

Rohingya refugees face 'multitude of protection risks,' warns UN agency

15 December 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency said on Friday that it is concerned about the deteriorating environment in which Rohingya refugees are living, especially children, who make up 55 per cent of the Rohingya refugee population in Bangladesh.

“UNHCR [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] is increasingly worried about the [deterioration of the overall protection environment](#), Babar Baloch, the agency’s spokesperson told the regular press briefing in Geneva.

In this environment, he explained, refugees face a multitude of protection risks. On Sunday, UNHCR would begin distributing clothing to recently-arrived Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh for cooler temperatures in the months ahead.

“Children, who are 55 per cent of the Rohingya refugee population, are particularly vulnerable. So are women, and they represent more than half of all refugees in Bangladesh. An estimated 10 per cent are either disabled, have serious medical conditions, or are older persons at risk,” stated Mr. Baloch.

UNHCR has been working to bolster the quality of shelters in the camps by supplying higher quality materials as well as expanding technical support for construction and drainage.

Since the beginning of the crisis, UNHCR has organized 17 airlifts – sending more than \$9 million in aid relief items. In the last month, the agency has distributed over 15,000 new shelter kits and more than 40,000 core relief items.

UNHCR also began distributing compressed rice husks for cooking fuel. This spares children from gathering firewood in adjacent forests – putting them at risk and degrading the environment by stripping woodland.

Meanwhile, in responding to a diphtheria outbreak in Cox’s Bazar, UNHCR turned part of its Transit Centre in Kutupalong into a treatment and isolation facility in which patients are managed by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Alongside the UN World Health Organization and UN Children’s Fund, UNHCR is also supporting the Bangladeshi health authorities’ diphtheria vaccination campaign for all children under age six.

“We are procuring antibiotics to treat 8,000 people and training refugee volunteers to disseminate information on diphtheria, detect symptoms of the disease and direct patients to health facilities,” said Mr. Baloch.

Hostilities flare on Yemen's west coast, sparking new displacement – UN refugee agency

15 December 2017 – As hostilities intensify in frontline areas on Yemen's west coast, the United Nations refugee agency said Friday that it is bracing for further displacement and a spike in humanitarian needs.

Following recent fighting in the capital, Sana'a, and neighbouring governorates, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) has received reports of new displacement from Hudaydah and Taiz governorates.

"UNHCR and partners are still assessing the situation, but [initial reports](#) are that more than 1,400 people have fled from Taiz and Hudaydah to the Ash Shamateen district in Southern Taizz, and Al Fayoosh district in Lahj," UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch told reporters on at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

"With numbers expected to rise further, UNHCR is working with partners to be in position to support and help those fleeing," he added.

UNHCR is particularly concerned about the fate of 1,460 Eritrean refugees as well as Yemeni civilians in the Al Khawkah area – 117 kilometres south of Al Hudaydah City.

"The area has been declared a military zone. We are arranging for emergency cash assistance to be sent to this vulnerable community, which is facing difficulties in accessing food due to the hostilities," Mr. Baloch said.

Following days of ground fighting, aerial bombardment and shelling in urban areas, the situation in Sana'a is relatively calm. UNHCR reopened its office there this week, working with partners to resume humanitarian operations that had been halted since early December.

The blockade of Yemen, which has yet to be fully eased, has resulted in scarcities and a spike in prices – including for fuel, water, food and medicines.

While new clearance procedures on goods are also resulting in delays for offloading cargo, UNHCR has asked the authorities to expedite clearances for humanitarian shipments, especially perishables, such as medicines.

Moreover, UNHCR's financial assistance programme, which is intended to benefit more than 17,000 vulnerable displaced families with winter assistance grants, has been postponed due to delays in funds being released from financial service providers.

Dangerous rhetoric, overconfidence, increasing risk of conflict on Korean Peninsula, UN chief warns

15 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Friday that he is deeply concerned over the risk of military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, “including as a result of miscalculation.”

“While all concerned seek to avoid an accidental escalation leading to conflict, the [risk is being multiplied by misplaced over-confidence](#), dangerous narratives and rhetoric, and the lack of communication channels,” the Secretary-General told the UN Security Council’s ministerial-level meeting, convened by Japan, on the challenges posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to international peace and security.

Describing the situation on the Korean Peninsula as “the most tense and dangerous peace and security issue in the world today,” he warned: “Any military action would have devastating and unpredictable consequences.”

In his briefing, Mr. Guterres said that unity of the Security Council is essential to achieve the goal of denuclearization in a peaceful manner and underscored that communication channels, including military-to-military ones have to be re-established and strengthened to reduce tensions in the region.

“The [UN] Secretariat and I are your partner in this effort. My good offices remain always available,” he added.

Mr. Guterres also noted the need to disassociate the peace and security situation in the DPRK from the humanitarian needs in the country.

Seventy per cent of the country’s population is affected by food insecurity and 40 per cent are malnourished and some \$114 million is needed to meet urgent requirements.

However, the 2017 DPRK Humanitarian Needs and Priorities appeal is only 30 per cent funded.

Urging UN Member States, in particular those represented the Security Council, to consider the humanitarian imperatives, Mr. Guterres said: “The people of the DPRK need our generosity and help.”

Diplomatic engagement is the only pathway to sustainable peace and denuclearization
UN chief Guterres

Concluding his remarks, the Secretary-General pointed to the upcoming Winter

Olympics in Pyeongchang and expressed hope that the DRPK would take part.

“As the General Assembly has recognized, these Games can foster an atmosphere of peace, development, tolerance and understanding on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. We need to spread and deepen that spirit of hope and possibility,” he said, urging for diplomatic engagement to sustainable peace and denuclearization.

“We must do everything we can to reach that objective – and avoid a level of danger that would be unpredictable in its trajectory and catastrophic in its consequences,” said Mr. Guterres.

The ministerial-level meeting was convened by Japan, in its capacity as the President of the 15-member Council for the month of December.

In addition to Taro Kono of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, which holds the Council presidency for the month, ministers from other Security Council member States, including Sweden (Margot Wallström), Ukraine (Pavlo Klimkin), the United Kingdom (Mark Field), and the United States (Rex Tillerson) were at the meeting.

Children are the face of conflict-fuelled humanitarian tragedy in South Sudan – UNICEF

15 December 2017 – South Sudan’s children are facing a raft of daily horrors and deprivations and urgently require a peaceful, protective environment, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Friday, warning that “anything less, places children and women at even greater risk of grave violations and abuse.”

As the conflict in the world’s youngest country enters its fifth year, UNICEF said in a new report entitled [Childhood under Attack](#), that more than half the children of South Sudan are “in the throes of tragedy” – victims of malnutrition, disease, forced recruitment, violence and the loss of schooling.

“No child should ever experience such horrors and deprivations,” said Leila Pakkala, UNICEF’s Regional Director in Eastern and Southern Africa, “and yet children in South Sudan are facing them on a daily basis.”

Years of insecurity and upheaval have had a ‘staggering impact on children,’ threatening an entire generation, according to the report entitled.

The numbers tell a grim story, said UNICEF, noting that almost three million children are severely food insecure; more than one million acutely malnourished; 2.4 million forced from their homes; two million out of school, and if the current situation persists, only one in 13 children are likely to finish primary school.

Moreover, an estimated 900,000 children suffer from psychological distress; more than 19,000 have been recruited into armed forces and armed groups; and more than 2,300 have been killed or injured since the conflict first erupted in December 2013 with hundreds of rape and sexual assault incidents against children having been reported.

Despite the huge challenges faced in a country that ranks among the world's most dangerous for aid workers, UNICEF has been delivering lifesaving assistance to children across the country since the crisis started in December 2013, warning that while it required \$183 million in 2018 to provide critical assistance to children and women, currently it is \$141 million short.

UN chief stresses need to denuclearize Korean Peninsula, avoid 'sleepwalking into war'

14 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres wrapped up a short visit to Tokyo on Thursday with an appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and other countries to implement relevant Security Council resolutions to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

"I think we all want to avoid that things get out of control and that misperceptions and mishandling of situations make us [sleepwalk into a war](#) that will have devastating consequences," Mr. Guterres told a press conference held at Japan National Press Club, stressing the need for the implementation of all Council resolutions, first by the DPRK and then all the other countries that have such obligations.

"The objective is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and it is extremely important to preserve the unity of the Security Council," he added.

Mr. Guterres is set to brief the Security Council on the DPRK, tomorrow, Friday, 15 November.

Asked about the outcome of a recent visit to Pyongyang by UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, Mr. Guterres said that "in diplomacy and especially in discreet diplomacy, it is difficult to measure an immediate result of any initiative" but "the message was conveyed."

He said that the message was that not only that Security Council resolutions must be implemented, but there must be a sense of urgency in creating the conditions for a meaningful dialogue to achieve the denuclearization of the Peninsula.

On questions about a possible military strike against the DPRK by the United States, he refused to comment on “things that have not happened” but said he is “a believer that a military solution would have dramatic negative consequences and that we need to be able to achieve the goal to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and to achieve it through diplomatic engagement.”

Asked what the UN can do in a concrete manner about the situation, he said that the Security Council has taken the right decisions, and the Secretariat has to explore all ways to convey the messages that are necessary for those decisions to be implemented peacefully.

“We are not miracle makers. We are people committed to a cause, and that cause is the cause of peace and security in line with international law,” he said.

To a question about a possible visit to the DPRK by himself, the Secretary-General said he would go anywhere at any time when it is useful.

“But I am not aiming at a protagonism just to appear in the cameras of the televisions,” he said. “We are available, but we can only mediate when both parties accept our mediation.”

The main purpose of the Secretary-General trip to Japan was to address the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017 held in Tokyo.