

Amid spreading cholera outbreak, UN migration agency aids South Sudanese

10 May 2017 – United Nations humanitarian workers are responding to a growing cholera outbreak in Ayod, the Greater Upper Nile region of South Sudan, one of multiple counties throughout the country where the disease has spread since June 2016.

The UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) said it deployed a rapid response team to Jonglei late last month, to support local health partners and try to contain the outbreak.

Conditions are [extremely difficult](#) for families in Jiech, said Carol Kipsang, an IOM health officer and nurse, referring to a town in Ayad County. More than 230 people are affected there.

We met one mother who was caring for her new born and her sister's child, after her sister died from cholera two weeks ago in her community. The young mother walked one hour to the IOM clinic to receive treatment for the children and seek nutritional support for her malnourished daughter.

The UN agency launched its response after 140 suspected cases of cholera were reported in Ayod during the first weeks of April, threatening the population of some 175,000 people.

Access to Ayod is difficult during the rainy season, and its proximity to the Nile River increases its vulnerability to outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as cholera, IOM said, noting also the ongoing crisis in Jonglei and the lack of health workers and medical supplies.

The majority of suspected cholera cases in Ayod come from communities living in cattle camps along the river.

Since the cholera outbreak was declared in June 2016, more than 7,200 cases of cholera have been reported, including 229 deaths, according to the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and the South Sudan Ministry of Health.

The disease is also reportedly spreading through swamp water, with millions of people displaced and moving through the swamps to avoid fighters.

WHO has provided response kits, medication and equipment for oral rehydration points and cholera treatment units.

Buddha's message of compassion 'timeless' says UN chief on international day

10 May 2017 – Observing the Day of Vesak, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called on the global community to draw inspiration from the journey of Lord Buddha and embrace his message of compassion.

“Born a sheltered prince, Shakyamuni went out into the world to confront and overcome human suffering,” said the Secretary-General in his [message](#) on the occasion.

“This message of compassion is timeless,” he said.

[Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon](#) in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions of Buddhists around the world.

It was on the Day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 B.C., that the Buddha was born. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on this Day that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away.

Further in his message, Mr. Guterres also emphasized that in today's interconnected world, there can be “no peace as long as others are in peril, no security as long as others suffer deprivation [and] no sustainable future until all members of our human family enjoy their human rights.”

“On this Day of Vesak, let us celebrate the wisdom of Lord Buddha by taking action for others with a strong spirit of solidarity,” noted the UN chief, extending his wishes to all those celebrating the occasion.

In 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) in which it recognized the International Day to acknowledge the contribution that Buddhism, one of the oldest religions in the world, has made for over two and a half millennia and continues to make to the spirituality of humanity.

EU an 'indispensable' UN partner, working for rules-based international order, Security Council told

9 May 2017 – The European Union (EU) has become over the past 60 years of its

existence, a “superpower for peace” focused not only on regional stability and security but also on sustainable development for all, which “explains why all our actions, all our initiatives are always taken in full coordination and partnership with the United Nations,” the EU’s senior most diplomat told the Security Council today.

“The European way is also the United Nations’ way. And we believe in the UN because we believe in the same principles, in the same values, and our communities are built upon the same fundamental ideals,” Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, told the Council today in her [annual briefing](#) on EU-UN cooperation.

Recalling that the European Union is marking its sixtieth anniversary “of choosing cooperation over confrontation,” she said the bloc has become not only the most successful peace project in the world, but also an indispensable partner to move beyond the current disorder, and to try to build together a more cooperative world order.

In recent months, some had thought that this anniversary would mark the decline of the European Union. “Our British friends have decided to leave us – which is very sad for all of us – but life goes on and so does the European Union,” Ms. Mogherini said, adding that since the UK Referendum last year, Europeans had recommitted to being “the strong and united power that our citizens and our partners need and deserve.”

The European Union is and will continue to be the reliable partner, she continued, stressing that “beyond our continent, we are the indispensable partner of a more cooperative, multilateral and peaceful world [...] we are becoming a more reliable partner for our neighbours and friends, starting with the UN and NATO.” She offered a series of examples to illustrate the EU’s commitment, especially in the Balkans and in Africa.

EU member States contribute nearly 40 per cent of the UN budget for peacekeeping operations. Through its voluntary contributions, the EU also covers half the budget of UN funds and agencies, such as the World Food Program ([WFP](#)), the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

So we will always return to this centre of gravity, this pivot of a rules-based international system. The European vision is the United Nations’ vision

“So let me be very clear, and speak directly to our American friends. It is essential for us that we all keep investing in these UN agencies. They are as important to global peace and security as defence spending – and sometimes even more. And we, Europeans, consider this support to the UN system as a crucial investment in our own security,” Ms. Mogherini stated.

She went on to praise the merits of a world order based on rules agreed upon and respected by all. It is for this reason that the European Union refuses to recognize the “illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. It is for this

reason also that the perpetrators of the chemical gas attack in Syria will be held accountable," she said.

Ms. Mogherini said the greatest divide in today's world "is between those who believe that international politics are a zero-sum game, and those who work to build win-win solutions and common ground." She noted that the "European way" is in a constant search for win-win solutions to all international issues from climate change to peace and security, adding that the UN "represents a space where compromise can always prevail over confrontation."

"So we will always return to this centre of gravity, this pivot of a rules-based international system. The European vision is the United Nations' vision," said Ms. Mogherini, adding that whoever wants to invest in this system, will find in the European Union a partner and a friend, a reliable, constructive, cooperative partner.

[UN relief workers concerned about civilians in Mosul threatened by Iraqi forces, ISIL](#)

9 May 2017 – As a new front opens in the fight between Iraqi forces and the group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in north-western Mosul city, United Nations humanitarian staff are raising concern about hundreds of thousands of civilians still living in the area.

Speaking to reporters in New York, the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General said that some 360,000 people are believed to be caught between the fighters.

"Families continue to arrive at the newly established mustering point at Badoush, northeast of Mosul, along the Syrian highway, where emergency assistance and basic services are being provided by humanitarian partners," Stéphane Dujarric said, citing information from UN humanitarian authorities.

Aid workers are responding to these and families still trapped inside "wherever access allows."

They are providing emergency response packages with basic food, water and hygiene items. Some 2.6 million people have received aid since October.

The UN and partners is trucking 3.1 million litres of water per day into eastern Mosul to meet water shortages. That figure was about 2.3 million litres at the end of April.

In addition to aid, the UN is concerned about the high trauma and casualty

rates.

Since 17 October, health care partners report over 12,000 people have been referred to hospitals in Mosul and neighbouring governorates, and nearly half of these reported cases were from west Mosul only, Mr. Dujarric said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) has said that new field hospitals have also been created, one for emergency reproductive and obstetric healthcare.

[Mediterranean: Coast guard on alert after shipwrecks as smugglers take advantage of calm waters](#)

9 May 2017 – About 6,600 migrants and refugees were rescued in the past few days trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea, United Nations authorities have said, as rescuers are on the lookout for up to 245 people missing after two shipwrecks this weekend.

“Rescue at sea operations, including by the Italian Coast Guard, in coordination with Frontex, and by [non-governmental organizations] are of crucial importance,” Cécile Pouilly, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), today [told](#) journalists in Geneva.

A rubber dinghy sank on Friday night with an estimated 132 people on board. Ms. Pouilly said some 50 people were rescued and disembarked in Sicily on Sunday, but more than 80 people are feared dead.

More recently, seven people out of an estimated 170 were rescued from a shipwreck that took place on Sunday off the coast of Libya.

This brings the number of migrants and refugees killed while trying to cross the straits to at least 1,309 this year, according to the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

Meanwhile, some [49,310 migrants and refugees](#) entered Europe by sea so far this year, IOM reported. The figure is lower than the 187,569 arrivals between 1 January and 7 May 2016.

VIDEO: UN raises alarm on migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea

The reason, according to IOM spokesperson Joel Millman, is the “strong drop” in traffic on the Turkey to Greece route following the Turkey-European Union deal reached in March.

Fleeing Libya

Most of the activity so far this year is from the Libya to Italy route, as well as to Spain.

Addressing the Security Council yesterday, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), said that the country lacks a rule of law and has become [“a marketplace for the trafficking of human beings.”](#) She warned of possible human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

Speaking from Rome today, IOM’s Flavia Di Giacomo suggested that political prisoners were among those fleeing the country.

“Our field colleagues providing direct assistance at the harbours reported that many migrants bore signs of torture,” Ms. Di Giacomo said.



Mediterranean migrant arrivals approach 50,000 in 2017; deaths: 1,309.
Source: IOM

More shipwrecks expected

The two latest shipwrecks came amid favourable weather over the weekend and improved sea conditions. As the weather warms, more people are expected to launch.

The likelihood of shipwreck is increasing as smugglers put more and more people on boats, Ms. Pouilly said, and the quality of vessels is decreasing.

In cases of shipwrecks, finding survivors has become more difficult. People on smuggler boats are increasingly less likely to have a satellite phone – a trend that Ms. Pouilly said is confirmed by the Italian coast guard.

“Between 2015 and 2016 the availability of those phones had decreased by half, so people were much more difficult to locate when problems occurred and could not call for help,” she said. There are confirmed reports of armed gangs attacking migrants on the high seas between Libya and Italy to steal their mobile phones and boat engines.

Mr. Millman said the development is an indication that smugglers’ networks are starting to unravel: “The components that smugglers feel they need to conduct this business are getting harder and harder to come by in a place like Libya, and so that would account for some of the violence and some of the robbery.”

AUDIO: IOM’s Joel Millman speaks to Daniel Johnson about reports that armed gangs targeting migrants on the high seas.