

Egypt: UN chief and Security Council condemn attack on Sinai mosque

24 November 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the United Nations Security Council have condemned “in the strongest terms” the attack on al-Rawdah Mosque during Friday prayers in the town of Bir al-Abed in North Sinai, Egypt, that left scores of people dead and wounded.

“The Secretary-General [extends his deepest condolences](#) to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Egypt and wishes a swift recovery to those who have been injured,” his spokesperson, Farhan Haq, said in a statement.

“The Secretary-General calls for those responsible for today’s horrific attack to be swiftly brought to justice,” he added.

In a statement issued to the press by Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi of Italy, which holds the presidency of the Security Council for November, the 15-member body also strongly condemned the “heinous and cowardly terrorist attack” which reportedly left at least 235 people dead and over 100 injured.

Council members reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these “reprehensible acts of terrorism” to justice.

UN rights expert calls on Mexico to investigate killing of state-level Ombudsperson

24 November 2017 – Strongly condemning the attack on a state-level Ombudsperson and his family in Mexico, the United Nations expert on human rights defenders has called on the authorities to investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Silvestre de la Toba Camacho, the Ombudsperson in Mexico’s Baja California Sur state, along with his son died in the 20 November attack and his wife and daughter were seriously injured.

“I condemn the killing of Silvestre de la Toba Camacho in the strongest possible terms, and am equally outraged by the assault on his family,” said

Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, in a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

“I call on the [state and federal authorities to ensure that a thorough investigation is conducted](#) and the perpetrators are brought to justice.”

Earlier this year, at the end of his [mission](#) to Mexico, Mr. Forst had underscored that ending the country’s current cycle of impunity was one of its biggest challenges.

“The best way to ensure the safety of human rights defenders is by bringing those who attempt to harm them to justice,” the rights expert added in the news release today.

Further, Mr. Forst also underscored the importance of the role of national human rights institutions in the protection of human rights and stressed that governments should put in place protection schemes to ensure that persons who work for them are able to perform their functions in a safe and autonomous manner.

In particular, he urged the Government of Mexico to set up protection mechanisms for defenders at risk, including people working in national human rights institutions.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council 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.

[UN experts urge China to ‘immediately and unconditionally’ release human rights lawyer](#)

24 November 2017 – Voicing concern that the trial of a human rights lawyer – leading to his imprisonment – fell short of international standards, a group of United Nations rights experts has appealed to the Government for the lawyer’s immediate and unconditional release.

According to a [news release](#) issued Thursday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), the lawyer, Jiang Tianyong, was jailed for two years after being found guilty of inciting subversion of the State’s power.

“Mr. Jiang’s trial clearly fell short of international standards and his

conviction represents an unfair and arbitrary punishment of a human rights lawyer and defender, whose only crime was to exercise his rights to free speech and to defend human rights,” the experts said in the [release](#).

“Domestic judicial procedures should be in compliance with China’s international human rights obligations,” they added.

According to the news release, Mr. Jiang, whose wife and daughter are in exile in the United States, was an outspoken defender of his fellow human rights lawyers who were arrested in an unprecedented crackdown in July 2015.

On Tuesday, 21 November, he was found guilty of the incitement charge by the Changsha Intermediate People’s Court after a supposed confession in August, the release noted, adding that the UN experts had previously expressed concern that his confession may have been coerced by the use of torture, in contravention of the Chinese Criminal Procedures Law and international human rights standards.

Those adding their voice to the call on the Government are Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on [extreme poverty and human rights](#); Michel Forst, the Special Rapporteur on the [situation of human rights defenders](#); David Kaye, the Special Rapporteur on the [promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#); José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, the Chair-Rapporteur of the [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#), and the [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#).

he release also noted that last August, during a visit to China, Mr. Alston had met with Mr. Jiang, and, in December, [expressed](#) concern that Mr. Jiang’s enforced disappearance may have occurred, at least in part, in reprisal for the lawyer’s cooperation with the UN during his visit.

The rights experts have been in contact with the Chinese Government on several occasions to raise their concern, it added.

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[Mediterranean crossing still world’s deadliest for migrants – UN report](#)

24 November 2017 – Crossing the Mediterranean to Europe is “by far the world’s deadliest” journey for migrants, with at least 33,761 reported to have died or gone missing between 2000 and 2017, a United Nations report finds.

The report, released Friday from the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), notes the highest number of fatalities, at 5,096, was recorded in 2016, when the short and relatively less dangerous route from Turkey to Greece was shut, following the European Union-Turkey deal.

“Shutting the shorter and less dangerous routes can open longer and more dangerous routes, thus increasing the likelihood of dying at sea,” said Professor Philippe Fargues of the European University Institute, who authored the report, [Four Decades of Cross-Mediterranean Undocumented Migration to Europe](#).

The report reviews available evidence on trans-Mediterranean irregular migration to Europe along various routes going back to the 1970s, particularly on the magnitude of the flows, the evolution of sea routes to Southern Europe, the characteristics of migrants, the extent to which one can separate between economic and forced movements, and mortality during the sea journey.

More than 2.5 million migrants have crossed the Mediterranean in an unauthorized fashion since the 1970s.

Irregular sea journeys started rising in those years in response to the introduction, by Western States grappling with rising levels of unemployment during the 1973 oil crisis, of visa requirements for people who until then had been exempted – most of them temporary labour migrants from North Africa and Turkey.

These policies encouraged those who were already in Europe to stay, increased irregular migration of family members to join their relatives in Europe and gave way to the smuggling business, the report states.

The report also highlights differences between the modern pattern of migration from Africa to Italy, mostly via Libya, and that from the Middle East to Greece via Turkey.

Arrivals to Italy from North Africa largely originate across sub-Saharan Africa in response to deep migratory pressures – population growth coupled with limited livelihood opportunities, high unemployment and poor governance and political and economic instability.

Arrivals to Greece from Turkey since 2009 have been primarily of nationals from origin States affected by conflict and political instability, such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

Noting the limitations of available data on irregular migration, the report says the numbers of deaths at sea may grossly underestimate the real number of people who die or go missing while crossing the Mediterranean, as they are based on numbers of bodies found and survivors’ testimonies.

Conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine not in place to enable safe returns – UN refugee agency

24 November 2017 – Amid reports of an agreement between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar on return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, the United Nations refugee agency has underscored that the returns must be voluntary, and take place in safe and dignified conditions.

At present, conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine state are not in place to enable safe and sustainable returns. Refugees are still fleeing, and many have suffered violence, rape, and deep psychological harm, Adrian Edwards, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), told journalists at a regular media briefing in Geneva Friday.

It is critical that returns do not take place precipitously or prematurely, without the informed consent of refugees or the basic elements of lasting solutions in place, he stressed.

Over the past three months, widespread inter-communal violence in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state resulted in some 622,000 people fleeing into neighbouring Bangladesh. Prior to this latest crisis, Bangladesh was already hosting well over 200,000 Rohingya refugees as a result of earlier displacements.

According to the UN refugee agency, some of those who fled witnessed the deaths of family and friends, and most have little or nothing to go back to with their homes and villages destroyed.

Deep divisions between communities remain unaddressed UNHCR spokesperson
Adrian Edwards

Deep divisions between communities remain unaddressed, added Mr. Edwards, underscoring that progress towards addressing the root causes of flight, including lack of citizenship for members of the Rohingya community, as recommended by the Rakhine Advisory Commission, will also be crucial.

Furthermore, humanitarian access in northern Rakhine state remains negligible.

At the briefing, the UNHCR spokesperson also noted that the UN agency looks forward to seeing details of the agreement between the two countries, and that it stands ready to help both governments work towards a solution for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh that meets international refugee and human rights standards.

Refugees have the right to return [and] a framework that enables them to exercise this right in line with international standards, will be welcome," he said.