

First South Sudan river convoy in five years, delivers UN aid to remote areas

For the first time since civil war erupted in South Sudan in 2013, a United Nations food convoy has managed to deliver thousands of tonnes of aid by river, to people in seven hard-to-reach locations, saving millions of dollars on costly aid flights.

The [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) convoy transported just over 750 tonnes of food and nutrition supplies up the Sobat river, a major tributary of the White Nile.

This meant negotiating access and security guarantees to allow safe-passage for the vessels through the Greater Upper Nile region, where thousands of South Sudanese people have been displaced by the war, said WFP.

The opening of more viable delivery routes helps us to reach more people, and get to them more efficiently – *Adnan Khan, WFP*

Life-saving aid for the isolated counties of Ulang, Luapiny and Nyirol, was previously only delivered by airdrop, which costs around six times more than using river or road transport.

The first convoy was loaded in Renk, composed of one barge and 11 smaller vessels that transported supplies of sorghum, pulses, vegetable oil and porridge – enough to sustain 40,000 people for one month.

According to a new Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) [report](#), backed by multiple UN agencies, 6.1 million people in South Sudan – approximately half of the population – face severe food shortages.

Millions of people don't know where their next meal is coming from", said Adnan Khan, WFP's Country Director in South Sudan. "They urgently need humanitarian assistance. Without it, they face serious challenges. The opening of more viable delivery routes helps us to reach more people and get to them more efficiently."

In response to these growing humanitarian needs, WFP is now providing emergency food supplies to 5 million people using road, air and river routes.

Indonesia earthquake: death toll rises beyond 2,000, UN targets nearly 200,000, supporting Government-led response

Following the series of devastating earthquakes, tsunami and landslides on 28 September in Indonesia, the death toll has risen to 2,010, with around 10,700 seriously injured and nearly 700 still reported missing, [according to](#) United Nations agencies on Tuesday.

Agencies are on the ground supporting the Government-led response and targeting 191,000 of the most vulnerable, with shelter, food, clean water and other life-saving assistance.

Immediately after the earthquake and tsunami, local responders on the ground began efforts to rescue people trapped in the rubble of collapsed buildings and provide urgent assistance to survivors.

Although physical access remains a challenge, progress is being made in reaching affected areas, [according to](#) the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) and “the humanitarian response is being scaled up” by UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the Indonesian Red Cross, in line with the Indonesian Government’s priorities.

More than 67,000 houses have been severely damaged or destroyed by the earthquake, tsunami and resulting landslides of liquified earth, leaving some 330,000 people without adequate shelter. Around 62,400 people have been displaced by the disaster and are staying in temporary sites with limited access to life-saving services. According to the national agency for disaster management (BNPB), more than 2,700 schools have been damaged, as well as 20 health facilities and water supply systems.

To respond to the most pressing needs, the [International Organization for Migration](#) is providing 28,000 gallons of bottled water and 1,700 emergency shelters. The [World Food Programme](#)’s logisticians have set up temporary storage structures to enable effective management and dispatching of aid items.

As children and women are particularly vulnerable in post-disaster contexts, protection services have been put in place, including child reunification efforts led by the [UN Children’s Fund](#) UNICEF, to assist the many separated children, and medical tents set up by the [UN Population Fund](#) (UNFPA) to provide reproductive care. Hygiene and maternity kits have been distributed and a team of midwives has been deployed.

Shortly after the disaster, the OCHA-managed Central Emergency Response Fund [allocated US\\$15 million](#) to support humanitarian activities on the ground, in particular those laid out in the [response plan](#), prepared by the UN in collaboration with the Government. The plan calls for \$50.5 million to reach 191,000 of the worst-affected women, children and men.

[Venezuela prisons 'beyond monstrous', UN warns, highlighting plight of Colombian detainees](#)

Conditions in Venezuela's prisons are "beyond monstrous", the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), said on Tuesday, before calling for an independent and transparent investigation into the death of a leading political opponent of the Government.

Issuing the alert in Geneva, OHCHR spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani said that there were specific concerns for the well-being of 59 Colombian nationals, who've been held for more than two years without being charged.

They were picked up in a security operation in 2016 and are now sharing a single cell at a facility in the country's capital, Caracas, Ms Shamdasani said. Many of them are ill, she told journalists.

"The 59 were accused of being Colombian paramilitaries but to date, no evidence or charges have been brought against them," Ms Shamdasani explained. "In November 2017, a Venezuelan judge had ruled that they should be unconditionally released. However, they remain in detention."

Investigation vital into death of Fernando Alban

Asked about Fernando Alban, a critic of the government whose death was announced on Monday at the headquarters of the country's intelligence services, Ms Shamdasani confirmed the need for an independent, transparent investigation to clarify reports that he had jumped to his death from the 10th floor.

"There are so many different reports, and quite a lot of speculation on exactly what happened," Ms Shamdasani said. "On whether Mr Alban committed suicide, whether he was thrown, whether he was ill-treated, which is why we need an independent, transparent investigation to clarify the circumstances of his death."

Overcrowding is rife...infrastructure is infested with rats and

insects. Not all detainees have access to natural light – *Ravina Shamdasani, OHCHR*

On the subject of the Colombian detainees, Ms Shamdasani explained that the men were rounded up during so-called Operations for the Liberation of the People (OLP), which the Venezuelan Government had said were designed to break up criminal gangs and bring criminals to justice.

Calling on the authorities to comply with the judge's ruling and free the Colombians, Ms Shamdasani underlined the dire conditions in the country's prisons.

"Overcrowding is rife," she said. "The infrastructure is infested with rats and insects. Not all detainees have access to natural light. And in many detention centres across the country, detainees have limited access to food and water, including drinking water."

The deteriorating human rights situation in Venezuela was detailed in [a recent UN report](#). Published in June, it highlighted the accelerating erosion of the rule of law amid unprecedented mass demonstrations and the excessive use of force in security operations.

Allegations of extrajudicial killings linked to OLP raids first surfaced in July 2015, the report found, after an operation took place in one of the poorest and most violent neighbourhoods in Caracas, Cota 905, in which 14 people died and 134 were arrested.

Citing information from the Attorney General's Office, the OHCHR report noted that between July 2015 and March 2017, 505 people were killed in OLPs, including four women and 24 children.

Dozens of detention centre deaths

The UN report also detailed the deaths last year of 39 inmates at a detention centre in the state of Amazonas, where security forces had retaken control, after detainees had established a system of self-government within the facility several years earlier.

"There have also been violent situations as you know in Venezuelan prisons, where because of these terrible conditions, or because of other ill-treatment, riots have broken out," Ms Shamdasani said. "So, really, the conditions are beyond monstrous in these detention facilities."

Citing civil society records, the UN human rights office report noted that "at least 570 people, including 35 children, were arbitrarily detained" in Venezuela between August 2017 and April 2018.

Ms Shamdasani said that one of the Colombian prisoners, William Estremor, had been taken to a hospital emergency department on Monday.

He was then reported to have been transferred to a small infirmary at premises in Caracas of the country's intelligence services, but there has

been no update on his condition, the OHCHR spokesperson explained.

“As far as international human rights law is concerned, their detention could very well amount to arbitrary detention,” Ms Shamdassani said. “This case has been referred to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.”

At its last session, the [UN Human Rights Council](#) mandated OHCHR to gather information on the situation in Venezuela and report back to Member States next year.

[Killing and rape of Bulgarian investigative reporter is an ‘outrage’ – UNESCO chief](#)

The head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), has condemned the “brutal” killing of investigative reporter Victoria Marinova, whose body was found on Saturday in the Bulgarian city of Ruse, bearing signs of suffocation and sexual assault.

“Attacks on journalists erode the fundamental human right to freedom of expression and its corollaries, press freedom and free access to information,” said Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO’s Director-General. “Moreover, the use of sexual and physical abuse to silence a woman journalist, is an outrage against the dignity and basic human rights of every woman”.

Ms. Marinova, who was 30, presented a current affairs programme called “Detector”, broadcast by the local, privately-owned television network, *TVN*. According to news reports, it is not yet clear whether her death was directly related to her journalistic work, but national authorities are reportedly carrying out a murder investigation.

Ms. Marinova is the third investigative journalist to be killed in the European Union in the past 12 months. Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed in a car bombing last October in Malta and Jan Kuciak was murdered in Slovakia in February.

Ms. Azoulay urged the authorities to “conduct a thorough investigation into this crime and bring its perpetrators to justice”, noting that “this is essential to defend freedom of expression and freedom of information in Bulgaria and, not least important, to ensure women’s safety, dignity and freedom”.

UNESCO is mandated with monitoring and advocating for the protection of a free press worldwide, including through a [UN Plan of Action](#) to protect

journalists and end impunity. In 2017, the agency recorded a total of seven journalists killed in Europe, four of whom were women. This represents the highest number of female reporters killed in single year, since 2006.

The percentage of women media professionals killed worldwide, rose from 4 per cent in 2012 to 14 per cent in 2017.

Independent inquiry needed into suspected 'enforced disappearance' of Saudi journalist: UN rights office

The “apparent enforced disappearance” of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was last seen reportedly visiting his country’s consulate in Istanbul last week, requires a full investigation involving both Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), said on Tuesday.

“This apparent enforced disappearance of Mr Khashoggi from the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul is of serious concern,” spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told journalists in Geneva.

“If reports of his death and the extraordinary circumstances leading up to it are confirmed, this is truly shocking.”

Noting that the development followed “several cases” in Saudi Arabia recently where human rights defenders and journalists have been detained, the OHCHR spokesperson underlined the need for an independent inquiry.

“We call for cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to conduct a prompt, impartial and independent investigation into the circumstances into Mr Khashoggi’s disappearance and to make the findings public,” Ms Shamdasani said.

The OHCHR spokesperson’s comments were echoed later on Tuesday by senior UN rights experts, who spoke of their concern at Mr Khashoggi’s disappearance on 2 October “and at allegations of state-sponsored murder” of the journalist and government critic.

“We are concerned that the disappearance of Mr Khashoggi is directly linked to his criticism of Saudi policies in recent years,” said Bernard Duhaime, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on [Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on [freedom of expression](#), David Kaye, and the UN Special Rapporteur on [summary executions](#), Agnes Callamard.

“We reiterate our repeated calls on the Saudi authorities to open the space

for the exercise of fundamental rights," they added, "including the right to life and of expression and dissent".

Given the lack of clarity surrounding Mr Khashoggi's disappearance, OHCHR's Ms Shamdassani said that her office would wait before issuing further statements.

"At the moment there are still a lot of questions about precisely what happened when Mr Khashoggi entered the consulate," she said. "So we will wait until matters are clearer before we can comment further."

According to news reports, Mr. Khashoggi went to the consulate a week ago to obtain a divorce document that would allow him to remarry his Turkish fiancée. She went with him, but had to wait outside, and he failed to return.

She told journalists that he had been required to surrender his mobile phone to consulate staff, and Mr. Khashoggi had advised her to call an adviser to the Turkish President, if he failed to emerge.