

[South Sudan: UN report exposes human rights violations against civilians in Yei](#)

19 May 2017 – A United Nations report has documented human rights violations and abuses against civilians that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity, in what used to be a peaceful multi-ethnic town in South Sudan.

“The conflict in Yei, in particular, highlights the [startling level of impunity](#) in South Sudan, which has fed successive cycles of violence across the country,” said the report, which contains the findings of an in-depth investigation into violations committed in and around the Central Equatoria town, 150 kilometres southwest of the capital, Juba, between July 2016 and January 2017.

The report by the Human Rights Division of the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) exposes violations and abuses by both sides of the conflict, based on ethnicity or their presumed association with the other side, including 114 killings by pro-Government forces.

The extent of the abuses by armed opposition groups remains unclear due to lack of access to areas where these groups are active. The report finds that these violations and abuses may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity and that they warrant further investigation.

Yei had been a largely peaceful town, with between 200,000 and 300,000 residents of many different ethnicities, until July 2016, when violence erupted between Government and opposition forces, which led to the departure of opposition leader Riek Machar into the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As Government forces chased him, fighting simultaneously broke out along the route, particularly in Yei, fuelling strong divisions along ethnic lines and resulted in targeted killings, arrests, rapes and mass civilian displacement of more than half of the population of the town.

Satellite imagery shows that there was widespread burning of homes and businesses, resulting in the forcible displacement of tens of thousands of civilians.

[Yemen's war pushing Somali refugees to](#)

return home – UN agency

19 May 2017 – More than 30,000 Somali refugees have apparently returned to Somalia from Yemen, the United Nations refugee agency said, and an increasing number are seeking aid to return home.

Babar Baloch, spokesperson at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), today told reporters at the UN's Geneva Office that Somali refugees are approaching the agency for assistance to return – citing safety and security concerns and limited access to services in Yemen.

The UN agency can assist up to 10,000 Somalis who voluntarily want to return to their home country. Their assistance would include documentation, travel and transportation aid, as well as financial support in Yemen to facilitate the journey.

– Most refugees opt to return to Mogadishu, in the anticipation that assistance and services will be [more accessible and available](#), Mr. Baloch said.

Among the people who want to return is Barei Ibrahim and her 10 children. Ms. Ibrahim has been living in Yemen for 26 years, after war drove her from Somalia in the early nineties.

– I don't have anything here, she told UNHCR from Yemen's only refugee camp, Kharaz, in the Lahj governorate. – I don't have a job or a future and we are facing difficulties. We are begging to get by and are living in sorrow and grief.

Some 30,600 Somalis have reportedly already returned to Somalia from Yemen since the beginning of the current war, according to UN figures.

– The conditions facing the almost 280,000 refugees in-country are worsening and their needs are growing by the day, UNHCR said. About 91 per cent of those refugees are Somalis, many who fled to Yemen years ago.

Yemen has traditionally accepted those in need of international protection, and is the only country in the Arabian Peninsula signatory to the Refugee Convention and the Protocol. However, the ongoing war has limited the capacities to provide adequate assistance and protection to refugees.

The UN agency is working to support those refugees living in Yemen, providing protection and services that include legal assistance, education and access to health and psycho-social services.

UN chief congratulates on peaceful parliamentary elections in Algeria

19 May 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has congratulated the people and Government of Algeria for the peaceful conduct of the 4 May parliamentary elections, for which he dispatched a group of electoral observers, his spokesperson said today.

The Secretary-General notes the announcement by the Algerian Constitutional Council of the results of the 4 May 2017 elections to the People's National Assembly, said a statement issued by his spokesperson.

The Secretary-General would welcome any further steps the Government and all stakeholders can take to continue to strengthen the democratic process, it added.

The Secretary-General deployed a panel of electoral experts to the country from 28 April to 7 May 2017, at the invitation of the Government.

Challenges can derail Bosnia and Herzegovina from path of stability, Security Council told

18 May 2017 – Though Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued its efforts towards membership in the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), negative incidents could still derail the country from the path of peace and stability, a senior diplomat told the United Nations Security Council today.

“As we enter the third decade of peace implementation, it cannot be assumed that Bosnia and Herzegovina is on a glide path to a peaceful, viable State irreversibly on course for European integration,” [said](#) High Representative Valentin Inzko during a briefing on the situation in the country.

The Office of the High Representative was created in 1995 to oversee the Dayton Peace Agreement signed by the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that formally ended the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.

“We need to be mindful of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex political and security environment, where negative scenarios can quickly

endanger the Dayton Peace Agreement and the progress achieved after Dayton," Mr. Inzko told the 15-member body, stressing the need for the international community to retain all the instruments at hand.

In this regard, he supported the EU military force's presence on the ground with an executive mandate and its extension, an issue to be considered by the UN Security Council in November.

The EU military force is "a relatively inexpensive but necessary investment in peace and stability in the Balkans," he said, as it provides an essential baseline of physical and psychological security that supports the EU, his Office and other international organizations.

Regarding the Euro-Atlantic integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities formally received the EU Questionnaire in December and the adaptation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU took place in the same month.

Equally encouraging was the consensus and forward-looking pragmatism demonstrated by the country's Presidency in adopting the so-called Defense Review of military forces last November, one of the requirements to participate in the NATO Membership Action Plan.

At the regional level, bilateral cooperation and overall reconciliation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia has continued to improve, he noted.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, faced some significant challenges over the last six months, including the controversy between Bosniak political representatives and Serb political parties over whether the country should submit a request for revision of the International Criminal Court's 2007 judgment in the genocide case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia vs. Serbia.

In another negative development, Croat politicians have intensified calls for the "federalization," which was understood by some to imply the further ethnic division of the country into three to four "federal units," one of which would have a Croat majority.

Further, the situation with regard to rule of law continued to deteriorate, with corruption a serious problem.

These "will require continued attention and commitment from the international community," he said.

UN envoy urges defusing tensions over

Palestinian hunger strike in Israeli jails

18 May 2017 – The United Nations envoy on the Middle East peace process today called for an immediate resolution to the growing tensions over a hunger strike by Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails.

“I am following with [great concern](#) the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian detainees protesting against their conditions in Israeli jails,” said the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, in a statement.

“The strike is now entering its second month and it is imperative that a resolution be found as soon as possible in line with international humanitarian law and Israel’s human rights obligations,” he added.

Expressing hope that current efforts will result in an immediate resolution to the matter, which is in the interest of ongoing initiatives to revive a political process, he called on all actors to exercise maximum restraint, show responsibility and take all necessary steps to avoid escalating tensions.