

## Peace in Syria must be built on dignity, human rights for all Syrians, UNHCR envoy Angelina Jolie

29 January 2018 – With nearly 5.5 million war-weary Syrian refugees sheltering in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, Angelina Jolie, the United Nations refugee agency's envoy, visited on Sunday Jordan's Za'atari camp, carrying the message that peace in Syria must be built on human rights.

"It is heart-breaking to return to Jordan and witness the levels of [hardship and trauma among Syrian refugees](#) as the war enters its eighth year," said Ms. Jolie, Special Envoy for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

On behalf of UNHCR, she voiced appreciation to the country for its generosity and humanity, says that Jordanians are "an example to the world, at a time when solidarity with refugees is in short supply."

She asserted that the Syrian crisis has raged for years, saying that UNHCR does not have the funds to fully provide even the most basic necessities for survival for many families.

"Last year, the UNHCR response for the Syria crisis was only 50 per cent funded. And so far in 2018, it is only seven per cent funded," she elaborated, adding that there is nothing more devastating for UNHCR staff than to be unable to help the people.

After seven years of war, most Syrian refugees have exhausted any savings and the vast majority live below the poverty line, on less than three dollars a day.

"Imagine what that would mean for your family," implored Ms. Jolie. "Here, it means families going without sufficient food; children unable to get medical treatment; young girls vulnerable to early marriage; and many Syrians facing their seventh winter without proper shelter."

"This is the reality of those displaced by the conflict in Syria," she added.

Thanking the journalists who bring the situation to the world, Ms. Jolie underscored the fundamental issue as being "the lack of a credible political and diplomatic process – based on human rights and international law – to bring the violence to an end."

"A viable political settlement is the only way to create the conditions for Syrians to return to their homes, and to end the human suffering and the strain on host countries," she stressed.

She maintained that humanitarian aid is not a long-term solution, underscoring "and to be clear, no one wants to get off aid relief more than

Syrian families.”

“For such an educated, capable people, it is soul-destroying to be made this dependent,” she elaborated.

Recalling that the war began with Syrians’ demands for greater human rights, she pressed that peace must be built on that.

“It cannot be built on impunity for the targeting of civilians by all sides, the bombing of schools and hospitals, barrel bombs, torture, chemical weapons and rape used as a weapon of war,” she held sway, adding: “It must be built on accountability – for instance, justice and recognition for the years of violence that women in Syria have faced.”

Ms. Jolie summarized her message to the international community to do more to help meet the needs of desperate Syrian families and the hosting countries, but “above all,” to provide the leadership and strength needed to negotiate a principled end to this senseless war – without sacrificing the dignity and human rights of Syrian families.

“That is non-negotiable,” she concluded.

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## [Hunger continues to intensify in conflict zones, UN agencies report to Security Council](#)

29 January 2018 – Food insecurity – or lack of access to enough food – continues to worsen in places torn by conflict, United Nations agencies reported Monday, listing Yemen, South Sudan and Syria among the countries most affected by acute hunger.

Highlighting the extremely critical importance of humanitarian support for affected communities, the report was generated by the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) and the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) as part of bi-annual briefings to the UN Security Council on food security.

[Conflict is a common factor](#) undermining food security in all 16 countries covered in the report, according to which the intensification of conflicts is a key reason behind the recent resurgence of world hunger levels, following decades of steady declines.

The 16 countries that are monitored are: Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.

Among them, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, CAR, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Somalia have a quarter or more of the population facing crisis or emergency levels of hunger.

In Yemen, 60 per cent of the population, or 17 million people, are affected by acute hunger. These figures are 45 per cent, or 4.8 million, in South Sudan, 33 per cent, or 6.5 million, in Syria, and 33 per cent, or 1.9 million, in Lebanon – a country hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees.

But these are far from being the only countries flagged as cause for concern.

In the DRC, where serious food security concerns have been overshadowed by crises in other parts of Africa, the situation is rapidly deteriorating, the report warns.

There, 11 per cent of the population is now in the crisis phase or above, adding up to 7.7 million people who are coping with acute hunger.

In Sudan, 3.8 million people are in the crisis phase or above. In Iraq, that figure is 3.2 million while in the Lake Chad basin, the number is 2.9 million people. In Burundi and Haiti, it is 1.8 and 1.3 million, respectively.

According to data released last October, the number of hungry people worldwide rose to 815 million people in 2016, up from 777 million the year before. The majority of the hungry, or 489 million people, live in countries wracked by conflict.

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## [UN health agency finds high levels of antibiotic resistance to world's most common infections](#)

29 January 2018 – Antimicrobials have been a driver of unprecedented medical and societal advances, but their overuse has resulted in antibiotic resistant bacteria, with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reporting new surveillance data on Monday which reveals widespread resistance to some of the world's most common infections, including *E. coli* and pneumonia.

"The report confirms the [serious situation of antibiotic resistance](#) worldwide," Dr. Marc Sprenger, director of WHO's Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat, said at the launch of the agency's new Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System ( [GLASS](#) )

The most commonly reported resistant bacteria were *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, followed by *Salmonella spp.*

Although the system does not include data on the resistance of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which causes tuberculosis, WHO has been tracking and providing annual updates on it since 1994, in the Global tuberculosis report.

Among patients with suspected bloodstream infection, the proportion that had bacteria resistant to at least one of the most commonly used antibiotics ranged widely – from zero to 82 per cent – between different countries.

Resistance to penicillin, which has been used for decades to treat pneumonia, ranged from zero to 51 per cent among reporting countries. And between 8 to 65 per cent of *E. coli* associated with urinary tract infections presented resistance to the antibiotic commonly used to treat it, ciprofloxacin.

“Some of the world’s most common – and potentially most dangerous – infections are proving drug-resistant,” Dr. Sprenger observed.

“And most worrying of all, pathogens don’t respect national borders,” he added.

To date, 25 high-income, 20 middle-income and 7 low-income countries are enrolled in WHO’s Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System. For the first report, 40 countries provided information on national surveillance systems with 22 also providing data on antibiotic resistance levels.

“WHO is encouraging all countries to set up good surveillance systems for detecting drug resistance that can provide data to this global system,” Dr. Sprenger asserted.

The quality and completeness of data in this first GLASS report vary widely. Some countries face major challenges in building their national surveillance systems, including a lack of personnel, funds and infrastructure.

“The report is a vital first step towards improving our understanding of the extent of antimicrobial resistance. Surveillance is in its infancy, but it is vital to develop it if we are to anticipate and tackle one of the biggest threats to global public health,” explained Dr. Carmem Pessoa-Silva, WHO surveillance system coordinator.

WHO is supporting countries in setting up national antimicrobial resistance surveillance systems to produce reliable, meaningful data, with GLASS helping to standardize data collection for a more complete picture of patterns and trends.

Solid drug resistance surveillance programmes in tuberculosis, HIV and malaria have been functioning for years – estimating disease burden, planning diagnostic and treatment services, monitoring control interventions effectiveness and designing effective treatment regimens to address and prevent future resistance. GLASS is expected to perform a similar function for common bacterial pathogens.

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## [New UN funding to help sustain critical aid programmes for hundreds of thousands in Ethiopia](#)

29 January 2018 – The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) – a pool of funding which supports critical relief operations around the world – has allocated \$10 million to help meet the life-saving needs of the most vulnerable people displaced due to conflict in Ethiopia.

Since early September, escalation of conflict along the country's Oromia and Somali regional borders has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into about 370 sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs), where they are living with needs many times greater than the response.

“Today I visited two IDP re-settlement sites where I saw first-hand the critical importance of scaling up our support to meet their needs,” [said](#) Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the head of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), during a visit to the horn of Africa nation.

According to a [news release](#) issued by OCHA, the Ethiopian Government has also stepped up its response and is delivering vital food assistance to those in need. It is also working on efforts to facilitate voluntary returns and provide alternative re-settlement sites.

“The CERF funds will complement the Government plan and will enable humanitarian partners to provide life-saving assistance, including shelter, clean water and sanitation services for those most in need among the displaced and host communities. The funds will also support solutions for displaced people to re-establish their lives,” [said](#) Mr. Lowcock, who manages the CERF on behalf of the Secretary-General.

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UN aid chief Mark Lowcock

In spite of having to brave acute crises, over the past decades Ethiopia has made remarkable strides in development and addressing hunger. However, its susceptibility to drought continues to plague its people with food insecurity, with rains having failed as recently as in 2016-2017.

And therefore, along with humanitarian response there is an urgent need to strengthen the country's long-term resilience to future shocks.

Highlighting this importance, Mr. Lowcock was joined during his visit by Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), to solidify humanitarian and development collaboration and to make joint recommendations for solutions to break the cycle of loss of development gains due to recurrent disasters.

“The international community must seize opportunities to support Ethiopia in strengthening Government-led sustainable development structures at all levels that can mitigate human risks and the threat from increasingly frequent and severe droughts,” added the news release, urging support to strengthen Government and civil society capacities for peace building and reconciliation.

Established by the UN General Assembly in 2006, CERF is a humanitarian funding mechanism that enables a faster and more effective response to vital needs of people affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, or under-funded crises.

Over the past two years, the Fund has provided \$49 million to aid programmes in Ethiopia, sustaining important relief efforts for those in dire need.

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## **[Bridging gap between relief and development work can meet immediate needs, lessen vulnerability – UN chief](#)**

28 January 2018 – A surge in conflict-induced needs in Africa and the Middle East, coupled with an increase in climate shocks that pummel the most vulnerable everywhere, have given fresh urgency to calls for the international community to work in a new way – that not only ends humanitarian needs but reduces them over time, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Sunday.

Addressing leaders gathered for a high-level event as part of the African Union Summit, which has been running since last week in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, Mr. Guterres underscored that this [new way of working](#) is not about shifting funding from development to humanitarian programmes or vice-versa.

“It is about recognizing common goals and optimizing existing resources and capabilities to help all people in situations of risk, vulnerability and crisis. It is about working better together to reduce humanitarian needs over the medium to long-term,” said the UN chief, spotlighting the aim of one of the key outcomes of the 2016 [World Humanitarian Summit](#).

Two years after the international community outlined the changes that are

needed to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability, Mr. Guterres [said](#) it was clear the call to bridge the humanitarian-development divide will take time and a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system.

“We must recommit to a focus on results and holding ourselves accountable by fully articulating collective outcomes,” he said.

Amid a surge in conflict-induced needs in Syria, Yemen the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and elsewhere, the UN chief said he had launched a push in diplomacy for peace, including mediation, to end and prevent conflict.

We must break down the silos that have existed for too long between humanitarian and development actors UN chief Guterres

As for the increasingly frequent and more intense climate shocks that are also creating record humanitarian needs, and heavily impacting the most vulnerable, the international community must redouble its efforts to address climate change, as well as to increase the resilience of those impacted by drought, floods and other disasters.

“We have a moral obligation to do better and we have the tools and knowledge to deliver on that obligation,” said the Secretary-General, underscoring: “We must break down the silos that have existed for too long between humanitarian and development actors.”

He said experience from countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, Yemen and Somalia, where the new approach is working, offers four valuable lessons:

1. The UN and development partners must strengthen the capacities of national and local actors to effectively respond to needs, risk and vulnerability;
2. Collectively start from a common understanding of the challenges we face. It is imperative we have shared data, information and analysis;
3. Carry out risk-informed joint planning, with governments and all partners, to reach those furthest behind; and
4. Redesign the financing architecture to promote predictability, flexibility and multi-year financing, as well as engage international financing institutions and the private sector actors, including insurance actors, to develop innovative solutions.

Noting that the world spends much more energy and resources managing crises than preventing them, the Secretary-General said the UN must uphold a strategic commitment to a ‘culture of prevention,’ and he pledged to work with Africa “towards ending suffering and restore the human dignity of every person.”