

[UN Mission condemns suicide bombing in central Somalia as attempt to derail reconciliation process](#)

The United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has condemned the suicide bombing on Saturday that reportedly killed government security officers and civilians in the city of Gaalkacyo.

“This attack occurred because extremists feel threatened by the progress that is being made with reconciliation efforts in Gaalkacyo,” said the head of UNSOM, Michael Keating in a [press statement](#).

“The country has suffered enough violence and bloodshed; it is time for reconciliation,” added Mr. Keating, who is also the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia.

According to initial reports, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives in an area of the city known as Jiir Abdullahi Yusuf, where security forces were stationed, killing at least two senior security force commanders as well as civilians. Al-Shabaab has reportedly claimed responsibility.

“The people and authorities in Gaalkacyo are courageously finding a way forward; they should not be derailed by this assault on their chances of a peaceful future,” Mr. Keating said.

UNSOM expressed its condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims and wished the injured a full and speedy recovery.

The Puntland and Galmudug state administrations control the northern and southern sections of Gaalkacyo, in north-central Somalia, respectively. This division has been a cause for recurring cycles of violence.

In January 2017, however, an agreement was reached by the Puntland and Galmudug state presidents. The accord stipulated a withdrawal of forces from the disputed city, the removal of all roadblocks to allow free movement of people and goods, and the introduction of joint police training and patrols.

[Aid agencies face ‘life threatening’ funding crisis as monsoon rains barrel](#)

towards Cox's Bazar camps – UN

The lives of tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees hang in the balance as monsoon and cyclone seasons threaten camps in southern Bangladesh, the United Nations migration agency warned Friday, appealing for urgent financial support to prepare the area against floods and landslides.

Without new funding, tens of thousands of people who poured into the camps, fleeing violence triggered in Myanmar last August will be at risk, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) cautioned.

“We cannot wait for funding to come in after the emergency is over and possibly [preventable tragedies have occurred](#),” said John McCue, IOM’s Senior Operations Coordinator in Cox’s Bazar.

“We need to be able to act now if lives are to be saved,” he added.

Almost a million Rohingya refugees live in the Cox’s Bazar district under tarpaulins, on steep, sandy slopes – 25,000 of whom have been identified as at the highest risk of landslides.

Without aid, numerous will have to remain in these hazardous locations and hundreds of thousands of others will also be at risk if roads become impassible, blocking access to aid supplies and medical services.

“Tarp stocks are also rapidly running out and IOM, which oversees shelter distribution, reports that by mid-May supplies will fall below critical levels,” maintained Mr. McCue, noting that without more funding, neither new shelters nor replacements would be available to those who lost homes during storms.

He also pointed out that other risks included safe water supply systems, which if collapsed could put hundreds of thousands of refugees in jeopardy of waterborne diseases.

Only nine per cent of a \$951million joint agency response plan has been secured. Of that, \$182 million allocated to provide Cox’s Bazar with assistance through December 2018 is facing a shortfall of almost \$151 million.

Aid staff on the ground are working to improve shelters, secure key access roads and have emergency response services ready should the worst happens, “but the harsh truth is that we cannot keep doing that if we do not have the funds,” said Mr. McCue stated.

IOM, the [World Food Programme](#) and the [UN refugee agency](#) are working alongside the government of Bangladesh and others to manage the scale of the response in Cox’s Bazar – the world’s biggest refugee settlement.

“If significant funding is not secured in the next few weeks to keep

operations running, there is a high likelihood that many children, women and men may die, when they could have otherwise been saved,” concluded Mr. McCue.

Students gather at UN to ‘Remember Slavery,’ honour those who suffered brutal slave trade

Students from around the world joined United Nations and Government officials in New York on Friday to celebrate the contributions made by the people of African descent, beginning from the time they were taken from their countries and forced into generations of servitude.

Speaking to *UN News* prior to the event, Missouri Sherman-Peter, the Permanent Observer for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to the UN, highlighted the importance of recognizing the heritage of those compelled into slavery, and informing the younger generation of what happened centuries ago.

“Knowledge is power, and you can’t begin to resolve problems, address them or recognize and be proud of what you are unless you have the knowledge,” she said.

“When you bring students to think that way, the problems and differences [among people] become less when everyone understands what happened [...] was horrific. But we are moving on and we can only move on with the young people with us.”

For over 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children have been victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history.

Christian Crouch, an Associate Professor of History and Director of American Studies, Bard College outlined the ordeals they faced.

“Five years is the number of years a slave survived in a sugar plantation that was nothing more than a factory in a field,” she told young people at the commemorative event.

Responding to a question from schoolchildren in Tanzania, Ms. Crouch explained that the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade continue to reverberate.

“Slavery still flourishes in many places and not only on the African continent. It exists in different forms on every continent of the world,” she said.



UN News/María Morera

Students attending the commemorative event visit the Ark of Return.

The student conference, held as part of the UN Remember Slavery Programme, is organized every year in spring to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It will be followed by educational activities throughout the year, including roundtable discussions, film screenings, an exhibition and tours, including to the [Ark of Return](#), the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

READ ALSO: [Architect of UN slavery memorial explains 'The Ark of Return'](#)

Commemorative events are also organized around the world by UN offices and Information Centres to raise awareness on the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade.

[South Sudan: Peace process under threat as violence surges across country, warns UN Mission](#)

Surging violence in parts of South Sudan is putting thousands of war-weary civilians at risk and endangering the fragile peace process in the world's youngest nation, the United Nations peacekeeping mission there has warned.

["Innocent civilians are being caught in the crossfire](#), including many women, children and elderly people," David Shearer, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and the head of the UN Mission in the country (UNMISS) said.

"Our teams on the ground are reporting incidents of killing, sexual violence, homes being burnt to the ground, cattle raiding, and the looting of hospitals and schools."

Intense fighting has been reported in Nhialdiu, Mayendit, Rupchai, Thaker, and Mirinyal, in the vicinity of Leer and Bentiu in the Unity region, as well as around Motot and Akobo in Jonglei.

In Leer, in the northern part of the country, armed clashes have occurred near a temporary UNMISS operating base and peacekeepers have placed on high alert to protect some six hundred internally displaced persons who sought sanctuary nearby, said the UN Mission.

The hostilities have forced the relocation of 30 humanitarian workers resulting in disruption of aid services.

"This surge in violence [...] is at odds with the cessation of hostilities agreement that was signed just a few months ago," explained Mr. Shearer.

"We urge the warring parties to lay down their guns, put the interests of the people first, and work together to build lasting peace."

In addition, with the upcoming peace talks at the High Level Revitalization Forum, the head of UNMISS underscored the need for all parties to stop fighting and "come together in good faith."

"Political leaders must demonstrate they are willing to compromise and resolve this conflict which is causing terrible harm to their people."

Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan has spent much of its short life mired in conflict, as what began as a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full-blown war late in 2013.

[**UN agency urges Greece to upgrade conditions at Evros reception centre amid rising number of refugee arrivals**](#)

Some 2,900 mostly Syrian and Iraqi families have arrived in Evros this month, with eight others losing their lives trying to cross the Evros River from

Turkey – prompting the United Nations refugee agency to call on the Greek Government to improve the conditions at its reception area.

Located in the north-eastern part of Greece, the increase in new arrivals is placing a strain on the Fylakio Reception and Identification Centre, the only one in Evros, which is filled beyond its 240-person capacity – including 120 unaccompanied and separated children.

“With the Reception and Identification Centre overwhelmed, and struggling to conduct timely registration and identification, or to provide services such as medical and psycho-social care and interpretation, the authorities initially place people, including many children, in [inappropriate police detention facilities](#) in the area while they wait for places at the centre to open up,” Charlie Yaxley, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) office told a regular press briefing in Geneva on Friday.

He went on to inform the press that some have been held in police detention for more than three months with dismal conditions and limited services.

“A UNHCR visit found families in one facility sleeping on the floor beside a row of cells,” he elaborated, adding that in a separate police facility, only one doctor and four nurses were available for more than 500 people – including pregnant women, very young children and people in need of medical and psycho-social care.

While welcoming the recent release of more than 2,500 people from detention, UNHCR expressed concern that they are being done without vulnerability screening and information on asylum and other options.

“Their situation must be urgently addressed to enable access to care and asylum procedures,” stressed Mr. Yaxley.

The spokesperson acknowledged the police and the Fylakio Centre were trying to address the challenges, adding that with increasingly stretched resources, the situation has become untenable.

He proposed a number of measures to stabilize the situation, such as immediately setting up reception and identification mobile units and transferring unaccompanied children to safe accommodation and families in detention to safe shelters.

“UNHCR will continue to assist the Greek authorities through the provision of technical and material support, including blankets, clothing, hygiene items, solar-powered lamps and other non-food items,” he concluded.