

# [Rohingya cannot become 'forgotten victims,' says UN chief urging world to step up support](#)

Painting a grim picture of villages being burned to the ground and other "bone-chilling" accounts he heard from Rohingya refugees who fled violence in Myanmar, the UN chief has called on the world to answer their calls for help with real action.

"Small children butchered in front of their parents. Girls and women gang-raped while family members were tortured and killed," United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said Tuesday in a *Washington Post* opinion piece, adding: "Nothing could have prepared me for the bone-chilling accounts."

The continuing plight of nearly one million Rohingya refugees driven from their homes in Myanmar was the focus of Mr. Guterres' trip along with Jim Yong Kim, the President of the World Bank Group, [during a visit last week](#) to Bangladesh – the country where they have found safe-haven.

Since late August 2017, widespread and systematic violence against Myanmar's mainly-Muslim minority Rohingya, has forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes in Rakhine state for Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar area, just across the border.

Prior to that, well over 200,000 Rohingya refugees were sheltering in vast, makeshift camps in Bangladesh as a result of earlier displacements.

In his *Washington Post* opinion piece, the UN chief recalled one Muslim man he met who broke down in tears, describing how his eldest son was shot dead in front of him.

The man's mother was brutally murdered and his house was torched to ashes. He then took refuge in a mosque but was discovered by soldiers who abused him and burned the Koran.

"These victims of what has been rightly called ethnic cleansing are suffering an anguish that can only stir a visitor's heartbreak and anger," continued Mr. Guterres.

"Their horrific experiences defy comprehension, yet they are the reality for nearly one million [Rohingya refugees](#)."

The Rohingya have suffered a pattern of persecution – lacking even the most basic human rights, starting with citizenship – in their native Myanmar.

The Secretary-General explained that systematic human rights abuses by Myanmar's security forces over the past year were "designed to instill terror

in the Rohingya population, leaving them with a dreadful choice: stay on in fear of death or leave everything simply to survive.”

While [Bangladesh](#)'s resources are stretched to the limits, wealthier countries are closing their doors to outsiders.

“The Government and people of Bangladesh have opened their borders and hearts to the Rohingya,” Mr. Guterres said, adding that such compassion and generosity “show the best of humanity and has saved many thousands of lives.”



UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

A Rohingya boy walks up steps in a rain-damaged section of the Chakmarkul refugee settlement.

## **A global response needed**

A [Global Compact on Refugees](#) is being finalized by UN Member States, seeking to ensure that, among other things, front-line countries, like Bangladesh, are not alone in responding fleeing waves of humanity.

Meanwhile, the UN and humanitarian agencies are working flat-out alongside the refugees themselves and host communities to improve conditions.

“But far more resources are desperately needed to avert disaster and to give fuller expression to the principle that a refugee crisis calls for a global sharing of responsibility,” stressed the UN chief, pointing that only 26 per cent of an \$1 billion international [humanitarian appeal](#) has been funded.

This shortfall means that malnutrition prevails in the camp, access to water and sanitation is iffy, refugee children are missing basic education and inadequate measures are left to alleviate the [monsoon risk](#).

“Makeshift homes hastily built by the refugees on arrival are now threatened by mudslides, requiring urgent action to find alternative sites and build

stronger shelters,” he detailed.

Mr. Guterres spoke of his visit to Bangladesh, saying “the Rohingya people need genuine assistance.”

The crisis will not be solved overnight, yet the situation cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely.

Unless the root causes of the violence in Rakhine state are addressed comprehensively, hatred will continue to fuel conflict.

“The Rohingya people cannot become forgotten victims. We must answer their clear appeals for help with action,” concluded the UN chief.

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## **Fragile countries risk being ‘stuck in a cycle of conflict and climate disaster,’ Security Council told**

Climate change – and the shortages of water and food that come from it – is becoming increasingly linked to conflict, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council on Wednesday, warning that countries most vulnerable to drought and crop failure are also most vulnerable to conflict and fragility.

“Climate change is inextricably linked to some of the most pressing security challenges of our time,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed during a debate intended to deepen understanding of climate-related security risks.

“Fragile countries are in danger of becoming stuck in a cycle of conflict and climate disaster. Where resilience is eroded, communities may be displaced and exposed to exploitation,” she added.

Ms. Mohammed is just back from her trip to Africa’s Lake Chad Basin with Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, which chaired today’s Council meeting.

Where resilience is eroded, communities may be displaced and exposed to exploitation – *Deputy Secretary-General*

The region is “experiencing a crisis brought on by a combination of political, socio-economic, humanitarian and environmental factors,” Ms. Mohammed explained.



She noted that the drastic shrinking of Lake Chad by more than 90 per cent since the 1960s has led to environmental degradation, socio-economic marginalization and insecurity affecting 45 million people.

Exacerbated competition over scant resources and the vicious cycle of risk and vulnerability have decreased the resilience of populations to cope with humanitarian crises. Declining economic activity and agricultural loss have led to a lack of employment opportunities across the region.

The resulting socio-economic marginalization, she said, has exposed populations, in particular the young, to the risk of violent extremism and provided breeding ground for recruitment by groups such as Boko Haram.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed briefs the Security Council meeting on understanding and addressing climate-related security risks.

The Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, has left over 10 million people displaced and resulted in massive destruction of basic infrastructure, health and educational facilities, commercial buildings, private houses and agricultural assets.

“The multidimensional nature of this crisis underlines the complex relationship between climate change and conflict,” she stressed.

“We must understand climate change as one issue in a web of factors that can lead to conflict. Within this web, climate change acts as a threat multiplier, applying additional stress on prevailing political, social and economic pressure points,” she added.

The Deputy Secretary-General said that over the last 18 months, the Security Council has also recognized the adverse effects of climate change on stability in other geographical areas, including West Africa, the Sahel and

the Horn of Africa.

The UN system is increasing climate-related security risk assessments and management strategies, she noted.

For example, the Secretary General's forthcoming report on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel will report on recent developments involving the climate-security nexus in the region. The recalibrated UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is similarly climate-oriented, she said.

Ms. Mohammed also emphasized the importance of supporting programmes that place women and Youth at the heart of efforts.

"Desertification means women must travel larger distances to fetch water and food, forcing them to miss out on education and economic opportunities in the long term. Youth without jobs will take alternate route to terrorism," she said.

In conclusion, she warned that climate change is moving faster than responses, urging the Security Council to do its part to help humankind keep pace.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Security Council meeting on Maintenance of international peace and security  
Understanding and addressing climate-related security risks.

Also addressing the Council was Hassan Janabi, Iraq's Minister of Water Resources, who said that major river basins in Iraq and the rest of the region are subject to the greatest ever threat, resulting from climate change, as well as competition for shared water resources.

He said the absence of implementable bilateral and multilateral agreements or regional frameworks for the equitable use of shared water is contributing to potential conflicts that could and should be avoided.



Iraq fully supports diplomatic means to solve water scarcity issues, including through “water diplomacy” and similar initiatives intending to maintain the security of the planet with a view to creating an environment of trust and cooperation, he added.

Hindou Ibrahim, International Indigenous People Forum on Climate Change, said that the Security Council must address climate change as a security risk.

She said that in the Sahel, where 90 per cent of the economy relies on agriculture and pastoralism, a heat wave and drought has the potential to immediately hurt the economy and the people.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Security Council meeting on Maintenance of international peace and security  
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At the regional level, she added, climate change contributes to reinforcing terrorist groups as they take advantage of poverty to recruit the youngest and most fragile.

Sweden’s Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom chaired the debate.

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## [World Population Day: ‘A matter of human rights’ says UN](#)

Family planning was affirmed to be a human right 50 years ago, leading to what would become the annual observation of [World Population Day](#), which

focuses attention on the impact the number of children born, has on the world.

In her message for the Day, UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem took that a step further, saying: “Family planning is not only a matter of human rights; it is also central to women’s empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving [sustainable development](#).”

Yet, in developing regions, the UNFPA chief pointed out that some 214 million women still lack safe and effective family planning, for reasons ranging from lack of information or services, to lack of support from their partners or communities.

“This threatens their ability to build a better future for themselves, their families and their communities,” she explained.

The Day was [inspired](#) by public interest generated by one particular date of huge significance. The UN estimated that it was 11 July, 1987, which the world’s population reached five billion people.

UNFPA supports family planning in developing countries by ensuring a reliable supply of a full range of modern contraceptives, strengthening national health systems and promoting gender equality.

“UNFPA is fully committed to continuing to support countries’ efforts to uphold the right of individuals, especially women, to plan a family,” Ms. Kanem continued. “We are striving to end all unmet need for voluntary family planning in developing countries, by 2030.”

“But, we cannot do this alone,” underscored the Executive Director, outlining the need for governments, parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society to join forces to make it happen.”

As a first step, she suggested that for a mere 20 cents per person annually, developed countries could close the global family planning funding gap, which Ms. Kanem said would be “a strategic and doable investment in the world’s future.”

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## [Health conditions for citizens of Yemen’s key port city ‘remain critical’ says UN agency](#)

Even before the escalation of conflict in Hudaydah, conditions in Yemen’s port city were some of “the most dire in the country,” according to the

United Nations health agency on Tuesday.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) said that Hudaydah had registered the highest incidences of suspected cholera cases of any city; around 14 per cent of those reported nationwide since the start of the crippling epidemic, in April 2017.

In addition to that highly infectious disease, there have been 209 suspected cases of diphtheria and 252 of measles.

“The intensification of fighting in Hudaydah endangered not only those directly affected but also the 70 per cent of the population who depended on vital supplies, including health-care supplies, that flowed through Hudaydah port, WHO’s Tarik Jašarević told journalists in Geneva on Tuesday.

“The port constituted a lifeline not only for the city but for all the northern governorates,” he added.

Although fighting has decreased and the port remains operational, from 13 June to 7 July a total of 328 injured and 46 deaths were recorded there, according to local health facilities.

Already plagued with one of the highest malnutrition rates in the country, at just over 25 per cent, Mr. Jašarević said that “the current surge in fighting will likely further exacerbate the situation.”

The port remains open and the city has seven fully-functioning therapeutic feeding centers, with seven others in neighbouring governorates, he updated.

For now, the port remains open and Hudaydah can be reached through a narrow passage with many checkpoints, but no blockade, he said.

The WHO spokesperson said its main pillar of operation are trauma care, cholera, malnutrition, and continuity of care.

Speaking for the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), Joel Millman told journalists in Geneva that agency had received a “generous contribution from Kuwait of \$10 million, earmarked for humanitarian assistance in Yemen.”

He added that IOM’s overall request for Yemen was \$96.2 million, while the appeal for the entire humanitarian community’s Humanitarian Response Plan, was for nearly \$3 billion.

Turning to the humanitarian situation on the ground, Mr. Millman said that as the war enters its third year, half the country’s population is living in areas directly affected by the conflict, and more than two thirds of the population – would require humanitarian aid during 2018.

Nearly 90 per cent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been displaced for at least one year or more, including 69 per cent who have been displaced for more than two years.



“The protracted nature of the displacement is straining IDPs and host communities’ abilities to cope,” he said.

A further one million IDPs had returned to their areas of origin but remained in dire need of aid. IOM called on all parties in the conflict “to respect international humanitarian law and not to target any civilians, including migrants.”

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## [Security Council hails ‘historic and significant’ joint peace declaration by Ethiopia and Eritrea](#)

The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday [described](#) the Joint Declaration, signed by the leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia, as “a historic and significant” move with “far-reaching consequences” for the whole Horn of Africa region and beyond.

The Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship signed on Monday by Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki, and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, signals the resumption of diplomatic ties for the first time in two decades, and opens a “new chapter of cooperation and partnership,” said the statement issued on behalf of the 15 Council members.

Among the measures agreed by the two men during the historic meeting in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, were the restoration of flights, the opening of embassies, and for Ethiopia to use port facilities in Eritrea, according to news reports. A block on telecommunications was also lifted, allowing families divided following a war across the disputed border between the countries, which left thousands dead, to telephone each other.

The UN is ready to do whatever the two parties ask us to do – *UN chief António Guterres*

The Council “recognized the call in the Joint Declaration for solidarity and support, and encouraged all actors to offer their support to the peace process”, said the statement, adding that members “stand ready to support Eritrea and Ethiopia in their implementation of the Joint Declaration”.

Council members also took note of the Secretary-General’s offer to support the process. On Monday, UN chief António Guterres told journalists in the Ethiopian capital, where he was [attending](#) the second annual UN-African Union conference, that the “recent evolution” of relations in the past few weeks

was “a very important signal of hope, not only for these two countries, not only for Africa, but for the whole world”.

“The UN is ready to do whatever the two parties ask us to do...The UN will be entirely at their disposal to do whatever is necessary to facilitate the success of what needs to be done,” added Mr. Guterres.

Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister of Ethiopia only in February, following the resignation of his predecessor, and is the first leader to hail from the majority Oromo ethnic group.

Since taking office, he has implemented a large number of political reforms, and previously served in Government as Minister for Science and Technology.