

Bangladesh 'fully committed' to UN peacekeeping as vital element of global peace and security – UN Force Commander

7 February 2018 – UN peacekeeping is a “very important component” of keeping the world safe and secure, and Bangladesh remains “fully committed” to contributing men – and increasingly women – to serve.

That’s according to Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh, who is currently the Force Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which goes by the acronym UNFICYP.

Maj. Gen. Humayan began his long and distinguished UN career in the hostile environment of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), in Bosnia, serving in the capital Sarajevo, which was besieged by Bosnian-Serb forces during the mid-1990s.

He also served as a Military Observer with the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), from 2002 to 2003.

He has served as Brigadier General and Director of Military Operations for the Bangladesh Army, and is currently Commandant of his country’s Military Academy.

Highlighting Bangladesh’s commitment to foster women peacekeepers and police, and increase the numbers who serve by 2020 and beyond, he told UN News from his base in Cyprus that it was “virtually impossible” to protect civilians who rely on UN peacekeeping missions around the world, without the participation of women.

He said there were 157 Bangladeshi women peacekeepers currently serving, and more than 1,400 had been deployed throughout the world in total over the years, including an all-female Bangladeshi Formed Police Unit that served in Haiti between 2015 and 2017.

“Personally, I believe that it’s very important that you have gender parity, particularly the participation of female peacekeepers,” he said.

He added that in today’s modern “multi-dimensional” peacekeeping missions focussing on civilian protection, “your situational awareness is much better and naturally your performance will also be better.”

He said that majority-Muslim Bangladesh was committed to having what he called a “female engagement platoon” in every mission where they contribute troops and police.

Maj. Gen. Humayan said there was widespread public support for women playing

an active role in public service across a wide range of sectors.

Women officers began serving in the Bangladeshi Army back in 2003.

He also praised the “tremendous” support that Bangladeshi blue helmets receive at home, for their work across ten peacekeeping missions, as it currently stands.

“The Bangladesh Government is always more than willing to make sure that the contingents who are deployed; they are properly trained, properly equipped so they are fit for purpose – fit for the mission.”

He said that despite suffering the loss of 135 peacekeepers on active duty over the years, Bangladesh was proud of the fact that it is consistently among the top three troop-contributing countries, or TCCs.

“Bangladeshi people are aware of what kind of contributions” are being made each day, “ensuring peace and stability in the global perspective, and I think they are very proud of us.”

AUDIO: Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh, Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, highlights the decades-long commitment of troops and police contingents from his country to UN Peacekeeping.

[Maldives: Democracy under ‘all-out assault,’ warns UN rights chief](#)

7 February 2018 – The declaration of the state of emergency in the Maldives by President Abdulla Yameen and the resulting suspension of constitutional guarantees have undermined the checks and balances necessary in any functioning democracy, the United Nations human rights chief warned Wednesday.

“The suspension of several functions of the judiciary and Parliament, and the restrictions on a series of constitutional rights, create a [dangerous concentration of power](#) in the hands of the President,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a statement release by his Office ([OHCHR](#)).

The state of emergency, which allows a government to perform actions normally not permitted, was declared on 5 February in response to a Supreme Court order to release and retry nine political leaders, and to reinstate 12 suspended opposition parliamentarians.

Effective, for 15 days, the emergency declaration suspended Parliament’s authority to remove the President and the top court’s jurisdiction to

determine disputes concerning removal of the President. In addition, the entire criminal procedure code has been suspended.

“President Yameen has, to put it bluntly, usurped the authority of the State’s rule-of-law institutions and its ability to work independently from the executive,” Mr. Zeid said.

“The Maldives have seen in recent years attacks on political opponents, on journalists, on civil society and human right defenders, and what is happening now is tantamount to an all-out assault on democracy,” he warned.

Former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was arrested on charges, including attempting the overthrow of the Government, and two Supreme Court judges, including the chief justice, have also been detained.

Following the arrest of the two judges, the remaining three judges on Tuesday overturned the Court’s previous unanimous ruling ordering the release and retrial of the nine political leaders.

Kosovo: Despite differences, potential for trust among political leaders remains, Security Council told

7 February 2018 – Even though significant differences persist between political leaders in Kosovo, the potential for trust and more forward-looking decision-making to address the challenges there should not be underestimated, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council today.

“I am convinced these leaders have a broader understanding of the nature of the challenges that need to be overcome, and equally, not to continuously postpone action to another day,” [said](#) Zahir Tanin, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and the head of the UN Interim Administration Mission there ([UNMIK](#)), on Wednesday

Briefing the Council via a video-link, the senior UN official also informed Council members of new strategy of the European Union (EU) for the Western Balkans, launched on 6 February, and said it is “the most ambitious and far-reaching framework for engagement” since 2003.

“2018 can present a new momentum for this dialogue, and as the EU High Representative herself highlighted yesterday, the dialogue could be positively concluded, given sufficient will from the leaders, and adequate encouragement from the international community,” he added.

Further in his briefing, Mr. Tanin stressed the importance of solving the 16

January assassination of one of Kosovo's most prominent Serbian politicians Oliver Ivanovic.

Identifying those responsible and holding them accountable would prove another important test of the Kosovo institutions, he added.

The senior UN official also spoke of recent examples of cooperation between Pristina and Belgrade, including in the immediate aftermath of the Ivanovic murder and subsequent Kosovo visit of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic.

"It is important to note that the leaders in Belgrade and Pristina have reacted to this event in a prompt and responsible manner," he said

Mr. Tanin also informed the Security Council of ongoing challenges in ensuring the rule of law; strengthening the role of women and youth in politics, responding to the economy and social conditions in Kosovo; and building trust between its communities, and underscored the importance of strong political will and unity to overcome the obstacles.

[Let Olympic Flame 'shine as a beacon to human solidarity,' UN says ahead of Pyeongchang Games](#)

7 February 2018 – This week the world will gather in PyeongChang, Republic of Korea, for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, unified in what United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called "the Olympic Spirit: in solidarity; mutual respect; and friendly competition."

"The Olympics and Paralympics showcase the best of the world's athletic achievements, and the [best of humanity](#)," Mr. Guterres said in a message Tuesday ahead of the opening of the Games, which open on 9 January.

The ancient Greek tradition of the *ekecheira*, or '[Olympic Truce](#),' began in the eighth century B.C., and serves as a hallowed principle of the Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) renewed this tradition in 1992 by calling upon all nations to observe the Truce.

Emphasizing the Truce's fundamental message that "our common humanity can transcend political differences," the UN chief said: "This ideal has more resonance than ever on the Korean peninsula," calling on all parties to conflict to observe the Olympic Truce during the 2018 Games.

Mr. Guterres concluded: "Let the Olympic Flame shine as a beacon to human solidarity. Let the Olympic Truce help spread a culture of peace."

On 13 November last year, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that urged Member States to observe the Truce individually and collectively throughout the period from the seventh day before the start of the Olympics until the seventh day following the end of the Paralympics.

The Assembly also expressed its expectation that “Pyeongchang 2018 will be a meaningful opportunity to foster an atmosphere of peace, development, tolerance and understanding on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.”

In a statement on 9 January, UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the decision of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to send a delegation to the Olympic Winter Games.

[More than 300 child soldiers released by armed groups in South Sudan – UN mission](#)

7 February 2018 – Some 300 child soldiers, including 87 girls, were formally released by armed groups in South Sudan, the United Nations mission in the country reported on Wednesday, calling on all stakeholders to support the young people on the journey back to their communities and help them build a future for themselves.

“[Children should not be carrying guns and killing each other](#). They should be playing, learning, having fun with friends, protected and cherished by the adults around them,” said David Shearer, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for South Sudan, welcoming the release.

Undertaken in Yambio (south-western South Sudan), it is the first such release in over a year and marks the first phase of the overall programme which will see more than 700 children return back to their communities.

“They will have endured suffering, including sexual abuse. It is vital that they receive the support they need to re-join their communities and that they are welcomed home by family and friends without any sense of stigma,” added Mr. Shearer

At a formal ceremony, the children were disarmed and were provided with civilian clothes as well as medical screenings. In the days to come, agencies, such as the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and local partners will provide them with counselling and psychosocial support as part of the reintegration programme.

According to UNICEF, the children with relatives in area will be reunited with their families, while others will be placed in interim care centres

until their families can be traced. They will also be provided with three months' worth of food assistance and with vocational training and age-specific education services in schools and accelerated learning centres to help reach their full potential.

"Not all children are forcibly recruited. Many joined armed groups because they feel they had no other option," said Mahimbo Mdoe, the head of UNICEF programmes in South Sudan.

"Our priority for this group – and for children across South Sudan – is to provide the support they need so they are able to see a more promising future."

Together with UNICEF, the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)) and other UN agencies have been working to bring the release to light.

Given the volatile security situation, the UN Mission deployed peacekeeping troops to escort religious leaders into remote bush areas to make contact and negotiate with the armed groups. It also sent engineers to repair a road between Yambio and a vocational training centre nearby to make sure that the young people can travel safely for training programmes.

Noting in particular, the work of the religious leaders, Mr. Shearer added: "I would like to pay particular credit to religious leaders who travelled into conflict zones and risked their own lives to bring these children to safety."

However, in spite of this release, some 19,000 children continue to be used by armed forces and groups more than four years after conflict erupted in December 2013. Release efforts have also been also complicated by fighting as the one witnessed in the region in July 2016 that stalled the momentum.