

[Rights violations in South Sudan may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, concludes UN panel](#)

United Nations panel on human rights violations in South Sudan documents unspeakable cruelty against civilians, not just limited to widescale brutal massacres and sexual violence but extending to individuals trying to defend themselves or their families and had their eyes gouged out, their throats slit or were castrated.

A United Nations inquiry into allegations of human rights violations and abuses committed during the ongoing conflict in South Sudan has concluded that some of the violations may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Since conflict erupted in the world's youngest nation in 2013, over four million people have been driven from their homes.

["Holding those in charge in South Sudan accountable](#) for the intentional suffering they inflict on their own people is crucial to stemming this humanitarian catastrophe," Andrew Clapham a member of [Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan](#), said on Friday.

The Commission, established by the Human Rights Council in March 2016, has [identified](#) more than forty senior military officials who may bear individual responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country.

In addition to investigating allegations, the Commission is also mandated to collect and preserve evidence for use in the Hybrid Court and other accountability mechanisms agreed under the 2015 peace agreement.

Urging for the swift setting up of the court, Yasmin Sooka, the Chair of the Commission underscored "ultimately this is the only way to stop the rampant devastation of millions of human lives by South Sudan's leaders."

The public report, which reflects only a portion of the information in the 58,000 documents and 230 witness statements collected, documents abhorrent instances of cruelty against civilians, including massacres, sexual violence as well as destruction of homes, hospitals and schools.

People who tried to defend themselves or their families had their eyes gouged out, their throats slit or were castrated.

It also noted that children have been recruited by all sides in the conflict and forced to kill civilians; in many cases they have watched loved ones raped or killed. The elderly have not been spared either.

Unable to flee on foot they have been left behind in villages only to be

hacked to death or burned alive, it adds.

The [report](#) is to be discussed by the Human Rights Council – the highest UN intergovernmental body on all matters related to human rights – next month.

[UN migration agency reports rise in displacement in northern Mali](#)

A resurgence of communal violence and armed conflict in recent weeks has led to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Mali, the United Nations International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) reported on Friday.

Despite a drop in numbers towards the end of 2017 – from 40,743 individuals in October to just over 38,100 in December – latest figures show an additional 8,164 displaced persons have registered in the regions of Mopti, Menaka, Timbuktu and Gao.

IOM said the increase has put “significant pressure” on humanitarian operations, given the fragile security situation in the region.

“Northern Mali still holds the largest number of IDPs especially due to the deterioration of the security situation,” according to a press release by the agency.

Mali, located in West Africa, was rocked by a political crisis in 2012, including a military coup and rebellion in its northern region.

A United Nations peacekeeping mission, known by the French acronym, [MINUSMA](#), has been supporting the political process and stabilization efforts since 2013.

The UN migration agency had expected an end to internal displacement in Mali by the end of last year, “provided there was no resurgence of armed conflict or communal violence to complement the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance to IDPs and host communities.”

However, IOM said that in addition to the tensions in the north, the international community “has struggled to mobilize” funding to support vulnerable communities and IDPs.

IOM and its partners plan to respond to the new wave of displacement, funds permitting.

Fresh threats loom over 720,000 Rohingya children 'cast adrift, trapped in limbo' – UNICEF

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya children are threatened in Bangladesh by approaching severe weather or by ongoing violence in Myanmar in their homeland, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned on Friday, calling urgently for scaled-up assistance ahead of the region's storm season and to address the root causes of the crisis.

"Some 720,000 Rohingya children are [essentially trapped](#) – either hemmed in by violence and forced displacement inside Myanmar or stranded in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh because they can't return home," Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes said Friday.

UNICEF's [report](#), *LIVES IN LIMBO: No End in Sight to the threats facing Rohingya children*, marks six months since the start of the latest exodus of Rohingya refugees into southern Bangladesh.

The agency says that floods caused by the forthcoming cyclone season are likely to engulf the fragile and insanitary camps where most of the refugees are living, raising the likelihood of waterborne disease outbreaks and forcing clinics, learning centres and other facilities for children to close.

The report also estimates that some 185,000 Rohingya children remain in Myanmar's Rakhine state, fearful of the violence and horror that drove so many of their relatives and neighbours to flee.

In Bangladesh, there are estimated to be around 534,000 Rohingya refugee children from last year's and previous influxes.

"This is a crisis without a quick fix that could take years to resolve unless there is a concerted effort to address its root causes," stressed Mr. Fontaine.

The report states that the Rohingya are a people cast adrift – chased from their homes and communities, trapped in limbo and deprived of their basic rights – while facing fresh threats to their well-being.

UNICEF calls on the Myanmar Government to end the violence, and to address what it terms a crisis of human rights in Rakhine state, referring to restrictions on Rohingya people's freedom of movement, extremely limited access to health care, education and livelihoods, and consequent dependence on humanitarian support.

According to the report, recognizing the Rohingya people's basic rights would create conditions necessary for the refugees to return to their former homes in Myanmar.

"People won't go home unless they are guaranteed safety and security, unless they have citizenship, unless they can send their children to school and have a chance of a future," Mr. Fontaine explained.

Since August 2017, a lack of access to many parts of the Rakhine state has severely restricted the work of UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies.

Immediate and unimpeded access to all children in the state is imperative – along with longer-term efforts to address intercommunal tension and promote social cohesion, said UNICEF.

Aid efforts led and overseen by the Bangladesh Government have averted disaster as local communities have accommodated 79,000 Rohingyas.

[UN migration agency seeks \\$194 million in funding to help Syrians affected by 7-year conflict](#)

The United Nations migration agency on Friday launched an appeal for \$194 million to help displaced Syrians living in and outside their war-torn country as well as the communities hosting them.

Seven years into the armed conflict in Syria, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Over 13 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country, including 6.1 million internally displaced. Nearly 3 million people are living in hard-to-reach or besieged areas.

In addition, over 5.5 million Syrians have taken refuge in the five neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt.

With its 2018 appeal, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) seeks to assist:

- 1 million people with non-food items and shelter support
- 800,000 people with access to safe water and services
- 500,000 people with health services
- 500,000 people with community-led protection services
- 200,000 people with livelihood opportunities
- 135,000 displaced people to receive adequate services in camps

- 35,000 children to attend school

“These [interventions](#) are vital to ensuring that Syrians get the life-saving assistance and livelihood support that many desperately need,” said IOM Director General William Lacy Swing, from the Organization’s headquarters in Geneva.

Since the crisis began, economic growth within host countries has been severely affected. With high unemployment rates, especially among young people, and limited resource availability, it is challenging for governments and municipalities to provide basic services.

IOM tracked 850,000 internally displaced persons returning to their areas of origin during 2017. During the same period, however, 2.9 million people continued to flee their homes, illustrating the continuing adverse effect of violence and conflict on the Syrian population.

Access to primary health care has been drastically reduced inside Syria, while agricultural production has been cut in half compared to 2011 levels.

In 2017, IOM organized the transportation of over 37,000 Syrian refugees from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt to 23 countries including Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, Norway, the United States and the Netherlands, among others.

[Road to peace in Central African Republic remains ‘long and difficult,’ says UN envoy](#)

The violence plaguing communities across the Central African Republic (CAR) is a reminder that despite the efforts of all stakeholders, the path to peace, stability and reconciliation in the country remains long and difficult, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council on Thursday.

The “tragedy” of refugees and internally displaced persons unable to return to their homes due to violence and insecurity “darkens an already precarious humanitarian picture where the lives of nearly half of CAR’s population would be unimaginable without emergency humanitarian assistance,” said Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN mission in the country, known by its French acronym, [MINUSCA](#).

Such “unacceptable” abuses and violations of human rights are mostly committed by armed groups which have not yet shunned criminal activities and

refuse to take up the Government's offer for dialogue, he added.

The UN envoy informed the 15-member Council of work undertaken by the Government to restore State presence and strengthen newly established democratic institutions.

"This positive impetus is also seen in the reinforcement of national judicial structures," he said, noting the recent establishment of the Bangui and Bouar Courts of Appeal and that preparations for the launching of the work of a special criminal court are "well advanced."



UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head MINUSCA, addresses the Security Council.

Highlighting the importance campaign against immunity, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga said that the setting up of the formal justice systems together with the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms would a long way in ensuring lasting peace.

Also in his briefing, the head of MINUSCA informed the Security Council on the activities of the mission and its commitment to strong delivery of its mandate while abiding by the highest standards of conduct and discipline.

"Efforts are underway to more effectively protect civilian populations while ensuring the safety and security of our own peacekeepers," he said, central to his, he underscored is ensuring full implementation of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.