

## New Year could bring more misery to children in DR Congo's restive Kasai region, warns UNICEF

12 December 2017 – New Year could bring more misery to children in DR Congo's restive Kasai region, warns UNICEF. In the coming year, severe acute malnutrition could claim the lives of more than 400,000 children under the age of five in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's volatile Kasai region, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned Tuesday.

"This [nutrition crisis and food insecurity](#) in the Kasai region follows the displacement of thousands of families who have been living for months in very harsh conditions," said Tajudeen Oyewale, the acting head of UNICEF in the African nation, in a news release underlining the scale of the catastrophe.

"The true scale of the problem is becoming clear as people are returning home in some areas where the security situation has improved and health services have started functioning again."

According to estimates, at least 750,000 children across the Kasai region are acutely malnourished and some 25 health zones are in a situation of nutritional crisis – a state when the severely has exceeded emergency thresholds.

The dire situation is primarily the result of over 18 months of insecurity and violence that has resulted in displacement of over 1.4 million and has severely reduced agricultural production with some two-thirds of households not to work their land to grow crops.

The level of food insecurity is not expected to improve before June next year as the planting seasons for crops which would have been harvested by then has already been lost.

Making matters much worse is the "devastation" of health facilities, according to UNICEF.

Approximately 220 health centres have been destroyed, looted or damaged, access to treatment for communicable diseases as well as care for the children severely malnourished extremely difficult.

"Guaranteeing access to basic health and nutrition services to returning populations is essential to help malnourished children survive and thrive," said Mr. Oyewale.

In response to the crisis, UNICEF and partners provided therapeutic nutritional care to more than 50,000 children aged between 6-59 months in the region this year. However, lack of resources has severely impacted aid delivery.

With just days remaining in the year, the UN agency has received a mere 15 per cent of the funds it required for 2017.

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## UN and partners launch \$4.4 billion regional appeal for more than five million Syrian refugees

12 December 2017 – A more than \$4 billion appeal has been launched to support what one senior United Nations official called on Tuesday “a lost generation” of Syrian refugees caught up in the ongoing conflict.

Well over five million Syrians need help, according to Amin Awad, the Director for the Middle East and North Africa of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

He added that nearly four million people in countries neighbouring Syria including Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq also need relief after years spent supporting those displaced since fighting began in 2011.

Syria remains the [biggest humanitarian crisis of our time](#). Seven million inside plus 5.3 million outside; 12.3 million people. Another 10 million who stayed put in Syria did not leave their homes but they are cut off. They’re cut off (from) livelihoods, services in education, health, separated from relatives, friends and they are in need also of humanitarian assistance. The whole nation is in need of humanitarian assistance,” Mr. Awad explained.

The UNHCR official said that the situation of 1.7 million Syrian refugee children was particularly worrying, as more than four in 10 are out of school.

*More on the 2018 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) [here](#)*

Supplying the 5.3 million refugees with enough food to eat is also critical, Mr. Awad added, given that insufficient funding in 2015 coincided with one million Syrians risking their lives as they went in search of shelter in western Europe.

“We are urging the international community and the donors in particular for many reasons: one, the vast number of refugees that we have in the region, the geopolitical status of that region, the risk that 5.3 million people can bring to an area, a small region already as volatile as it is if there is no assistance. We have had the experience of 2015 and we should not repeat that. I think we should meet the needs of these refugees in a timely manner as quickly as possible,” said Mr. Awad.

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## Recalling Algiers attack, Secretary-General says, 2007 bombing 'hit heart of the UN'

11 December 2017 – In a message commemorating the 2007 bombing of the United Nations offices in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres expressed the Organization's continuing support to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

"These terrorists hit Algeria, but they also hit the UN in the heart. It was the entire staff of the Organization who was touched, who felt this pain," said the Secretary-General, in a message in French.

"Unfortunately, these attacks are only increasing and we are now targeted around the world, while we are here to support the most vulnerable populations," he highlighted.

Seventeen staff members from several UN humanitarian and development agencies were killed on 11 December 2007 when a car bomb ripped through the offices. A number of Algerians were also killed and over one hundred injured.

"We will not forget them. We will not forget the pain of those who remain, who must survive after such trauma and continue their lives, broken homes and interrupted dreams," he added in his message, expressing his deepest sympathies and support.

Also in the message the Secretary-General expressed his full solidarity with the people and the Government of Algeria in their efforts to fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

"The United Nations will always be at your side," he said.

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## UN aid official in Yemen urges lifting of blockade, says millions a 'step away from famine'

11 December 2017 – The continuing blockade of ports in Yemen must be lifted, a senior United Nations humanitarian official today urged, calling for greater access to more than eight million people on the verge of famine.

Speaking from Sana'a, Jamie McGoldrick, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen [said](#) that "the lives of millions of people, including 8.4 million Yemenis who are a step away from famine, hinge on our ability to continue our operations and to provide health, safe water, food, shelter and nutrition support."

He called on all groups involved in the conflict to "fully facilitate sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access, as required by international humanitarian law."

Mr. McGoldrick said this means lifting of restrictions on Yemen's Red Sea ports and Sana'a airport, which continue to delay aid from entering the country and hindering the availability of food and fuel.

He also urged parties to the conflict to ensure protection for aid workers and facilities, process visas and not interfere unnecessarily in the work of aid organizations.

The UN aid official also warned about renewed violence along the western coast of the country and other parts of Yemen.

"I am greatly alarmed at reports of hospitals being damaged, populations being impeded from fleeing to safe areas and killings and arbitrary detentions reportedly being carried out in Sana'a," said Mr. McGoldrick.

In the statement, the official warned that fresh violence would "only lead to further devastation" for the 22 million people in need.

He said that a political solution is the only means to put an end to the suffering, and reiterated his call on any countries with influence to step up their engagement to protect civilians and put an end to this conflict.

"As stated by the UN Secretary-General, it is in the interest of everybody to stop this war," he said echoing António Guterres's comments in recent weeks.

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## **Human Rights Day: UN officials pledge to focus on advancement of human dignity, equality and rights**

11 December 2017 – Top United Nations officials on Monday urged everyone to raise their voices and stand up for the rights of others, while celebrating the launch of a year-long campaign on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights during a special event at UN Headquarters in New York.

"Over seven decades, this mighty document has helped to profoundly change our world," [said Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Monday, at an event to commemorate [Human Rights Day](#), observed annually on 10 December.

"[The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)] establishes the equality and dignity of every human being. It stipulates that every government has a duty to enable all people to enjoy their inalienable rights and freedoms. And it establishes that these rights are universal," he added.

Mr. Guterres highlighted the progress achieved by humankind since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, including advancing and protecting the rights of women, children and victims of discrimination as well as in holding accountable perpetrators of gross human rights violations and abuses.

However, he also called for taking a stock in areas where progress has not been achieved.

"In practice, recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of human beings is still far from universal," he said, noting that millions around the world continue to suffer human rights violations and abuses. "And human rights defenders still face persecution, reprisals are rising and the space for civil society action is shrinking in very many nations," added Mr. Guterres.

Participants at the Human Rights Day and launch of the year-long campaign for the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that included Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, former High Commissioners for Human Rights Louise Arbour and Navi Pillay and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour. Photo: UN WebTV screen capture

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### [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Underscoring the need for all sections of the society to "speak out and take a stand" for human rights, the UN chief announced his own pledge that he will respect the rights of others regardless of who they are, and will uphold their rights even when he disagrees with them.

"When anyone's human rights are denied, everyone's rights are undermined, so I will stand up. I will raise my voice. I will take action. I will use my rights to stand up for your rights," he committed.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly highlighted that the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was not only a milestone for the General Assembly, but was also one for humanity.

"But [the Universal Declaration] did not create human rights. They existed

before this. Not on paper – but in people. In fact, human rights are an inherent part of humanity. And they always will be,” he said, adding that while the rights can be denied, they cannot be taken away – neither by law nor policy or action.

Recalling the efforts, that ultimately led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration in 1948, he called on everyone use the seminal document to inspire themselves and help protect and promote everyone's human rights.

“Stand up taller – and speak up louder – for human rights,” he urged.

Also speaking today were Wu Hongbo, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; as well as Louise Arbour and Navi Pillay, former High Commissioners of Human Rights.

The [campaign](#), which was officially [launched](#) yesterday by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein at Palais de Chaillot in Paris on Sunday.