

## Millions of children in Yemen vaccinated against polio through UN-backed campaign

10 April 2017 – Despite daunting challenges, United Nations agencies and partners in war-torn Yemen have completed a major nationwide polio inoculation campaign, vaccinating nearly five million children under the age of five against the paralyzing disease.

The UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#))-UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#))-World Bank supported campaign was launched in February and saw thousands of health workers, health educators, religious leaders and local council officials mobilize their communities to maximize the campaign’s reach, including in high-risk groups, such as internally displaced persons and refugees.

“Every minute, the situation of Yemen’s children gets worse. It is unacceptable that children in the country are dying of preventable diseases,” said the UNICEF Representative in Yemen, Meritxell Relaño, in a [news release](#) today.

“This is why, together with partners, we are sparing no effort to save more lives.”

Through the campaign, more than 369,000 children between the ages of six months and 15 years in the violence struck Sa’ada governorate were also inoculated against [measles](#) – a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease.

“WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, are working closely with health authorities to keep Yemen [polio](#)-free and curb the spread of measles,” [noted](#) Nevio Zagaria, the WHO Representative in Yemen.

This is why, together with partners, we are sparing no effort to save more lives  
Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative Yemen

Prior to 2006, measles was one of the leading causes of death in children under five in the country. But several vaccination campaigns have succeeded in drastically reducing child deaths from the disease.

“This partnership provides continuous support to national health authorities to increase vaccination coverage for vulnerable children across Yemen,” Dr. Zagaria added.

[Vaccinating children](#) is one of the safest and most cost effective health interventions to protect them from potentially fatal and debilitating diseases. Immunization campaigns are important, not only, to keep communities polio-free but also help minimize the risk of poliovirus coming into them.

The World Bank is committed to investing in children's health, which is a vital investment in the country's future, through working with our UN partners in Yemen and strengthening the local health institutions said Sandra Bloemenkamp, World Bank Country Manager for Yemen.

SEE RELATED: [Half of all health facilities in war-torn Yemen now closed; medicines urgently needed – UN](#)

The United Nations has been supporting Yemen's health system, which has been hit hard by the ongoing conflict.

In addition to providing essential health services for children. During this campaign, UN agencies delivered fuel, generators and solar-powered refrigerators to keep vaccines at a constant cool temperature. They also helped transfer of vaccines from national and provincial cold rooms to local health facilities and vaccination teams.

---

## [Security Council, UN Secretary-General and UN group condemn terror attacks in Egypt](#)

9 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the Security Council today condemned the bombings of two Coptic churches in Tanta and Alexandria, Egypt, which killed at least 41 people and injured more than 100 others.

Speaking through his spokesperson, the Secretary-General said that he hoped the perpetrators of this horrific terrorist act will be swiftly identified and brought to justice.

In a separate press statement, the Council called the bombings heinous and cowardly, and reaffirmed that terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The bombings were also strongly condemned by the High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which noted that the attacks took place during Palm Sunday celebrations when both churches were packed with worshippers aim at ruining the unity and diversity that characterize the Egyptian society.

Launched in 2005 through the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the UN, the Alliance maintains a global network of partners, including States, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.

Mr. Guterres, the Security Council and the UNAOC expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Egypt, and wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured, according to separate statements.

The 15-member Council also stressed the need to bring everyone responsible for the attacks to justice, and urged UN Member States to cooperate with the Government of Egypt and all other relevant authorities.

---

## [After attacks, UN senior official in South Sudan urges protection of aid workers and civilians](#)

8 April 2017 – Following recent attacks on civilians and aid workers in South Sudan, the top United Nations humanitarian official in the country today called on the Government and the opposition to protect civilians and ensure the safety and security of humanitarians.

Noting reports this week of “outrageous abuses” by both state and opposition actors in Upper Nile against aid workers, as well as reports of horrific attacks against civilians in Eastern Equatoria, Eugene Owusu, called the attacks “reprehensible and unacceptable.”

“I call on those in power [to take swift action](#) to end the targeting of innocent people in this conflict and to hold those responsible to account,” the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan said.

In his statement, Mr. Owusu noted two “serious” attacks against aid workers in Aburoc and Melut, both in the Upper Nile, since 31 March.

He condemned the attacks “in the strongest terms,” and demanded authorities to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

“Humanitarians are in this country to save lives. It is beyond reckoning that they continue to be killed, harassed and abused despite our repeated calls for action,” Mr. Owusu stressed.

Also this week, in Pajok, Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria, at least 6,000 people have been forced to flee to Uganda and reportedly several dozen have been killed, following an attack by government forces on the town.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) said that thousands more are thought to be sheltering in the bushes in areas surrounding the town, which was estimated to be home to up to 50,000 people.

"I am appalled by the reports," said Mr. Owusu. "I implore the leadership in South Sudan to rapidly investigate these allegations and to end all attacks against civilians."

The attacks come as the humanitarian situation in South Sudan is deteriorating. More than 3.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including nearly 1.9 million people who are internally displaced and more than 1.7 million who have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries.

OCHA estimates that an average of 2,000 South Sudanese refugees are arriving into Uganda each day, some 62 per cent of them children.

---

## [UN envoy 'deeply concerned' by growing tensions in Gaza stemming from pay cuts](#)

8 April 2017 – The United Nations envoy for the Middle East peace process today called for Palestinian unity amid concerns over local pay cuts.

"I am deeply concerned by the growing tensions in Gaza," said Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

"While the Palestinian Government needs to ensure its [to ensure its fiscal sustainability](#) under increasingly difficult economic conditions, it is important that reforms or decisions to reduce expenditures are fairly distributed and made with consideration to the harsh conditions under which people in Gaza live," Mr. Mladenov noted.

He urged the responsible parties to work together to find a solution and called on all factions "to allow the Palestinian Government to assume its responsibility in Gaza."

Calling Gaza "an integral part of the future Palestinian state," Mr. Mladenov said that no efforts should be spared to bring about "real national reconciliation" that ends the divide.

"Leaders have a responsibility to avoid escalation and bridge the growing divide between Gaza and the West Bank that further fragments the Palestinian people," he added.

His comments come as tens of thousands of people reportedly took to the streets in Gaza today, following 30 per cent cuts to civil servants' salaries.

---

## Syria: As US responds militarily to chemical attack, UN urges restraint to avoid escalation

7 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today urged restraint to avoid any escalation of the situation in the Middle Eastern country, after the United States responded militarily to an alleged chemical weapons attack earlier this week.

“I continue to follow the situation in Syria closely and with [grave concern](#),” said Mr. Guterres in a statement.

According to the US, the launch of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles into the Shayrat Airbase was a response to what it states was the Syrian Government’s [use of chemical weapons](#) from the base. The alleged 4 April chemical weapons attack killed many civilians in the Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib.

Decrying the ‘abhorrent’ chemical weapons attack, the UN chief stressed the need for accountability for such crimes in line with existing international norms and Security Council resolutions.

In the wake of the reported US airstrikes, Mr. Guterres said: “Mindful of the risk of escalation, I appeal for restraint to avoid any acts that could deepen the suffering of the Syrian people.”

“These events underscore my belief that there is no other way to solve the conflict than through a political solution,” he said, calling on the parties to urgently renew their commitment to making progress in the Geneva [[intra-Syrian talks](#)].

Meanwhile, the Security Council convened an urgent session to hear an update on the situation in Syria.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman said that the 30 December 2016 Syrian ceasefire “brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey” had faltered in the last two months amid a steady escalation of military activity.

He said that in mid-February, Government forces escalated their military operations in several areas of Damascus and Homs, recapturing Wadi Barada and al-Waar in Homs.

In February and March, armed opposition groups, sometimes coordinating with al-Nusra Front, launched offensives in Daraa, Damascus and Hama.

On 4 April, as Government forces were fighting to regain territory recently

lost to opposition offensives in northern Hama, disturbing reports emerged of an alleged chemical attack, in nearby Khan Shaykhoun in southern Idlib, Mr. Feltman said, adding that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has announced that its fact-finding mission is starting to investigate the alleged attack.

A statement from the Syrian General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces called the US response a “blatant act of aggression” which had caused six deaths and huge material damage.

Mr. Feltman said that Iran and Russia condemned the US attack, with the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and New Zealand expressing some support for the US strikes.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace and security, he said, urging the 15-member body to unite and exercise that responsibility to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun.

Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#) and the 2012 [Geneva Communiqué](#) remain the foundation of, and contain the core principles for, United Nations mediation efforts and ultimately a solution in this regard, he said.