikes in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Raqqa suggests that insufficient precautions may have been taken in the attacks, Mr. Zeid [said](#) in a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

Just because ISIL holds an area does not mean less care can be taken. Civilians should always be protected, whether they are in areas controlled by ISIL or by any other party, he added.

Places such as the border city of Albo Kamal where retreating ISIL fighters and their families are mixed in with some 100,000 people, including displaced Syrians and Iraqis are of particular concern, Mr. Zeid said.

The same civilians who are suffering indiscriminate shelling and summary executions by ISIL, are also falling victim to the escalating airstrikes, particularly in the northeastern governorates of Al-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, according to numerous credible reports of such incidents, he said, citing an airstrike of 14 May that reportedly killed 23 farm workers, including 17 women, in a rural village of eastern Al-Raqqa Governorate.

Airstrikes on two residential areas of the ISIL-controlled city of Albo Kamal in eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate on 15 May reportedly killed at least 59 civilians, including 16 children and 12 women and injured another 70.

The day after that, ISIL fighters are said to have cut the throats of eight men at the sites of the airstrikes, after accusing them of providing coordinates for the strikes. On 18 May, an ISIL attack on the Government-controlled village of Aqareb in rural eastern Hama Governorate allegedly resulted in the deaths of 36 civilians including women and children.

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# With focus on natural disasters, UN risk reduction forum opens in Mexico

25 May 2017 – Opening a major United Nations conference on risk reduction in Cancun, Mexico, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed cautioned that the world would not reach its development goals without tackling climate change and disaster risk.

“[Human and economic losses](#) from disasters cannot continue at current levels if we are going to progress with the Sustainable Development Goals,” the Deputy Secretary-General said at the opening on Wednesday evening.

Held every two years since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to discuss disaster reduction, the [2017 Global Platform](#) – the fifth such event to date – is bringing together some 6,000 Heads of State, policy makers, disaster risk managers, civil society and other participants.

This is the first international summit on disaster since the [Sendai Framework](#), which was adopted in 2015 in the northern Japanese city after which it was named, and consists of seven targets and four priorities for action that aim for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

Last year, 445 million people were affected by disasters linked to natural hazards worldwide including floods, storms, earthquakes and drought, 8,000 people lost their lives and direct economic losses from major disaster events were estimated at \$138.8 billion.

The World Bank estimates that the real cost to the global economy from disasters is \$520 billion per year and that they push 24 million people into poverty annually.

“The challenge is how we are going to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) if annual economic losses from disasters can wipe out the entire GDP of a low income country overnight and force millions from their homes,” Ms. Mohammed said.

She noted that Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Pacific, have all agreed and adopted plans to implement the Sendai Framework “with a clear focus on shifting the paradigm from managing disasters to managing disaster risk.”

She emphasized that this is vital in order to progress on key targets of the Sendai Framework including reducing mortality, reducing the numbers of people affected by disasters, reducing economic losses and reducing damage to critical infrastructure – all points that are also integral to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

Earlier in the day, UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for

Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser, welcomed participants and said he hoped the gathering would provide “great momentum” to efforts to make this a safer and more resilient world.

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## [Attacks on hospitals and medical staff ‘symptoms of grave disregard’ for international law – UN chief](#)

25 May 2017 – Attacks on hospitals and medical staff ‘symptoms of grave disregard’ for international law – UN chief Parties to conflict are treating hospitals and clinics as targets, rather than respecting them as sanctuaries, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres warned today during a Security Council debate on the protection of civilians in armed violence.

“Despite our efforts, [civilians continue to bear the brunt of conflict](#) around the world,” Mr. Guterres told the 15-member body, stressing that attacks on medical staff and facilities continue in conflict zones. Alongside him were Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy of Human Rights Watch.

The UN chief recalled that last year, the Council took specific action to improve the protection of medical care during conflict, by [adopting](#) which, among others, urged ‘States and all parties to armed conflict to develop effective measures to prevent and address acts of violence, attacks and threats against medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties.

In August, his predecessor submitted recommendations for the swift implementation of this resolution.

“But on the ground, little has changed,” Mr. Guterres warned, citing statistics from the World Health Organization showing that attacks on medical care took place in at least 20 countries affected by conflict in 2016.

Attacks on hospitals and medical staff, and the removal of medical supplies from humanitarian convoys, are symptoms of a continued grave disregard for international law and the protection of civilians

In Syria, Physicians for Human Rights has documented more than 400 attacks on medical facilities since the conflict began. More than 800 medical staff have been killed, and more than half of all medical facilities are closed or are

only partially functioning, with two-thirds of specialized medical personnel having fled the country.

In Yemen, just a few months after the adoption of resolution 2286, 15 people including three medical staff were reported killed when a hospital was hit in an airstrike.

In Afghanistan, the number of reported attacks against health facilities and personnel almost doubled in 2016 compared with 2015.

In South Sudan, after years of attacks, less than 50 per cent of medical facilities are functional in areas affected by conflict.

“These attacks are evidence of a broader trend: parties to conflict are treating hospitals and health clinics as targets, rather than respecting them as sanctuaries,” Mr. Guterres said.

He went on to highlight the three main protection priorities; ensure greater respect for international humanitarian and human rights law; stepping up the protection of humanitarian and medical missions, by implementing his predecessor’s recommendations on Security Council resolution 2286 (2016); and preventing forced displacement and finding durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people.

On the third point, he stressed the need to address the root causes of conflicts that are driving displacement, by investing in inclusive and sustainable development, promoting all human rights and the rule of law, strengthening governance and institutions, and enhancing mediation capacity, from communities to national governments.

“Preventing and ending conflict is my first priority,” he declared. “I call on you all to make it yours, for the sake of the millions of civilians who are suffering around the world.”

According to a concept note circulated by Uruguay, which holds the Council presidency for May, Member States are invited to place the issue of the protection of healthcare in a broader context, connecting it to overarching ‘protection of civilian’ issues.

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## **On Africa Day, UN chief says world must move from ‘managing crises to preventing them’**

25 May 2017 – ‘Africa Day’ 2017 comes at an important moment in the continent’s endeavours towards peace, inclusive economic growth and

sustainable development United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said, urging humanity to listen and learn with the people of Africa.

“All of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the [people of Africa](#). It starts with prevention. Our world needs to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. We need to break the cycle of responding too late and too little,” said Mr. Guterres in his message commemorating Africa Day.

The UN chief pointed out that most of today’s conflicts are internal, triggered by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalization, disrespect for human rights and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it.

But prevention goes far beyond focusing solely on conflict.

“The best means of prevention and the surest path to durable peace is inclusive and sustainable development. It is critical to continue building more effective and accountable institutions to address governance challenges, advance the rule of law and promote civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,” he stressed.

As the international community has entered the second year of implementing the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development to tackle global poverty, inequality, instability and injustice, Mr. Guterres highlighted that Africa has adopted its own complementary and ambitious plan: Agenda 2063.



In Swaziland, children clap at morning assembly at a UNICEF-supported child-friendly school in Mbabane. Photo: UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi

“For the people of Africa to fully benefit from these important efforts, these two agendas need to be strategically aligned,” he said.

We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people

Mr. Guterres referred to last month’s first-ever UN–African Union annual conference as “a unique opportunity to strengthen our partnership and establish a higher platform of cooperation,” saying: “Our work is based on four driving principles: mutual respect, solidarity, complementarity and interdependence.

Mr. Guterres said that the UN partnership with Africa is also rooted in a deep sense of gratitude.

“Africa provides the majority of United Nations peacekeepers around the world. African nations are among the world’s largest and most generous hosts of refugees. Africa includes some of the world’s fastest-growing economies,” he elaborated.

Turning to youth, he noted “We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people. More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age. Making the most of this tremendous asset means more investment in education, training, decent work and engaging young people in shaping their future.”

The UN chief also stressed: “We must also do our utmost to empower women so they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace. I am pleased that the African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment.”

He also reaffirmed his commitment as a partner, friend and committed advocate for changing the narrative about this diverse and vital continent.

“Crises represent at best a partial view. But, from a higher platform of cooperation, we can see the whole picture – one that recognizes the enormous potential and remarkable success stories throughout the African continent,” concluded the Secretary-General.