

UN rights experts urge Iran to immediately release British-Iranian citizen after fresh charges

20 October 2017 – United Nations human rights experts have appealed to Iran to immediately release a jailed British-Iranian citizen, who is now facing fresh charges, and expressed “grave” concerns for her welfare.

Ms. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is already serving a five-year term in Tehran’s Evin Prison and could face an additional 16 years of imprisonment if convicted on the new charges.

“We consider that Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been [arbitrarily deprived of her liberty](#) and that her right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal has been violated,” the experts said in a news release issued Friday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

Last week, Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was taken alone to court to hear the new charges against her, and was not allowed access to a lawyer during the hearing. Her lawyer had also not been informed of the new charges.

“We are gravely concerned over the mental and physical impact that the new charges have had on Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe,” the experts said, calling on the Iranian authorities to release her at once and guarantee her physical and psychological wellbeing.

The experts are José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, current Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran.

Closing UN’s ‘Africa Week,’ Assembly President says continent’s vision getting close to reality

20 October 2017 – Addressing the final event of this year’s Africa Week at the United Nations, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák on Friday highlighted the continent’s transformative changes facilitated by the African Union’s development agency.

“First, I want to acknowledge the importance of the New Partnership for

Africa's Development (NEPAD)," Mr. Lajčák told an Assembly plenary meeting, referring to the programme first established in 2001 and then integrated into the African Union's structure to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of continental and regional priority projects.

"NEPAD was something of a trailblazer [...] Since its adoption in 2001, NEPAD has led to transformative change," Mr. Lajčák said, noting that it predates the UN's [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 by more than a decade.

For example, he said, NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme has improved agricultural productivity on the continent, changing the lives of many African farmers.

Additionally, NEPAD has led to big strides in the integration of African trade. The finalization of the tripartite free trade agreement this summer among the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East African Community (EAC) was an important step.

"The continental free trade area is no longer a distant dream. It could very soon be a reality," he said.

However, faster progress needs to be seen, not only in the two sectors of agriculture and trade, but also in infrastructure, industry, economic diversification and poverty eradication, said Mr. Lajčák.

He went on to stress that no development in Africa can take hold unless it is led from within, noting that there are many exciting developments at the national level, and African countries are also building their capacities for domestic resource mobilization, and tackling illicit financial flows.

Yet, in an increasingly globalized world, the efforts within Africa need to be supported by a revitalized partnership with development partners, including UN bodies and Member States, as well as by investment and financial and technical assistance.

Also the root causes of conflict and suffering must be addressed. "The signing of a trade agreement will mean little to a mother whose young child is very sick from malaria. Similarly, foreign direct investment is not on the mind of someone who is running from a shower of bullets," he said.

"Africa has a very clear vision" – one which involves all layers of society benefiting from growth and development; one in which malaria or other diseases do not serve as death sentences for hundreds of thousands of people every year; one in which early warning signs of conflict lead more often to successful mediation than to violence; and one in which institutions are strong, women and youth both lead and participate, and good governance is the norm, he said.

"This vision is getting closer to reality," he concluded.

The plenary featured a debate by UN Member States on NEPAD as well as the

decade 2001-2010 to roll back malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Rohingya crisis: UNICEF issues 'Child Alert'; outlines urgent action to save lives

20 October 2017 – Issuing a dire warning on the desperate situation of Rohingya refugee children, who now number more than 320,000 in Bangladesh, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has called for an end to the atrocities targeting civilians in Myanmar's Rakhine state, and immediate and unfettered access to all children affected by the violence there.

At present, UNICEF has no access to Rohingya children in northern Rakhine state, where horrific violence since late August has driven over half a million members of the minority Muslim community to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh.

Many [Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh have witnessed atrocities in Myanmar no child should ever see](#), and all have suffered tremendous loss, said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake, releasing a new report *Outcast and Desperate: Rohingya refugee children face a perilous future*.

This crisis is stealing their childhoods. We must not let it steal their futures at the same time.

In the report, UNICEF has called for urgent action in four key areas:

1. International support and funding for the Bangladesh Humanitarian Response Plan and humanitarian response plan for Myanmar;
2. Protection of Rohingya children and families, and immediate unfettered humanitarian access to all children affected by the violence in Rakhine State;
3. Support for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar; and
4. A long-term solution to the crisis, including implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

The most pressing need for thousands of refugees and refugee children is food, safe water, sanitation and vaccinations. Psychosocial support, education and counselling is also urgently needed.

Meanwhile, the influx of refugees continues unabated between 1,200 and 1,800 children are arriving per day (about 60 per cent the total number) and

thousands more are said to be on way.

VIDEO: Thousands of new Rohingya refugees arrive in Bangladesh. UNHCR Video

To cope with the crisis, UN relief agencies are working at full tilt, but funding and resources are in short supply.

Ahead of an [international pledging conference](#) on 23 October in Geneva, UNICEF has urged donors to respond promptly to the requirements of the updated Bangladesh Humanitarian Response Plan released jointly by the UN and humanitarian agencies.

The Plan calls for \$434 million, including some \$76.1 million to address the immediate needs of newly-arrived Rohingya children, as well as those who arrived before the recent influx, and children from vulnerable host communities.

The ministerial-level conference, organized by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) and co-hosted by the European Union and Kuwait, will provide Governments an opportunity to show their solidarity and share the burden and responsibility.

More than 700,000 over-one-year-olds vaccinated in massive campaign

In the midst of a crisis which appears to overwhelm any response, UN agencies successfully concluded the first phase of a massive oral cholera vaccine (OCV) campaign, reaching over 700,000 children and people over the age of one with protection against the deadly diarrheal disease.

“The coverage is commendable as the oral cholera vaccination campaign was planned and rolled out against very tight timelines,” said Dr. N. Paranietharan, the head of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) presence in Bangladesh.

Among the 700,487 people inoculated since the campaign was launched on 10 October, 179,848 are children aged between one and five.

“[The campaign] demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh, partners on the ground, as well as partners such as GAVI (a public-private global health partnership) and the International Coordinating Group on vaccine provision, to help secure the health and wellbeing of these immensely vulnerable people,” added the WHO official.

The second phase is scheduled for early November to give an additional OCV dose to children aged between one and five years, for added protection.

The vaccination campaign supplements other preventive measures, such as increased access to safe water, adequate sanitation and good hygiene. To help improve hygiene, a bar of soap was also handed out to each individual administered the vaccine.

Cities and local policies key to overcome hunger, stresses head of UN agency

20 October 2017 – Highlighting the potential of cities to address malnutrition, the head of the United Nations food security agency has called for innovative partnerships between urban centres and wide range of stakeholders to overcome the challenge of food waste and to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet for all.

Multiple forms of malnutrition – overweight, obesity or micronutrient deficiencies – threaten the health of millions of people around the world, José Graziano da Silva, the Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), told a global meeting of mayors and representatives from more than 150 cities.

[Fortunately cities are taking action and rising up to the challenge](#) [...] high levels of creativity can be achieved if partnerships are forged with local actors, civil society, private sector and academic and producer organizations, he added.

Citing his own experience with the Zero Hunger Program in Brazil, which lifted 40 million people from poverty and hunger, the FAO Director-General stressed that a key component in the success was the participation of cities, where local governments launched popular restaurants that served balanced and nutritious food at low prices as well as prioritizing the purchase of locally produced food.

In his address to the third mayor's meeting of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact – a commitment to combat hunger and food waste and improve nutrition – Mr. Graziano da Silva also spoke of the UN agency's support to implementing the Pact.

In particular, he highlighted FAO work to promote dialogue between parliamentarians, mutual learning programs among farmers as well as South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as important means to accelerate the pace of change and the transformation of food systems.

FAO supports local governments in their food systems assessments, in the development of urban food strategies and plans, and in the definition of their investment priorities to strengthen linkages with rural areas, said the FAO Director-General.

Also in his remarks, Mr. Graziano da Silva also highlighted the need for aligning efforts with the New Urban Agenda, adopted last October, by world leaders as the new global standard for sustainable urban development.

The New Agenda makes a concrete call for better urban and territorial planning with a view to ending hunger and malnutrition, said Graziano da Silva, adding that it also urges for greater coordination between food and energy policies, and those regarding water, health, transport and waste.

UN delivering coordinated humanitarian response in wake of Mogadishu bombings

The United Nations has mobilized its staff and resources to aid Somalis affected by last Saturday's bomb blasts in the capital Mogadishu.

"We have called upon our colleagues in the UN family to [donate blood](#). At the same time, the entire UN family is also mobilizing in support for the response by the Federal Government and the local administration," said the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Rasedon Zenenga.

Since last Sunday, the UN Mine Action Service ([UNMAS](#)) has deployed technical advisors, medics and explosives-detecting dog teams at the main bomb blast site near the Safari Hotel. Fire unit personnel from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the UN Support Office in Somalia have been using specialized life-detection equipment to search for survivors.

On Monday, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) delivered 3.8 metric tonnes of medical supplies – donated by the United Kingdom – to Mogadishu's Medina Hospital and a newly established National Emergency Operations Centre. UNICEF also erected three large tents for personnel tracing patients' relatives.

Earlier this week, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also delivered tents, a generator and 1,000 non-food item kits to Medina Hospital and the operations centre.

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) contributed three tons of medicines and other emergency relief supplies on Tuesday to treat those wounded in the explosions.

In addition, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has delivered radios to a local ambulance company and is planning to provide cash payments to hundreds of youth who have been participating in rubble-clearing operations at the main blast site.

For its part, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is helping to synchronise the response of various UN humanitarian agencies and the massive donations of international partners supporting the recovery effort.

On behalf of UN family in Somalia – 137 of whom have donated blood – Mr. Zenenga expressed deep sadness over the attacks that killed more than 300 civilians and injured more than 500.

While noting that many city hospitals had been overwhelmed by the number of people wounded and were running short of supplies, he said that the UN is working closely with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to ensure that they provide adequate support to federal and local government ministries and agencies.

“Our support as the UN family will partly go through AMISOM, including some equipment and medical supplies,” Mr. Zenenga said.

Alan Macdonald, Director of UNMAS Somalia, pointed out the important role played by the agency’s sniffer dogs in searching for secondary explosive devices around the perimeter area of the main blast site.

“In the second day, the response changed, we have explosive detection dogs but we’ve also augmented that with combat engineering support where we are helping the AMISOM soldiers with heavy equipment for removing rubble at the site,” Mr. Macdonald noted.