

Three displaced families killed in airstrike in south-west Yemen – UN rights wing

21 July 2017 – Three displaced families have been killed when their makeshift shelter was hit in an airstrike in Yemen's Taiz governorate earlier this week, the United Nations human rights wing said.

Citing witness reports, Rupert Colville, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [said today that the straw house the families were sheltering in was destroyed in the strike](#), killing everyone who were inside at the time.

“At least 18 civilians in all, including ten children and two women, are believed to have died in the incident,” he said.

The Arab Coalition Forces airstrike had taken place in the Al Asheerah village, which is near the town of Mawza, and is currently controlled by the Houthis, at around 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 18 July.

According to Mr. Colville, the families had been recorded by OHCHR as displaced, along with three others, from their homes in a different village nearby three months ago as a result of other airstrikes, and had set up four rough shelters in an open area in Al Asheerah.

The village is located about eight kilometres from the Khalid Bin Al Walid Military Camp, where clashes between pro-Hadi forces, backed by the Coalition Forces, and the Houthis are taking place.

Noting that according to available information, there did not appear to have been “any military objectives anywhere” in the immediate vicinity of the destroyed house, the OHCHR spokesperson underscored that attacks targeting civilians or civilian objects or indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

“[We] remind all parties to the conflict, including the Coalition, of their duty to ensure full respect for international humanitarian law and to respect their obligations under international human rights law,” said Mr. Colville, calling on the authorities for a comprehensive and impartial investigation into this incident.

Since March 2015, OHCHR has documented 13,609 civilian casualties, including 5,021 killed and 8,588 injured. These figures are based on the casualties individually verified by its office in Yemen and the overall number could be much higher.

In Nigeria, UN deputy chief says 'messages of women' vital to sustainable peace, development

20 July 2017 – Urgent action is needed now towards the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, as well ensuring their voices are heard in all aspects of society, the United Nations deputy chief told reporters in Abuja today as part of a first-ever UN-African Union trip focused on women, peace and security.

“It is about action. It is about implementation,” Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed told the press in the Nigerian capital, where she also spotlighted the importance advancing gender equality as a precondition for sustainable development for all.

During the [joint AU-UN high-level trip](#), which will move on from Nigeria to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ms. Mohammed will be accompanied by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the Special Envoy of the AU on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop.

“It is a new era,” Ms. Mohammed continued, “a new era where we have many tools at our disposal.”

“We know that from the economy to stability and peace, we are not able to achieve our goals if we are only investing in half of the population. Human resource is a major asset of a nation and a continent. Women often account for half. But they lack the investment we need,” she added, urging that women’s voices be heard in all aspects of society.

What we really want to do is to hear and bring the messages of women
Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General

Ms. Mohammed cited various challenges, which went beyond abject poverty to encompass high maternal mortality rates, extremism and education gaps.

“What we really want to do is to hear and bring the messages of women in decision-making, women who bear the brunt and carry the burden of many of the tragedies that we see to see how we can come out of this, how we can be a constructive partner in finding the solutions to sustainable development,” she stressed.

According to Ms. Mohammed: “It makes economic sense. It’s not charity. It is about rights [...] it’s a huge part of our economic development.”

Over the past two days, the deputy UN chief met with the acting President and key ministers on these and other issues that affect development.

Investing in Sustainable Development Goals can help prevent conflict

From the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria's north-east to the conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, she said conflicts drain the country's economy of resources that could be better used for development.

“Without peace we cannot have development. Whatever investments that we are putting into development we are seeing them eroded by the lack of peace,” she underscored.

Ms. Mohammed also spoke about meeting with young refugee girls, who, living in camps, fled tragedies, including some of the freed Chibok girls. “We heard stories that young girls should not have to tell, and these have been a tragedy for all of us,” she lamented.

However, the deputy UN chief was inspired by their spirit as they “refuse to be victims and are survivors with a future that is bright.”

“We saw girls [...] who talked about their dreams no longer their nightmares,” she said, adding that while challenges remain as there are many girls still left behind, “it shows that there is hope.”

Ms. Mohammed underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships with Nigeria and the African Union for a scaled-up response to support women and girls who face these tragedies.

Turning to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), she emphasized that by investing in them, “we can look at the root causes [...] we can prevent the conflict from happening.”

Also, as present conflicts are resolved, the [SDGs](#) provide an opportunity “to invest in the day after, to make sure that we are building back so that we don't lose the dividend of peace.”

Change in behaviour for South Sudan actors ‘long overdue,’ Security Council told

20 July 2017 – Highlighting challenges facing South Sudan, a senior United Nations official today underlined that overcoming obstacles borne of a volatile combination of insecurity and political uncertainty is critical for

the war-torn country to be put on the track to peace and stability.

The security environment remains extremely volatile and South Sudan is in need of an effective and credible ceasefire, El Ghassim Wane, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, told the Security Council today, noting reports of active military operations in parts of the country since the Government's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in June.

In his briefing, Mr. Wane also noted that while the Government has publicly expressed its commitment to create an environment conducive for the conduct of the National Dialogue, certain recent decisions seem to contradict those pledges, such as blocking of key media websites after their alleged criticism of the authorities.

Every effort should be made to ensure that [the Dialogue] is inclusive, transparent, takes place in a free and secure environment, has clear outcomes that complements the ARCISS [Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan] and is supported by a sufficiently broad political consensus from all political forces in the country, he added.

Further, noting the importance of an Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, an eight-country trade bloc in Africa)-led revitalization process, the UN official urged the Council to continue its support for the process and called on national stakeholders to embrace it as a genuine opportunity to restore peace in South Sudan.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Wane stressed the importance of the unity in the region and the need for the international community to call on the leadership of all sides in South Sudan that the current situation in the country is unacceptable and unsustainable.

A change in behaviour is long overdue, and the pursuit of political objectives through violence for which the people of South Sudan continue to bear a heavy toll should not be allowed to continue, he stated.

[AIDS-related deaths decline; 19.5 million people on life-saving treatment – UN report](#)

20 July 2017 – The scales have tipped for the first time in the fight against AIDS as more than half of all people living with the HIV virus now have access to treatment, while AIDS-related deaths have nearly halved since 2005, according to a new United Nations report.

We met the 2015 target of [15 million people on treatment](#) and we are on track to double that number to 30 million and meet the 2020 target," said Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), in a press statement.

We will continue to scale up to reach everyone in need and honour our commitment of leaving no one behind," he added.

The UNAIDS report, [Ending AIDS: Progress towards the 90-90-90 targets](#), gives a comprehensive analysis of the 2014 targets to accelerate progress so that by 2020, 90 per cent of all HIV-infected people know their status, 90 per cent of all HIV-diagnosed people are accessing antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 90 per cent of those taking ART are virally suppressed.

It states that last year, 19.5 million of the 36.7 million people living with HIV had access to treatment and AIDS-related deaths have fallen from 1.9 million in 2005 to one million in 2016. With continued scale-up, this progress puts the world on track to reach the global target of 30 million people on treatment by 2020, according to the report.

We will continue to scale up to reach everyone in need and honour our commitment of leaving no one behind," Mr. Sidibé stressed.

Eastern and southern Africa, which account for more than half of all people living with the virus, are leading the way. Since 2010, AIDS-related deaths there have declined by 42 per cent and new HIV infections by 29 per cent, including a 56 per cent drop in new infections among children over that period – a remarkable achievement of HIV treatment and prevention efforts aimed at putting that region on track towards ending its AIDS epidemic.

On the 90-90-90 track

The *Ending AIDS* report reveals that in 2016, more than 70 per cent of HIV-infected people knew their status, 77 per cent of whom were accessing treatment. Of those, 82 per cent were virally suppressed and helping to prevent virus transmission.

Eastern and southern Africa, western and central Europe and North America and Latin America are on track to reach the targets by 2020 – with Botswana, Cambodia, Denmark, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden and the UK having already achieved it.

The Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific can also reach them if programmes are further accelerated, says the report.

The most significant impact of scale-up has been in reducing AIDS-related deaths, which have almost halved in the past 10 years. Accordingly, life expectancy has significantly increased in the most affected countries, particularly in eastern and southern Africa.

Communities and families are thriving as AIDS is being pushed back," said Mr Sidibé. "As we bring the epidemic under control,

health outcomes are improving and nations are becoming stronger.”

Lagging behind

In contrast, progress against the targets has been poor in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where AIDS-related deaths have pointedly risen. Exceptions, however, include Algeria, Morocco and Belarus, which have increased HIV treatment access from 2010 to 2016.

The report also shows that globally, 30 per cent of people living with HIV still do not know their status, 17.1 million are unable to access ART and more than half are not virally suppressed.

UN envoy calls for de-escalation of tensions and violence in Jerusalem

20 July 2017 – Expressing deep concern over a surge in tensions and violence around the holy esplanade of Jerusalem’s Old City, the United Nations envoy on Middle East peace today called for de-escalation of the situation.

“I call on all concerned parties to [de-escalate the situation](#) and on moderate voices to speak up against those who try to fuel tensions,” said Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in a statement.

He welcomed the commitment of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to uphold and respect the status quo at the City’s holy sites, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ firm condemnation of violence, specifically the [deadly attack](#) on two Israeli policemen on 14 July.

“I hope these affirmations will contribute to resolving the concerns of all parties and put an end to the provocative rhetoric that has added to the escalation over the past week,” Mr. Mladenov said, noting the importance of the special role of Jordan and the historical role of King Abdullah II, as custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.