

UN extends solidarity to flood-devastated Texas after record-shattering rainfall

29 August 2017 – The United Nations is reacting to the devastating images from Tropical Storm Harvey, which has affected an area the size of Spain in the southern United States, and which is likely to worsen in the coming hours as the rain continues.

Shocked at the images of Hurricane Harvey's devastation, Secretary-General António Guterres [said](#) in a Tweet.

The Secretary-General, who is currently in the Middle East on an official visit with Israeli and Palestinian authorities, added that his thoughts are with all the victims and the first responders.

The storm is presenting a "nightmare scenario" according to the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and bringing "catastrophic and life-threatening flooding."

Clare Nullis, a WMO spokesperson [told](#) journalists in Geneva that rivers are rising and the disaster is "far from over."

"Harvey has caused so much rainfall that the National Weather Service has had to update the colour charts on its graphics in order to effectively map it," Ms. Nullis said, "introducing a new colour category for rainfall totals above 30 inches or 76 centimetres."

Although the storm is no longer classified as a hurricane, it is moving slowly and generating heavy rainfall.

"The priority for now is to save people's lives and get them out of harm's way," said Ms. Nullis.

The UN disaster risk reduction office today [extended condolences](#) to the families and friends of the people killed, and said the destruction caused by Harvey is already in the millions of dollars.

"Hurricane Harvey has revealed how exposed even high-income countries are when building takes place on a grand scale along coastlines exposed to tropical storms. There is no doubt that along with failings in risk governance, climate change is intensifying the cocktail of man-made risk to an unprecedented degree," said UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser.

He noted the impact of displacement caused by flooding "the most common natural hazard" and stressed the importance of building outside of flood plains.

In Palestine, UN chief says two-state solution 'only way to guarantee peace'

29 August 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today reiterated his call for a political solution to the Middle East conflict that would end Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and would create an independent Palestinian state, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

“It is [my deep belief](#) that it is essential to restart a serious and credible political process of negotiation aiming at that objective – the two-state solution – as it is also important to create conditions on the ground to improve the situation of Palestinian populations,” Mr. Guterres said at a press conference in Ramallah after meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

“A two-state solution that will end the occupation and, with the creation of conditions, also the suffering even to the Palestinian people, is in my opinion the only way to guarantee that peace is established and, at the same time, that two states can live together in security and in mutual recognition,” Mr. Guterres said.

He said that Israel's settlement activity represented a major obstacle to the implementation of the two-state solution although there are other obstacles.

The UN chief also expressed a concern about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and pledged to support the effort towards creating conditions for a unified Palestinian leadership both in West Bank and Gaza.

To a question about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's latest comments on settlements in West Bank, Mr. Guterres said “it is clear that there is a disagreement on that matter.”

“We believe that settlement activity is illegal under international law [...] it is an obstacle to the two-state solution,” he added.

Visit to Yasser Arafat Museum

Also today, the Secretary-General visited Yasser Arafat Museum.

“When visiting this museum, there are of course many emotions and many feelings, but the most important of them is the feeling of the suffering of the Palestinian people,” Mr. Guterres told reporters.

For many years, in different capacities as Prime Minister of Portugal and as president of an international political organization, he has closely followed the peace process, in its hopes and frustrations, he said.

I have a dream, a dream to see in the Holy Land two states: A Palestinian state and an Israeli State, living together in peace and security, in mutual recognition and allowing for this kind of suffering not to be possible anymore, the Secretary-General stated.

Myanmar: UN rights chief says violence in Rakhine state 'predictable and preventable'

29 August 2017 – Alarmed at renewed fighting and incitement in the wake of the attacks on Myanmar security forces in northern areas of Rakhine state, the top United Nations human rights official today urged all sides to renounce the use of violence and called on State authorities to ensure they abide by their obligations under international human rights law.

This turn of events is deplorable. It was [predicted and could have been prevented](#), said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, noting that decades of persistent and systematic human rights violations, including the very violent security responses to the attacks since October 2016, have almost certainly contributed to the nurturing of violent extremism, with everyone ultimately losing.

The High Commissioner called on the political leadership to condemn the inflammatory rhetoric and incitement to hatred that is proliferating, including on social media.

Mr. Zeid also expressed concern about claims by the State Counsellor's Office that international aid workers were complicit in or supporting the attacks.

Such statements are irresponsible and only serve to increase fears and the potential for further violence, he said. I am extremely concerned that the unsupported allegations against international aid organizations place their staff in danger and may make it impossible for them to deliver essential aid.

Mr. Zeid said the perpetrators of the attacks on security personnel must be brought to justice, as must those who have been attacking the civilian population.

State authorities should issue clear instructions to security forces to refrain from using disproportionate force, minimize damage and injuries and respect the right to life, he said.

The State has a duty to protect those within its territory without discrimination, stated Mr. Zeid.

I call on the Government of Myanmar to follow the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by Kofi Annan, for an integrated and calibrated response to the situation in Rakhine state, to address rather than sacrifice human rights concerns in the interests of maintaining peace and order," he said.

The High Commissioner also expressed concern about thousands of Rohingya having fled from Myanmar into Bangladesh since the attacks, adding to the tens of thousands who have been arriving in Bangladesh since October 2016.

UN refugee agency urges open borders for people fleeing violence in Rakhine

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) today [communicated](#) to the Government of Bangladesh its readiness to support the country in assisting refugees crossing the border.

As of Sunday, it was estimated that some 5,200 people had entered Bangladesh from Myanmar since Thursday. Several thousand were reported to be in locations along the Myanmar side of the border.

The agency is aware of several reported instances of people being prevented from entering Bangladesh. UNHCR believes it is of the utmost importance that Bangladesh, which has hosted refugees from Myanmar for decades, continues to allow Rohingya fleeing violence to seek safety there.

UNHCR also called on the international community to support Bangladesh in doing so, with all necessary aid and other help.

[UN chief Guterres condemns latest ballistic missile launch by DPRK](#)

29 August 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has condemned the latest ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), in violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

"The launch undermines regional security and stability and efforts to create space for dialogue," said a [statement](#) issued by UN spokesperson Eri Kaneko.

According to press reports, early Tuesday morning, the DPRK launched a ballistic missile that travelled some 2,700 kilometers, flying over Japan before crashing into the Pacific Ocean.

"The Secretary-General calls on the Government of the DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations and to work to re-open channels of

communication,” the statement said, adding that Mr. Guterres remains in close contact with all parties concerned.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council is scheduled to meet urgently on the issue this afternoon at the request of Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea.

[UN chief urges all countries to join legally-binding treaty against nuclear tests](#)

29 August 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has urged all countries to sign and ratify a global treaty that bans nuclear explosions on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

“More than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted over the past seven decades – from the South Pacific to North America, from Central Asia to North Africa. They have harmed some of the world's most vulnerable peoples and pristine ecosystems,” the Secretary-General [said](#) in his message for the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

To ensure that no country could conduct another test, he urged all countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty ([CTBT](#)).

To date, 183 countries have signed the CTBT and 166 have ratified it. For the treaty to enter into force, ratification is required from eight more of the so-called Annex 2 States. Of these, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and the United States, have yet to ratify it.

DPRK, India and Pakistan are among the 13 countries that have not signed the CTBT.

“I urge all countries yet to join the CTBT to do so as soon as possible,” Mr. Guterres said. “For almost 20 years, a global norm has existed against nuclear testing based on voluntarily unilateral moratoriums. I applaud this restraint, but it is not enough.”

He noted that continued nuclear tests by DPRK demonstrate that “even the strongest norm is no substitute for a legally-binding prohibition.”

Overnight, DPRK fired a ballistic missile in violation of Security Council resolutions, Mr. Guterres said in a separate [statement](#) condemning the event and urging DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations.

The comments come on the [International Day against Nuclear Tests](#), which is

observed annually on 29 August, following the declaration of that day in a resolution unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2009.

The resolution called for increasing awareness and education about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for their cessation as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The resolution's adoption also commemorated the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in Kazakhstan in 1991.