

## Cameroon: UN rights office urges meaningful dialogue to address decades-long grievances

6 October 2017 – Voicing concern over tensions in Cameroon, the United Nations human rights wing has urged the Government and dissatisfied groups to engage in a meaningful political dialogue to fully address long standing grievances.

Speaking to the press today in Geneva, Rupert Colville, the Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) also called on the authorities in the African nation to conduct impartial and effective investigations into Sunday's violence in which at least 10 people were killed.

“Credible sources indicate that some of these deaths resulted from excessive use of force by the security forces,” [said](#) the Spokesperson at the regular news briefing.

Cameroon's Anglophone regions have seen multiple strikes and demonstrations over the past year as resentment and tensions have built at what, he said, English-speakers see as discrimination against them in favour of the majority French-speaking population.

Noting that over the past few months, public and private property has been damaged, including arson attacks on a number of schools, Mr. Colville called on all people to pursue peaceful means to make themselves heard.

In the same vein, he also urged the authorities to ensure that the security forces exercise restraint and take measures to prevent the use of force when policing demonstrations.

“People should be allowed to exercise their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, including through having uninterrupted access to the internet,” he stated.

Further at the briefing, he noted that OHCHR welcomed the comments by President Paul Biya, on Sunday, in which the President condemned all forms of violence, irrespective of the perpetrators, and called for dialogue as the only way to find a durable solution.

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# UN peacekeeping chief seeks Security Council support for speedy deployment of uniformed personnel

5 October 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping chief today said rapid deployment of uniformed personnel to the field is a costly, complex and difficult process that requires the commitment of the contributors, the host country and neighbors, as well as the support of the Security Council.

“Generating uniformed personnel for UN peacekeeping is a tireless and enormous task,” said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, in a briefing, noting that this is the first time the Council has dedicated a meeting to this issue – strategic force generation.

A small team of dedicated officers is in charge of generating and rotating more than 300 units – including 76 infantry battalions – with tens of thousands of troops and police from over 120 countries, while selecting and deploying several thousand individual staff and police officers throughout the year, Mr. Lacroix explained.



Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, addresses the Security Council meeting on strategic force generation for United Nations peacekeeping operations. UN Photo/Cia Pak

In the weeks and months that pass from the issuance of a mandate by the Security Council, until a mission reaches a minimum operating capacity, lives can be lost. There are financial implications of long deployment timelines as well, as a peacekeeping operation deployed too late will have a more intractable situation to address, potentially requiring a larger footprint and prolonging the life of that mission, he stated.

The peacekeeping chief noted significant progress made towards more rapid deployment. For example, a battalion in the UN mission in the Central African Republic that was facing conduct and discipline issues has been replaced in less than 60 days.

He also said that his office recently received sufficient pledges to fulfil nearly all the requirements for a Vanguard Brigade of roughly 4,000 troops and police for the remainder of 2017 and the first half of next year.

Despite the success of the last two years, a number of specialized capabilities remain in short supply, particularly high-value enablers, such as helicopters, quick reaction forces, and units trained to dispose of explosive ordnance.

There is also a lack of progress towards targets for deployment of female peacekeepers.

He highlighted a crucial role the Security Council plays in defining and helping meet the capability requirements of UN missions, encouraging Council Members to come forward with new, innovative contributions, including through the provision of tailored and sustained training and capacity building efforts to address mid- to long-term capability gaps. The trilateral partnership between Japan and several African troop-contributing countries is a good example of this kind of initiative, he added.

The Council can also take into account current or potential capability gaps, such as those in the UN Mission in Mali, when drafting or renewing mandates. For missions like that in South Sudan, the Council should engage collectively and individually to ensure that host governments fully comply with status of mission agreements; and that the Council act accordingly when host governments fail to do so, he said.

The Council can also ensure the full implementation of performance, training and conduct requirements, and in cases of underperformance or misconduct, the UN Secretariat relies on the Council's consistent support to address them.

The Council can also back UN efforts to foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation through strategic force generation and other reform efforts.

"Strategic force generation is an important and still relatively new initiative," he said, stressing that it should be seen as only one part of a broader, ongoing effort by the Secretariat to make peacekeeping operations a more efficient, effective and accountable tool for the international community.

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## **Mali continues to make progress, but swift action needed as civilians still face threats – UN envoy**

5 October 2017 – While recent crises threatening the peace process in Mali had been overcome and new agreements reached, progress must be accelerated as the situation remains perilous for peacekeepers and civilians, the head of United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the West African country told the Security Council today.

"Despite the positive developments, we must remember that the agreed deadlines of 2018 are quickly approaching and the challenges are enormous," said Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General

in Mali and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) [said](#) via videoconference from the Malian capital, Bamako.

“All parties must redouble their efforts to re-establish trust between them and, despite the prolonged delays in the implementation of the Agreement [on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali], engage in necessary reforms and provide a peace dividend to the people,” he added.

He said that the period under the Council’s review, mid-June to mid-September, witnessed debate over a draft revision of the national Constitution amid armed clashes between the Platform and Coordination, the two coalitions that had signed onto the 2015 peace agreement. The combined efforts of the signatory movements and the international community had allowed MINUSMA to overcome the crises, but delays in implementing the agreement persisted.

Following the clashes, he said, truces were agreed upon in August, with further commitments to end hostilities having been signed in September. Earlier in the day, several prisoners held by the groups had been freed and recent progress included the participation in a 20 September high-level meeting in New York of both coalition leaders, who had agreed to accelerate the peace agreement’s implementation.

Some of the specifics they had discussed included establishing a second chamber of Parliament, operationalizing territorial collectives, launching demobilization activities, security sector reform and redeploying the reformed national military.

“Yet, the challenges remain enormous,” he stressed. The Human rights situation remains a source of deep concern, particularly given the rise of armed extremism, the absence of State authority in certain areas and the imposition of anti-terrorism measures. While progress in fighting impunity for abuses that occurred during the 2012 crisis included the conviction of Aliou Mahamane Touré, there must be justice for all and every perpetrator must held accountable, he said.

He added that the recently authorized sanctions regime was an important part of the pursuit of justice and peace. Initiatives such as the dissemination of information on human rights and the establishment of the international commission of inquiry would also help fight impunity, he said, adding that MINUSMA continued to support State institutions in all areas through regular dialogue.

The security situation remained a major obstacle, he said, with nearly daily losses of UN peacekeepers due to anti-personnel mines and improvised explosives. Accelerated reconciliation efforts were needed as was the full deployment of the escort battalion for the regional reaction force. Given all the challenges, he reiterated the need for funding to invest in protection, improve monitoring, enhanced patrolling and detection, and early warning systems to reduce the toll of attacks.

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## [UN report reveals shocking levels of grave violations against children affected by conflicts](#)

5 October 2017 – More than 15,500 children became victims of widespread violations – including shocking levels of killing and maiming, recruitment and use, and denial of humanitarian access – a new United Nations report has revealed.

According to the Secretary-General's [report on children and armed conflict](#), presented today to the Security Council, children from countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, suffered an unacceptable level of violations by parties to conflict – both government forces as well as non-State armed groups.

“The tragic fate of child victims of conflict cannot and must not leave us unmoved; a child killed, recruited as a soldier, injured in an attack or prevented from going school due to a conflict is already one too many,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, said in a [news release](#) today.

Of the 20 country situations included in the report, at least 4,000 verified violations committed by Government forces and over 11,500 by non-State armed groups. Afghanistan recorded the highest number of verified child casualties since the UN started documenting civilian casualties in 2009, with 3,512 children killed or maimed last year – an increase of 24 per cent compared to the previous year.

The report also documents 851 verified cases (more than double the number in 2015) of children recruited and used in Syria, and 1,915 in Somalia in 2016. It also notes that in Yemen, at least 1,340 children were killed or maimed. In Syria that number stood at 1,299.

### ***UN chief ‘appalled’ at scale of violations***

[Expressing shock](#) over the scale of violations documented in the report, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres reiterated his call on parties to conflict to abide by their responsibility to protect children, in accordance with their obligation under international humanitarian and human rights law.

“The goal of the report is not only to raise awareness of the violations of the rights of children but also to promote measures that can diminish the tragic plight of children in conflict,” read a statement attributable to the spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

“The Secretary-General is encouraged that several governments and non-state actors are now working with the United Nations towards that objective. He hopes that more will follow,” it added.

The statement further noted that the new *Developments and Concerns* section included in the report reflects this enhanced UN engagement, which should lead to reducing the suffering of children victims of armed conflict and increase their protection.

The violations covered in the report include recruitment or use of children; killing or maiming children; committing rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; engaging in attacks on schools and/or hospitals; and abducting children in situations of armed conflict.

The parties which committed these violations are listed in annexes to the report. The annexes also include parties that have put in place measures to improve protection of children during the reporting period and those who have not implemented adequate measures.

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## [Security Council expands mandate of UN Mission to verify truce between Colombian Government and ELN](#)

5 October 2017 – Acting unanimously, the United Nations Security Council today expanded the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, tasking it to monitor temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) armed group.

The Council, through a news resolution, decided that the [UN Verification Mission](#) will, on a temporary basis until 9 January 2018, “verify compliance with the temporary, bilateral, national ceasefire with the ELN at the national, regional and local level.”

“[It shall also] endeavour to prevent incidents through enhanced coordination between the parties and resolution of disagreements” noted the resolution.

In today’s resolution, the Security Council also tasked the Verification Mission with enabling a timely response by the parties to incidents, as well as verifying and reporting publicly and to the parties on compliance with the ceasefire.

The Council also approved an addition of no more than 70 international observers, as [requested](#) by the Secretary-General for liaising with the Colombian Armed Forces and ELN to avoid conflicting movements and prevent armed clashes.

The resolution follows an agreement reached in early September in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, between the Colombian Government and the ELN on a bilateral and temporary ceasefire. The ceasefire entered into force on 1 October, and is due to remain in force until the second week of January 2018.

Also today, the Council adopted a presidential statement in which it recognized the work of the (now closed) UN Mission in Colombia and welcomed the “remarkable achievements” in the country following the 2016 Final Agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP).