

Central African Republic: UN Mission condemns deadly attack on peacekeepers

9 May 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) has strongly condemned yesterday's attack on one of its convoys in the country's south that killed one Cambodian peacekeeper.

"MINUSCA vigorously denounces this odious attack on peacekeepers whose presence on Central African soil has no other objective than to help the country to protect its population and to allow the Central African Republic to emerge from the cycle of violence caused by armed groups," [said](#) a press release, referring to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR by its French acronym.

Eight peacekeepers were also injured, including one Cambodian and seven Moroccan, near Bangassou, about 474 km east of the nation's capital, Bangui, with four peacekeepers missing in action, according to MINUSCA.

The Mission said it has sent a helicopter and peacekeepers to secure the site and search for those missing in action. A medevac plane evacuated the injured peacekeepers, who have arrived in Bangui and are receiving medical care.

The Mission said it will do everything possible to ensure that the perpetrators of the attack –who fled into the bush – are arrested so that they can be brought to justice.

MINUSCA recalled that "harming the life of a peacekeeper can be considered a war crime and subject to prosecution."

The Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of MINUSCA, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, extended condolences to the family of the victim, his contingent and his country, while expressing his gratitude for the work and sacrifices of the peacekeepers in protecting the population in the country.

AUDIO: Onyanga-Anyanga explains to UN News how during the so-called "transhumance" season, when livestock is being moved to find suitable grazing grounds, attacks like these are not uncommon.

EU an 'indispensable' UN partner, working to build cooperative, rules-

based world 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 humanitarianians 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 sources 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.

[Coast guard on alert in Mediterranean after new shipwrecks; smugglers take advantage of calm weather](#)

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.



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

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.

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.”

UN experts ‘strongly’ condemn brutal murder of journalist and rights defender in Maldives

9 May 2017 – A group of United Nations human rights experts have ‘strongly’ condemned the murder of a prominent journalist and human rights defender in Maldives and called on the authorities to conduct a public inquiry into the killing and bring those responsible to justice.

Yameen Rasheed is an outspoken critic of the Government who wrote about alleged public corruption and human rights violations and was found stabbed in the stairway of his home in the capital, Malé, on 23 April.

‘We strongly condemn the killing of Mr. Rasheed and we urge the Government of the Maldives to take action now to promote and protect the rights of their people to express their views freely,’ the experts said in a [news release](#) issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Mr. Rasheed was also at the forefront of a campaign calling for accountability over the disappearance of another journalist and human rights defender, Ahmed Rilwan, who has not been seen or heard from since 8 August 2014.

According to OHCHR, he had received numerous death threats, which he had reported to the police, but apparently no action was taken to protect him.

This murder is the latest in a series of attacks against journalists and human rights defenders expressing liberal views. The killings come against a backdrop of rising religious intolerance in the Maldives and reports suggest that most of the attacks have gone unpunished.

In the news release, the rights experts recognized that the Maldivian authorities have started an investigation and arrested two individuals.

However, they stressed that the ‘extreme seriousness’ of the attack warranted ‘a thorough and independent public inquiry [...] bringing to bear all of the resources of law enforcement and focusing on Mr. Rasheed’s murder and the disappearance of Mr. Rilwan.’

Government has to ‘take active steps’ to promote tolerance and experts

Further in the release, the experts also noted that the island nation’s authority must take seriously their obligation to promote a free and safe space for all forms of expression.

It is the Government's responsibility [...] to take active steps in law and practice to promote toleranceRights experts

On 27 April 2017, four days following his statement condemning the murder of Mr. Rasheed, the President of Maldives reportedly stated in a public meeting that any speech that mocks Islam cannot be tolerated or protected under freedom of expression, read the release.

It is the Government's responsibility, the UN experts emphasized, to take active steps in law and practice to promote tolerance.

They also voiced concern over a legislation that uses religion and social norms to restrict freedom of expression in ways that are incompatible with the obligations of the Maldives under international law.

We call on the Government to revise this legislation and other restrictive measures and to show a sincere commitment to human rights and democracy, they stressed.

The UN human rights experts issuing the appeal included:

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN [Human Rights Council](#) to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.