

Syria: UN chief welcomes first aid convoy to Rukban camp since January, joint agency operation assists 50,000

The United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) kicked off a joint aid operation on Saturday, delivering vital humanitarian assistance to 50,000 people in south-east Syria's Rukban camp, near the Jordanian border.

In a statement welcoming the aid convoy, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) recognized that while “the long-needed delivery is an important achievement, the overall humanitarian access to this informal desert camp remains [wholly inadequate](#).”

As such, he called on all relevant actors “to ensure continued, full, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to the tens of thousands of displaced Syrians in this remote area, and to all people in need throughout the country.”

“The population at Rukban has not received assistance since January this year, and they are increasingly desperate,” Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, recently told a Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The long-needed delivery is an important achievement –
UN Secretary-General

“We are delivering food, sanitation and hygiene supplies, nutrition and health assistance in addition to other [core relief items](#) in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent,” said Ali Al-Za'tari, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria.

The inter-agency aid operation is expected to take three to four days as it also conducts an emergency vaccination campaign “to protect some 10,000 children against Measles, Polio and other deadly disease” and undertake rapid needs assessments.

The convoy was meant to deliver assistance to Rukban camp on 27 October, but was postponed for [security reasons](#).

Between basic commodity shortages, protection concerns, increasing violence and the death of several children unable to access medical treatment, the overall situation in the camp remains critical.

According to news reports, Rukban camp, which is a cluster of about 10,800 makeshift tents and mud huts, has been labeled as “one of the most desperate places in Syria.”

SARC's president called the operation "a huge positive step for the people there."

The UN urges all parties to allow safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all in need in line with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law.

"While this much-needed delivery is an important achievement, a longer-term solution must be found for the many civilians living in Rukban," underscored Mr. Al-Za'tari.

"We must do everything we can to continue helping civilians living in the harshest conditions in there," he concluded.

[Saudi Arabia, China, among 14 nations under UN human rights spotlight: what you need to know](#)

The United Nation's highest human rights body, the Human Rights Council (HRC), will start reviewing on Monday the track records of 14 countries, including Saudi Arabia and China. Here's our UN News guide to how it works and why it matters.

The process is called the [Universal Periodic Review](#), or UPR, and the ultimate goal is to improve the human rights situation for people around the globe.

What is it all about?

Every four and a half years, on a rotational basis, all 193 UN Member States undergo an interactive review of the human rights situation in their countries. The idea is to give equal treatment to all the countries and allow them to exchange best practices.

Who does the reviewing?

The Human Rights Council was created in 2006 as part of a general wave of reforms of the UN system. It is composed of 47 Member States, elected by the UN's 193 Member States. However, any country can take part in the discussions held during a review. Each State review is led by groups of three countries (known as "troikas"), randomly chosen.

How does this "interactive review" work?

Information and evidence are presented, and questions are asked by special

independent experts (called “Special Rapporteurs”), and the UN’s Member States. Civil-society organisations can also submit questions and evidence through country representatives. The State under review is given a chance to explain the actions they have taken, or plan to take, to address the issues presented. Recommendations are officially made, and technical assistance is provided where needed. Each State review lasts about three and a half hours.

Which countries are being reviewed on this rotation?

The UPR review sessions take place for two weeks, three times a year, and 14 countries are reviewed in each session – a total of 42 per year. This time, the following countries will be reviewed in this order: Saudi Arabia, Senegal, China, Nigeria, Mexico, Mauritius, Jordan, Malaysia, the Central African Republic, Monaco, Belize, Chad, Congo and Malta.

Which human rights are assessed?

The UPR assesses the human rights obligations set out in: the [UN Charter](#), the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the human rights treaties ratified by the reviewed State, and international humanitarian law.

What comes out of it?

A report is prepared by the troika with the involvement of the reviewed State and technical assistance from the UN human rights office (OHCHR). This report provides a summary of the actual discussion, with the questions, comments and recommendations made, as well as the responses by the reviewed State. The report is discussed a few days after the review and adopted at a plenary session of the Human Rights Council.

Is there any follow-up, any accountability?

The reviewed State has the primary responsibility to implement the recommendations contained in the final report. Countries are expected to provide information on what they have been doing to make changes during their review, as well as on any developments on human rights when they undergo their following UPR. The international community and OHCHR are there to assist and provide technical assistance, in consultation with the country concerned.

What happens if a State is not cooperating?

The Human Rights Council can take a series of measures, such as specific investigations and the setting up of dedicated committees to put pressure on non-cooperating Member States, and draw the world’s attention to them.

International court rejects Saif Gaddafi call to drop arrest warrant

A call by Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi – son of the late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and *de facto* Prime Minister of the country during the time of his father's rule – for an international arrest warrant against him to be ruled inadmissible, was rejected by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)), on Friday.

Fatou Bensouda, delivering her latest six-monthly statement to the Security Council on the situation in Libya, said that her office maintains that Mr. Gaddafi must be arrested and surrendered to the Court.

In the international warrant, issued by the ICC in June 2011, Mr. Gaddafi is accused of playing a key role in planning the suppression of civilian demonstrations by any means, including lethal force, against his father's regime.

In June Mr. Gaddafi argued that, because of ongoing domestic proceedings conducted against him in Libya, he cannot be tried at the ICC: this argument is rejected by the Court and the case, said Ms. Bensouda, remains admissible: because Mr. Gaddafi's challenge is currently *sub judice*, she was not willing to share further details.

Mr. Gaddafi is just one of several individuals in Libya whose alleged criminal acts could fall within the jurisdiction of the ICC which, said Ms. Bensouda, continues to monitor criminal actions of armed groups in the country:

"These armed groups represent a major threat to long-term peace and stability in Libya. We do not confine our investigations to any one group; we look at alleged [Rome Statute](#) [the treaty that established the ICC] crimes committed by actors across the territory of Libya...these alleged crimes include killings, sexual violence, torture and enslavement."

Ms. Bensouda said that her Office continues to make "considerable progress" in the Libya situation but admitted that "not one suspect" has so far been surrendered to the ICC.

Yemen: UN chief hails 'signs of hope'

in world's worst man-made humanitarian disaster

Welcoming recent indications that peace talks could resume soon to end Yemen's brutal civil conflict, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said on Friday there is "no room for complacency," and called on the warring parties and the international community to "halt the senseless cycle of violence" and "reach a political settlement".

Conflict in the country has its roots in 2011, but the situation escalated dramatically in 2015, when a Saudi-led coalition was invited by the internationally-recognized Government to intervene, uprooting millions and destroying civilian infrastructure across the country. "International humanitarian law has been flouted repeatedly," Mr. Guterres told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York.

Since 2015, access to basic services and sources of income has become increasingly challenging and, today, three quarters of the entire Yemeni population – 22 million women, children and men – find themselves dependent on some form of humanitarian assistance to survive.

"This is not a natural disaster. It is man-made. Yemen today stands on a precipice," said the UN chief.

[According to humanitarian agencies](#) working on the ground, the massive scale of humanitarian need has turned Yemen into the world's worst crisis in decades. Cholera is endemic, and famine is looming.

"On the humanitarian side, the situation is desperate," said Mr. Guterres, but "on the political side," he noted, "there are signs of hope".

"The international community has a real opportunity to halt the senseless cycle of violence and to prevent an imminent catastrophe," he stated.

The Secretary-General called for several steps to be taken urgently: an immediate cessation of hostilities, especially in densely populated areas; clearance without restrictions for essential imports such as food and fuel; and ensuring humanitarian access to civilians. He said efforts to kick-start the economy by stabilising the exchange rate of the Yemeni Rial; and paying the salaries and pensions of public servants were also essential; alongside additional funding from the international community for the humanitarian response.

"I welcome the strong, constructive engagement from many Member States in recent days joining their voices to the UN's repeated appeals for a cessation of hostilities and supporting my [Special Envoy](#)'s efforts," said the UN chief, who also welcomed the warring parties' expression of readiness to engage in peace consultations.

“There is now an opportunity for peace in Yemen,” he concluded, urging the parties to “overcome obstacles and resolve differences through dialogue at UN-facilitated consultations” in November.

[More countries partner to target ‘zero hunger’ in global south](#)

More than 20 countries committed to a new declaration on agricultural and rural development on Friday, in a bid to stamp out poverty and hunger. The commitment came at the end of a [forum](#) on international development cooperation in Changsha, China.

The Changsha Declaration aims to ramp up the efforts towards [South-South Cooperation](#) – an initiative working to eliminate hunger and malnutrition through the mutual sharing and exchange of good practices, resources, and know-how between countries of the “global south”.

At the forum’s conclusion, 26 countries and 11 international organizations signed on to the Declaration, which includes more information-sharing towards constructing common policies and programmes.

The forum coincided with the launch of a [new report](#), jointly published by the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), the [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF), [World Food Programme](#) (WFP), and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), alerting of severe food shortages plaguing Asia and the Pacific.

The region faces risk of “a colossal human loss” if countries in the region do not recommit themselves to ending all forms of malnutrition, regional experts from the four specialized UN agencies warned in a joint press release on Friday.

One recent large-scale example of cooperation can be seen in Bangladesh, where hundreds-of-thousands of displaced mainly-Rohingya refugees fleeing violence, faced a major hunger crisis, effecting the whole region. China has been fielding experts and technicians to share knowledge in various technical areas, including aquaculture, crop production and livestock breeding to boost the country’s agriculture sector.

Around the world, climate-related disasters, limited access to safe water, and violence have contributed to a general rise in malnutrition.

Director-General for FAO Jose Graziano da Silva announced plans to establish an International Centre of Excellence for Agriculture Innovation and Rural Development in Beijing during the forum; a facility that will provide training in agriculture innovation and promote investment in rural areas in

an effort to reach the first [2030 Sustainable Development Goal](#) of zero hunger.