

## [DR Congo: UN rights office urges probe into use of force against protestors, UN personnel](#)

23 January 2018 – At least six people died and 68 were wounded during weekend demonstrations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) capital, Kinshasa, the United Nations human rights office reported Tuesday, urging the Government to investigate all incidents where security forces may have used excessive force against protestors and UN personnel.

“The rights to freedom of religion, expression and [peaceful assembly](#) must be fully respected, in line with the DRC’s obligations under international law. The authorities must also ensure that UN human rights personnel are able to carry out their essential monitoring work,” Ravina Shamdasani, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), told reporters in Geneva.

On Sunday, the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC recorded at least six deaths during demonstrations in the nation’s capital, Kinshasa, with 68 people wounded, 121 people arrested and the firing of tear gas into churches in various parts of the African country.

A UN rights officer trying to conduct human rights monitoring of the demonstrations was kicked and punched by security forces in Kinshasa, while military police also fired tear gas towards at least three UN patrols.

“Violent dispersal of protestors will not resolve the political tensions but will only serve to heighten them,” she said, calling on the authorities to work constructively with political opponents, religious leaders and civil society to ensure that the right of all Congolese to participate in the public affairs of their country is upheld.

Throughout the country, Internet and SMS [text message] services have been suspended since midnight on Saturday, 20 January night, following a similar 48-hour suspension around the 31 December protests.

Tear gas was fired into and around churches in Kinshasa, Goma, Kisangani, Lubumbashi and Bukavu, while heavy deployments of national police and armed forces, were reported in Mbandaka, Beni, Mbuji-Mayi and Butembo, particularly around places of worship.

Sunday’s events followed the killing of nine people and the injuring of at least 98 others during the 31 December 2017 protests.

“Those held responsible for the killings and injuries must be brought to justice without delay,” Ms. Shamdasani said.

The protests have been taking place in the vicinity of churches.

The political agreement at the heart of the demonstrations – facilitated by *Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo* (CENCO) mediators – allowed President Joseph Kabila to stay in power beyond the end of his term and stipulated that peaceful, credible and inclusive elections would be organized in the DRC by the end of December 2017.

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## [Record 22.2 million people need humanitarian assistance in Yemen – UN aid chief](#)

23 January 2018 – The top United Nations relief official has expressed his deep concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, noting that a record 22.2 million people are now in need of assistance – 3.4 million more than last year.

"I remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which has continued to deteriorate because of on-going conflict, collapsing basic services and economic decline," said Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, in a statement issued overnight by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, encouraged all donors to contribute to the recently launched 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response plan, which requires \$2.96 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to more than 13 million people across the country this year.

He welcomed the nearly \$1 billion pledge by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as well as an additional \$500 million in commitment from regional donors.

He also noted the importance of keeping all of Yemen's ports, including Hudaydah and Saleef, open to humanitarian assistance and commercial imports of food, fuel and medicines. Over 70 per cent of people in need of assistance live in proximity to those two Red Sea ports.

Since the decision to re-open Hudaydah and Saleef last month, the United Nations and its partners have successfully delivered large volumes of food, medicines and fuel to people in need, he said.

"Yemenis have suffered for too long," Mr. Lowcock said, calling on all parties to cease hostilities and engage meaningfully with the UN to achieve a lasting political settlement.

On Monday, UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told the press that the UN Special

Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, intends not to continue in his position beyond his current contract ending in February 2018.

Since the uprisings in Yemen began in early 2011, the United Nations has been actively engaged in mediation efforts to help Yemenis to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and enable the resumption of a peaceful, orderly and inclusive political transition.

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## [UN chief outlines reforms that 'put Member States in driver's seat' on road to sustainable development](#)

22 January 2018 – Sustainable development is a fundamental human right and humanity's best chance for a future of peace and prosperity, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres said Monday, laying out the case for Agenda 2030 to be at the centre of UN activities.

Mr. Guterres underscored that to implement the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development – an action plan including 17 goals to ensure that all people live in peace, security and dignity on a healthy planet – adopted by UN Member States in 2015, strategic choices needed to be taken between an evolutionary approach and a more ambitious pathway.

“We chose the [path of ambition](#),” he told a meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC ), adding: “In a rapidly changing world, we cannot afford to have a slowly reforming UN development system [...] we must act.”

The UN chief stressed that reforms are necessary because “business as usual” approaches simply will not provide countries with the support they need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) or meet the [Paris Agreement](#) commitments on climate change.

He laid out seven keystone reform proposals for better coordination, transparency and accountability, beginning with a new generation of demand-driven UN country teams, equipped with skillsets tailored to country-specific development priorities and needs.

The second proposal was a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, “with stronger capacity, leadership, accountability and impartiality.”

Thirdly he proposed “a coordinated, reprofiled and restructured regional approach to better support work on the ground.” The fourth reform would be for renewed spaces for Member States to guide system-wide actions, bringing greater transparency and accountability at the country level.

"I would also like to see a strengthened ECOSOC, empowered to hold the system accountable and challenge us to do more, together," he added.

A stronger UN institutional response and approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda was the fifth proposal, and the sixth was concrete steps to accelerate the UN system's alignment to that blueprint.

"A Funding Compact to bring better quality, quantity and predictability of resources, increased accountability and transparency and enhanced capacities of the system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda," was his final proposal.

The Secretary-General said the request included increasing the share of core resources for individual agencies system-wide, from 21.7 per cent to 30 per cent, and doubling the share of contributions to pooled funds from eight per cent to 16 per cent of non-core.

#### *Member States in the driver's seat*

A common theme running through the proposals is a "rock-solid commitment" to reinforce national leadership and ownership for sustainable development.

"Member States will be in the driver's seat and the 2030 Agenda will be the driving force," he stated.

He emphasized that the Organization's development coordination function is "vastly underfunded," saying that resident coordinators often lack basic staffing capacities to credibly lead UN development activities – preventing Member States' resolutions to eradicate poverty from becoming a reality.

According to the Secretary-General, funding the core capacities of the Resident Coordinator system through assessed contributions "would be a logical step as the Organization repositions sustainable development at the heart of its work."

He held sway that about one per cent of annual contributions allocated to operational development activities would bring value for money by yielding a more robust coordination function, significantly improving effectiveness and strengthening leadership and system accountability.

Calling effectiveness, efficiency, results for people and value for money "our shared goals," Mr. Guterres said delivering was "our shared responsibility."

"At the same time," he stressed "we will continue to take all possible measures, within existing mandates, to lay the groundwork for precisely what you seek: a repositioned system, reinvigorated by a more impartial and accountable coordination system for sustainable development."

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# Liberia: UN welcomes new President's inauguration as key milestone on country's road to success

22 January 2018 – George Weah was inaugurated on Monday as the new President of Liberia, where the United Nations is set to close its peacekeeping mission in a few weeks after a successful 15-year presence in the West African country.

The new Liberian President took office at a ceremony in the packed SKD stadium in the capital, Monrovia.

"I have spent my life in stadiums, but I have never felt like this," said the former football champion who is succeeding outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the first peaceful democratic transition the country has known over the past 70 years. Ms. Johnson Sirleaf led the country from 2006 to 2018.

"With the help of our regional partners and of the United Nations, we chose democracy as our best choice," underlined the new Liberian President in its inaugural speech.

Leading the UN delegation at the event, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, congratulated the Liberian people for the "credible and peaceful election which, for the first time in Liberia, is ushering one elected civilian Government to take over from another civilian Government."

"This is a remarkable achievement for Liberia," said Mr. Chambas who, between 1991 and 1996, participated in the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)) mediation efforts in Liberia during the country's first civil war. "We are all rejoicing with the people of Liberia. We wish President George Weah all the success that he deserves," added the UN envoy.

In his inaugural speech, President Weah thanked the UN Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) for its efforts in reestablishing peace and security in a country that experienced two civil wars spanning over 14 years between 1989 and 2003.

According to the UN, civil war in Liberia, the African continent's first independent State, claimed the lives of almost 250,000 people – mostly civilians – and led to a complete breakdown of law and order.

Along with ECOWAS, the Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the UN Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) made several interventions during the conflict to bring peace.

After the signature of a peace agreement in August 2003, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. The first peacekeepers arrived in the country in October of the same year.

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“The United Nations peacekeeping mission has ensured unbroken peace within our borders for more than a decade,” said President Weah.

After almost 15 years of operations, UNMIL has successfully completed its mandate, which encompassed civilian protection, supporting reform of rule of law and justice institutions, the protection and promotion of human rights, and the promotion of sustainable peace through a public information radio broadcast run by the peacekeeping mission.

“This is a very happy day for the UN, to witness this success story of Liberia with the efforts of the international community over the past 14 years,” said Farid Zarif, the UN Special Representative for Liberia and Head of UNMIL.

“This is the culmination of all the efforts and works in building the capacity of the Liberians and also strengthening their democratic experiment, for them to reach a point where they can all come together and celebrate the success as one nation.”

Starting 31 March, UNMIL will be replaced by a UN country team in Liberia. “I can assure you that the United Nations will remain committed and engaged and on the side of the Liberian people going forward,” underscored Mr. Chambas.

**AUDIO:** George Weah was inaugurated on Monday as the new President of Liberia, where the United Nations is set to close its peacekeeping mission (UNMIL) in a few weeks after a successful 15-year presence in the West African country.

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## [UN flag no longer offers ‘natural’ protection to peacekeepers, says report on mission casualties](#)

22 January 2018 – The United Nations should change the way it does business in high-security risk peacekeeping operations, as the UN flag no longer offers ‘natural’ protection to mission personnel, according to a new report, which calls for better training for ‘blue helmets,’ more technology and greater freedom to respond to the threat posed by armed groups.

“Unfortunately, hostile forces do not understand a language other than force,” warns the report, titled Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers, arguing that projecting strength is more secure for uniformed and civilian personnel than risk-averse approaches.

Since 1948, more than 3,500 personnel have lost their lives serving in UN peace operations with 943 due to acts of violence. Since 2013, casualties have spiked, with 195 deaths in violent attacks, more than during any other 5-year period in history.

It was in this context that, in November 2017, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres [appointed](#) Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil to lead a high-level review to identify why the UN has had so many casualties caused by acts of violence in recent years, and what should be done to reduce these casualties.

Mr. dos Santos Cruz previously served as Force Commander, of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)) from 2013 to 2015 and of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti ([MINUSTAH](#)) from 2007 to 2009.

Two other authors are William R. Phillips, a retired United States Army Colonel, and former Mission Chief of Staff of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)), and Salvator Cusimano, the Special Assistant to the Director, Africa II Division of the Office of Operations in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

The review team visited UN peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali and South Sudan, accessed relevant internal UN data and conducted 160 interviews to inform their work.

The report does not address the issue of mandates, but instead confines its conclusions to operational issues in missions in those countries.

The report, which was submitted to the Secretary-General, states that with the influx of armed groups, extremists, organized crime, and other criminal elements and threats, the blue helmet and UN flag no longer offer 'natural' protection to peacekeepers.

*Please see full report [here](#)*

The review team identified four broad areas where the UN and Member States must take actions to reduce fatalities.

These include (1) changing mindsets so that personnel are aware of the risks and empowered to take the initiative to deter, prevent, and respond to attacks; (2) improving capacities so that the mission and personnel are equipped and trained to operate in high-threat environments; (3) achieving a "threat sensitive mission footprint" that is aligned with mission mandates and limits the exposure of the mission to threat; and (4) enhancing accountability to ensure that those able to take actions to prevent fatalities and injuries live up to their responsibilities.

The UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and of Field Support have developed an action plan to implement the report's recommendations, according to a [note to correspondents](#) issued by the Office of the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General.

The plan focuses on three main areas – operational behaviour and mindset; capacity building and readiness; and support issues – and includes immediate Headquarters and field-level actions.

The Departments have also established an implementation support team led by two senior officials, which will coordinate and monitor implementation of these measures at Headquarters and provide support to field missions.

The report was released on Monday to UN Member States at a session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations by Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who will brief the press about the report on Wednesday.

**AUDIO:** Retired Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil, the lead author of a new independent report aimed at improving the security of peacekeepers, talks to UN News about what's needed to make sure 'blue helmets' get better training, access to more technology and have greater freedom to respond to the threats.