

## Humanitarian diplomacy 'getting nowhere' in Syria warns UN special adviser

1 February 2018 – Civilians in Syria's besieged areas have not seen a single convoy of humanitarian aid arrive for a full two months, a senior United Nations adviser said on Thursday, lamenting that diplomatic efforts appear "totally impotent," and that hundreds of lives are being lost as a result.

Briefing reporters in Geneva after a meeting of a UN-supported humanitarian task force, Jan Egeland, Special Adviser to the UN Special Envoy, said the most recent aid convoy arrived on the 28th November 2017, in the town of al-Nashibiya, and consisted of aid for only 7,200 people.

Many civilians fleeing conflict areas took refuge in the area of Idlib, where fighting has since flared up, leaving them with little choice but to move on again.

Mr. Egeland said that the history of the war in Syria is that of millions of people fleeing for their lives every single year for the past five years, and that the situation is "screaming for a ceasefire."

"This is a war when armed men are specializing in the suffering of civilian populations and those that are the sponsors, are not able to end it."

He added that an end to the fighting was essential, and that this would require cooperation from Russia, Iran and Turkey.

Asked if the recent meeting of Syrian parties in the Russian city of Sochi could help the humanitarian situation, Mr. Egeland said he hopes that the meetings will result in progress, adding that it hasn't so far, but "this is very early days."

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## Mali human rights situation still a concern – UN report

1 February 2018 – Despite the signing of a 2015 Peace Agreement, the human rights situation in Mali still remains a concern, according to a United Nations report published on Thursday.

It found that more than 600 cases of human rights violations and abuses were committed between January 2016 and June 2017: an interim period established

under the peace deal aimed at laying the foundations for a democratic and unified country.

“This report provides useful insights on the [challenges and progress](#) in the human rights situation in northern and central Mali,” said Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)), which issued the report together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

“It also demonstrates that respect for human rights, far from being a generator of tension, may contribute, on the contrary, to creating an environment that is conducive to the implementation of the Peace Agreement.”

The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali signed by the authorities, a rebel alliance from the north and a pro-government armed coalition, was finalized in June 2015.

The UN study showed that more than 800 other incidents involving unidentified armed elements and which put the lives of civilians at risk also took place during the reporting period.

Overall, these acts of violence impacted more than 2,700 victims, the majority of whom were men and children.

They include 441 individuals who were killed.

Nearly 80 per cent of violations, abuses and other incidents that put civilians at risk involved armed movements that were signatories to the Peace Agreement, those which had not signed it, or unidentified armed elements.

Perpetrators also included elements affiliated with Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine and other similar groups.

Meanwhile, the Malian defence and security forces, and other state actors, were involved in 20 per cent of the cases, while international forces, including MINUSMA, were involved in two per cent.

The report said primary factors which led to the violations include confrontations between signatory armed groups in the Kidal region, the expansion of activities of AQIM, Ansar Dine and other similar groups, and increasing armed robberies and other violent crime in the central regions of the country, as well as counter-terrorism operations conducted by the state.

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## [Security operations by Myanmar show](#)

# 'established pattern' of domination over ethnic groups – UN expert

1 February 2018 – What Myanmar's Government has claimed are military and security operations are "actually an established pattern" of domination and aggression against ethnic groups, the United Nations independent expert on the rights situation there said on Thursday, reporting on her visit to nearby countries, including Bangladesh, which is hosting nearly 900,000 Rohingya refugees.

Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, has just wrapped up a mission that was limited to Thailand and Bangladesh, and did not include Myanmar as its Government has [denied her all access](#) to the country and withdrawn cooperation for the duration of her tenure.

[Speaking](#) at a press conference on her visit, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, Ms. Lee said that recent reports of attacks against civilians, homes, places of worship and villagers; sexual violence; arbitrary arrests; and torture and enforced disappearances "are acts that have been alleged against the military and security forces for generations."

"I was told repeatedly by the other ethnic groups I spoke to – be they Kachin, Karen, Karenni, or Shan – that they have suffered the same horrific violations at the hands of the *Tatmadaw* over several decades and – in the case of some groups – continuing today," she added.

"While reports from Rakhine state have rightly provoked international outrage; for many in Myanmar, they have elicited a tragic sense of déjà vu."

The UN Special Rapporteur also [highlighted](#) that the scale of violence in the ethnic areas of Myanmar was a continuing erosion of democratic space, and that the civilian Government has failed to bring about openness and transparency and is instead "persisting with repressive practices of the past."

Turning to possible returns of the hundreds of thousands of refugees hailing from the Muslim minority Rohingya community, she underscored that for returns to be ever realized in a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable manner is for the Rohingya to be treated as equals – "[as] citizens of Myanmar with all the rights that that status affords."

Equality, added the UN expert is critical for Myanmar to be free from violence that has affected its communities throughout the past.

She also called on the international community to pressure Myanmar to create conditions for the refugees before it is too late.

"This must be done in a principled way that prioritizes the need for these people to be recognized as Rohingya and as citizens of Myanmar," she said.

Ms. Lee said she hoped to regain access to Myanmar and said that she remains ready to work with the Government and other stakeholders to promote and protect the human rights of all people in the country.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council – the highest UN intergovernmental body on all matters related to human rights – to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation.

The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

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## **Human cost of conflict in South Sudan has reached ‘epic proportions,’ warns UN refugee agency chief**

1 February 2018 – The human cost of South Sudan’s long-running conflict has reached “epic proportions” with the number of refugees set to rise beyond three million by the end of this year, potentially making it Africa’s largest refugee crisis since the mid-1990s, the head of the UN refugee agency said on Thursday.

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, together with UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, launched a \$3.2 billion appeal to help those forced to flee their homes, as fighting continues across the world’s youngest country.

They are appealing for \$1.5 billion to support refugees who have fled across the border into six neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR).

A further \$1.7 billion is needed to help those internally-displaced by the fighting, which has fuelled famine conditions, and a humanitarian crisis since conflict broke out between forces loyal to the President and Vice-President, in 2013.

Mr. Grandi said the violence was “purging South Sudan of the people who should be the greatest resource of a young nation.”

“They should be building the country, not fleeing it,” he added.

Mr. Grandi and Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, have been visiting newly-arrived refugees from the country, in UNHCR’s Kakuma refugee camp, in northern Kenya.

Mr. Lowcock said that the conflict had taken a “brutal and deadly toll” and it was “in the interests of everyone to continue to provide generous and continuous support” to the refugees.

There are nearly 2.5 million South Sudanese who have already fled the country, and around seven million need humanitarian assistance.

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## [Giving voice to Yemen’s voiceless: Jamie McGoldrick reflects on two years leading UN’s relief effort](#)

1 February 2018 – This year’s UN Response Plan for Yemen, describes the war-torn country as “the worst man-made humanitarian crisis” in the world, with more than 22 million people – around three-quarters of the total population – in need of help.

Since the escalation of violence in March 2015, when conflict broke out between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement, Yemen, already the poorest in the region, has been left on the verge of a humanitarian collapse.

Over the past few years, it’s the voice of Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick, that has been drawing the world’s attention the most loudly, and the most often, to Yemen’s plight.

He had extensive experience as a senior manager with the UN humanitarian affairs office ([OCHA](#)), before arriving in Yemen, in December 2015, and for our latest UN News interview podcast, he explains why he’s just stepped down from the job, and what it has been like to oversee one of the most difficult and challenging aid operations in the world.

Mr. McGoldrick tells *UN News* that to deliver aid to an increasingly desperate population in Yemen, there’s “no point in getting angry, there’s no point in getting frustrated, the point is to get smart.”

**AUDIO:** Jamie McGoldrick, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, talks about why he’s just stepped down from the job, and what it has been like to oversee one of the most challenging aid operations in the world.