

UN rights chief urges DRC authorities to allow peaceful expression of dissent at protests

15 November 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief on Wednesday called on the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to lawfully handle demonstrations organized by those protesting the updated electoral calendar for general elections.

The [inflammatory comments by police authorities](#) ahead of today's protests are deeply alarming, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a news release.

I call on the Government and security forces to work to defuse tensions instead of creating the conditions for suppression, confrontation and violence, he added.

Upon publication of the electoral calendar on 5 November, which states that general elections will take place in December 2018 – two years later than originally scheduled – civil society organisations called for nationwide protests to be held today.

In response, a number of alarming comments were reportedly made by provincial police inspectors in Goma and Kinshasa. Yesterday, the Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) provincial inspector in Kinshasa warned that any gathering of more than five people would be dispersed – mercilessly – upon the Governor's orders.

Even before the announcement of the electoral calendar, between 22 and 23 October, at least 65 opposition political activists were arrested in Lubumbashi, in the country's southeast. All those arrested were later released, some on bail, but these arrests were part of a worrying pattern of actions to prevent political opponents from gathering.

Mr. Zeid called for top political leaders to ensure respect for the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the freedom of expression. He also urged all sides to exercise restraint and to renounce the use of violence.

The UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials contains very strict guidelines on the use of force, including that intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

In September last year, 54 people died after defence and security forces used excessive force against demonstrators who were calling for constitutional deadlines to be respected and for President Joseph Kabila to step down at the end of his second mandate.

[Security Council maintains partial lifting of arms embargo on Somalia for one year](#)

14 November 2017 – The Security Council on Tuesday renewed until 15 November 2018 the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia, authorization for maritime interdiction of illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and the humanitarian exemption.

In the resolution adopted by 11 affirmative votes and four abstentions, the 15-member body requested the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) to continue its investigations related to the export to Somalia of chemicals that may be used as oxidisers in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, such as the precursors ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate, potassium nitrate and sodium chlorate.

Those abstained in the vote were Bolivia, China, Egypt and Russia.

Further, the Council extended until 15 December 2018 the mandate of the SEMG, and recognised that during the course of its current and three previous mandates, the SEMG has not found conclusive evidence that Eritrea supports Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

The Council expressed its intention to keep measures on Eritrea under regular review, in light of the upcoming midterm update by the SEMG due by 30 April 2018.

Recalling the three meetings between an Eritrean government representative and the SEMG, the Council reiterated its expectation that Eritrea's Government will facilitate the entry of the SEMG into Eritrea to discharge fully its mandate.

The Council urged Eritrea and Djibouti to engage on the issue of the Djiboutian combatants missing in action and to seek all available solutions to settle their border dispute peacefully.

[Kosovo: Time for action overtakes time for excuses, UN envoy tells Security](#)

Council

14 November 2017 – Noting recent momentum to advance democracy and good governance in Kosovo, the head of the United Nations Mission there urged for more emphasis on rebuilding trust and reconciliation, including through engagement with women and the youth, as well as on overcoming challenges related to freedom of cultural and religious identity.

“With the end of the election cycle, the time for action now moves ahead of the time for excuse,” Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the head of the UN Mission in Kosovo ([UNMIK](#)), [told](#) the Security Council Tuesday.

“It is important that the potential for embarking on a sustainable peace process not be hindered by inflexibility or simple inaction,” he added, calling all parties to play their part in the process.

In his briefing, Mr. Tanin informed the Security Council that 40 new judges and 13 new state prosecutors from the Serb community were sworn into office in Kosovo, who would work as part of a unitary Kosovo justice system.

He, however, noted that the implementation of agreements made in 2013 and earlier, continue, at best, to be sporadic and variable.

“Within the framework of the European Union (EU)-facilitated dialogue, technical implementation needs more meaningful commitment from both sides,” said the UN envoy, noting that the most obvious gap is the lack of progress towards the implementation of the agreed Community/Association of Serb-majority municipalities.

Regarding Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the UNMIK said that Pristina representatives attend all CEFTA meetings, and that UNMIK’s participation is limited to the requirements of the legal statutes.

“This participation continues strictly to the extent required by CEFTA members to ensure its functionality, which in turn supports economic opportunity throughout the region,” he said, noting the importance of economic and employment opportunities as well as addressing corruption, ensuring public accountability at all levels and combatting organized criminality.

“The final objective of [UNMIK] remains clear, with your support: sustained peace, and the opportunities it brings for individuals to fulfil their aspirations and their potential,” concluded Mr. Tanin.

One in 10 children work, UN agency reports at start of conference to end underage labour

14 November 2017 – An estimated 152 million children around the world work, a practice that the international community at a United Nations co-organized conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is trying to eliminate.

“Of those, almost half are in hazardous work. We need to recognize that progress has been very uneven,” [said](#) International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Guy addressing the opening of the [IV Global Conference](#) on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, which started today.

The senior UN official urged governments to work together to eradicate child labour by 2025, as agreed to in the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“The goals cannot be clearer, nor can the uncomfortable reality that if we do not do more and better, we will not achieve them,” Ryder warned.

According to an ILO report released yesterday, more than half of all children – some 73 million – work in jobs that directly endanger their health, safety and moral development.

A majority of the children cited between the ages of five and 17 work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, forestry and livestock.

“Poverty is the main cause of child labour in agriculture, together with limited access to quality education, inadequate agricultural technology and access to adult labour, high hazards and risks, and traditional attitudes towards children’s participation in agricultural activities,” ILO said in the report, [Ending child labour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes](#).

Among other findings, the report noted a link between child labour and armed conflicts.

The incidence of child labour in countries affected by armed conflict is 77 per cent higher than the global average, while the incidence of hazardous work is 50 per cent higher, according to the report, which noted the use of Syrian refugee children in the work force throughout the world.

The authors point to the need to boost legal protection and inspections of work places, strengthening social protection and investing in free, quality education, as ways to fight against child labour.

The conference in Buenos Aires runs through Thursday.

Suffering deepens in Yemen as border shutdowns enter second week – UN agencies

14 November 2017 – A proposal to deliver vitally needed aid to war-ravaged Yemen via smaller ports than those under blockade will not solve the catastrophic humanitarian situation there, a senior UN official said Wednesday.

Speaking over the phone to journalists in Geneva, Jamie McGoldrick, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, called for the reopening of the country's major import hubs, Hodeida and Saleef, along with Sana'a airport.

Smaller ports such as Aden in southern Yemen and Jazan – which is in neighbouring Saudi Arabia – lack the capacity to handle the amount of fuel, food and medicines that's needed, Mr McGoldrick said.

"Coming from Jazan in the north or coming from Aden in the south to serve the bulk of the population that we have identified, in the northern part of the country, it would be very difficult in many places because of for security issues, because of logistical issues" he said.

This would increase the cost of supplies by an estimated \$30 per metric tonne "and this is something that would then reduce the amount of money we have to serve the population and right now our humanitarian response plan is only 57 per cent funded," explained Mr. McGoldrick.

He said that Yemen has just 20 days' worth of diesel left in the north, and three months' reserves of wheat, adding that while he has heard reports that Aden and other ports were opening, there has been no confirmation of it.

The decision to blockade Yemen was taken by the Saudi-led coalition – engaged there in a three-year war against Houthi militants, which, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), has left more than seven million close to famine and 21 million needing assistance in one of the world's poorest countries.

With humanitarian supplies "dangerously low," Mr. McGoldrick warned that keeping famine and disease at bay risks setbacks.

Suffering worsens in Yemen

With the closure of land, sea and air borders now entering its second week, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) expressed alarm at the worsening humanitarian situation.

"Over the past week, the closures have [prevented humanitarian and commercial supplies](#) and restricted the movement of aid workers. They are also placing

new economic strain on a civilian population already suffering through many months of conflict," said UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

"As a result," continued Mr. Spindler, "our staff and those of our partners are seeing an increase in the number of civilians seeking humanitarian help. Vulnerable populations including internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers are especially hard-hit."

The spokesperson reminded reporters that since the conflict began in March 2015, it has become the world's largest humanitarian crisis, affecting 21 million people.

"Two million internally displaced people, a million returnees and 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers are all struggling to survive through increasingly prolonged displacement," he stressed, adding that worsening conditions have also led to child labour and early marriage.

"Together with other members of the humanitarian community in Yemen, UNHCR is advocating for the border closures to be lifted without delay. The closures are exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, posing a critical threat to the millions struggling to survive," Mr. Spindler concluded.