

UN rallies support for displaced amid fresh violence in Central African Republic

30 May 2017 – United Nations agencies are seeking to rally support for the people fleeing escalating violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), while the Organization's human rights office has called for the establishment of a strong justice system in the country.

Since fighting flared in May between rebels, more than 68,000 people have fled their homes within CAR, while more than 20,000 have sought refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), or the UN refugee agency.

More funds are urgently needed to aid more than 88,000 people who have been forced to flee an upsurge in violence, [said](#) UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch at today's press briefing in Geneva.

Significant rebel activity on towns along the DRC border as well as rumours of possible attacks are pushing people to flee in the Haute Kotto and Mbomou prefectures inside CAR, he noted.

UNHCR is calling for urgent support to its funding appeal of \$209.2 million for the CAR situation, which is only 6 per cent funded.

For its part, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), or the UN migration agency, has tracked more than 19,000 displaced people in the nation's sub-prefecture of Bangassou in Mbomou Prefecture, which is situated at the border with the DRC. More than 13,000 of those displaced are children.

More than 80 per cent of the displaced persons are living with host communities and not in camps, [said](#) Yoko Fujimura, IOM's expert on displacement tracking. Host families are sharing the little that they have with displaced people and therefore should also be supported to avoid tensions over limited resources, [she added](#).

As of May 2017, there were more than 500,000 internally displaced persons nationwide, a figure that had not been reached since August 2014.

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) has released a report that maps [13 years of violence and impunity](#) in the CAR.

Mass killings and other serious human rights violations have been documented in the report covering the multiple conflicts in the Central African Republic between 2003 and 2015.

Many of the violations may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, the mapping report states, as it sets out a strategy to fight pervasive impunity in the country.

The history of the country has been marked by deep-rooted poverty, ethnic tensions, pervasive political instability, corruption and nepotism that led to a succession of armed conflicts, the mapping report states. After gaining independence, the Central African Republic was subjected to a succession of authoritarian regimes that committed, condoned and were unable to prevent serious violations and abuses.

Regional instability and internal conflicts in neighbouring countries have fuelled the volatile conditions in the country, particularly through the flow of arms and rebel groups across its porous borders, the report adds.

The mapping report on the Central African Republic lays bare the staggering suffering of the people of this mineral-rich country which is among the poorest in the world, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said.

In documenting the violations and abuses of the past, we hope to galvanize national and international efforts to protect and bring justice to the victims of these crimes, said Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the UN Special Representative for the CAR and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic ([MINUSCA](#)).

The report sets out recommendations, such as having a sequenced and comprehensive approach to transitional justice, creating a prosecution strategy for the Special Criminal Court, and establishing a truth and reconciliation commission.

[With 'blue helmets' in harm's way every day, peacekeeping reforms and resources needed – UN chief](#)

29 May 2017 – Marking International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today said that peacekeeping must have the tools and rules it needs to adapt to the dangerous and challenging environments they face.

In an [opinion piece in the Boston Globe](#), the Secretary-General wrote that "too often, United Nations peace operations face a gap between our goals and the means we have to achieve them."

He noted that peacekeepers, known also as 'blue helmets' for their iconic headgear, are deployed to many places where warring parties show little commitment to peace, and are themselves increasingly targeted by parties to conflict and violent extremism.

Dealing with this near reality requires a serious strategic reform on our part, based on an analysis of the mandates and capacities of our missions and our partnerships with governments and others," he said.

Mr. Guterres noted that significant reforms in peacekeeping have already reduced costs and made deployments faster and more flexible.

Peacekeeping is already "cost-effective," he said, noting that its budget is less than half of one per cent of global military spending and shared by the 193 UN Member States.

VIDEO: What is UN Peacekeeping? A quick guide on why UN peacekeeping is an investment in global peace, security and prosperity.

Referencing studies in the United States which show that UN peacekeeping missions are estimated to be eight times more cost-effective than when the US acts alone, Mr. Guterres wrote that "investment pays off many times over when we consider the economic growth and prosperity that follow from increased stability and security after successful peacekeeping missions."

UN blue helmets have helped to stabilize and strengthen the development and economics in countries ranging from El Salvador to Namibia, and from Mozambique to Cambodia.

So far, 54 missions have completed their mandates and closed, with two more "Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia" expected to do so in the coming months.

These missions have left a legacy that includes the dedication and courage of those serving, and of those who died in duty.

Since the first peacekeeping operation in Palestine in 1948, more than 3,500 UN staff have died in the service of peace "including 117 military, police and civilian peacekeepers from 43 countries who died in service last year."

"United Nations peacekeepers place themselves in harm's way every day, between armed groups that are trying to kill each other and to harm civilians," Mr. Guterres wrote, noting in particular the situation in the Central African Republic where a number of UN colleagues have been killed recently.

Peace is an abstract concept, he said, but peace on the ground depends on "gruelling hard work, every day, under difficult and dangerous conditions."

Mr. Guterres noted that despite heroic efforts every day, the reputation of peacekeeping has been tarnished by "appalling" cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

To tackle this scourge, he recently presented a plan to all Governments which aims to end impunity and create victims' rights advocates at UN Headquarters and in peacekeeping missions.

On 29 May in 1948, the first UN peacekeeping mission began operations in Palestine. In 2002, the UN General Assembly designated 29 May as the [International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers](#). The annual observance was marked this past Friday at Headquarters, where the Secretary-General presided over a wreath-laying ceremony in honour of all peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag.

[With Africa in spotlight at G7 summit, Secretary-General Guterres urges investment in youth](#)

27 May 2017 – At the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Italy, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today called world leaders to invest in young people, with stronger investment in technology and relevant education and capacity building in Africa.

Speaking at a session on reinforcing the partnership between the G7 and Africa, the Secretary-General noted that the international community has a role in helping the continent adapt as it heads for a new wave of industrialization.

[Failing to do so](#) might have dramatic consequences for the well-being of the people of Africa; increase fragility, causing massive displacement and risking to boost unemployment, especially for young people,” Mr. Guterres told leaders at the two-day meeting in Taormina, Italy.

Noting that a majority of African countries have improved their competitiveness and business environments, the UN chief stressed: [Our shared challenge is to build on these gains and to change the narrative about Africa](#) [from crisis-based narrative to an opportunities-based narrative. We know that the full and true story of Africa is that of a continent with enormous potential for success.](#)”

Africa has the fastest growing youth population in the world, he added, who must be supported with education and training in tomorrow's jobs.

[High levels of youth unemployment are not only a tragedy for young people themselves, but can also undermine development and generate frustration and alienation that, in turn, can become a threat to global peace and security,](#)” Mr. Guterres cautioned in his statements to leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United

States.

Investment in youth must include education and training for girls and women. Gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa \$95 billion a year, which at six per cent of the region's gross domestic product is a needless loss of inclusive human development and economic growth, the UN chief said.

He also called for moving manufacturing and traditional activities, such as agriculture, higher up the global value chain, as well as investing in infrastructure that links regions, countries and communities.

Smart digital platforms, smart grids, smart logistics infrastructure can link urban and rural, and better connect the people of Africa to each other and the world, Mr. Guterres stated, adding: More than just the transfer of technology, we need to maximize the power of innovation for the people of Africa.

Such support and innovation will help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's framework for socio-economic transformation, known as Agenda 2063.

[Kosovo: UN to create trust fund, following panel report on alleged rights violations by peacekeeping mission](#)

26 May 2017 – Taking into account an expert panel report on alleged human rights violations by the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, the Secretary-General has decided to establish a Trust Fund to implement community-based assistance projects, his spokesperson said today.

Among the cases reviewed by the Human Rights Advisory Panel, which examined alleged rights violations by the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), was a complaint submitted by 138 individuals from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities that they suffered lead poisoning and other serious health consequences as a result of their relocation to internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps in northern Kosovo.

The trust fund will finance community-based assistance projects, primarily in North Mitrovica, South Mitrovica and Leposaviç, but will benefit more broadly the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

“The assistance projects will focus on the most pressing needs of those most vulnerable communities, including with respect to health services, economic

development and infrastructure,” [said](#) Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, in a statement.

“The Secretary-General is keenly aware of the particular plight of those individuals, as well as the other members of these most vulnerable communities who also lived in the IDP camps” and “wishes to express the Organization’s profound regret for the suffering endured by all individuals living in the IDP camps,” the Spokesperson said.

“The Secretary-General believes that it is our shared duty to support the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo and ensure that they receive the assistance that they need,” Mr. Dujarric said, noting that the UN will make every effort, in consultation with Member States, to mobilize the necessary resources in support of the Trust Fund.

The Organization will also continue to draw lessons from its experience in Kosovo and from the work of the Panel and take action to prevent such situations from happening again, he said.

Since November 2007, the Panel has reviewed more than 500 complaints in the context of United Nations peacekeeping missions. In a number of cases, the Panel concluded that there had been failures to uphold human rights standards. The Panel completed its work on the Kosovo case and subsequently provided a final report in July 2016.

[UN envoy warns of dire crisis as Gaza faces power cuts, gallons of raw sewage pouring into the sea](#)

26 May 2017 – The United Nations Middle East envoy today cautioned that unless urgent measures are taken to de-escalate the crisis now spiralling out of control in the Gaza Strip, there will be devastating consequences for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

“In Gaza, we are [walking into another crisis](#) with our eyes wide open,” the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, told the Security Council in New York.

The senior UN official noted that the humanitarian situation has worsened since March, when Hamas set up a parallel government institution to run affairs in the enclave resulting in an “intra-Palestinian political tug-of-war.” He called for compromise, the implementation of intra-Palestinian agreements and the end of closures.

Of particular concern is the “unprecedented” energy crisis after the lone

power plant was shut over a taxation dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, which took over the Gaza Strip in 2007.

Combined with downed power lines from Egypt and possible restrictions on purchase of Israeli electricity, most Palestinians in Gaza receive only about four hours of electricity per day.

If the Palestinian Government implements its decision to cap purchase of energy from Israel, "this decision will further reduce electricity supply by some 30 per cent, plunging its population into a spiral of a humanitarian catastrophe," Mr. Mladenov said.

He noted that the UN has been warning of this potential crisis for months, and that it is now becoming a reality – with hospitals postponing elective surgeries, limited drinking water, and soaring food prices.

The lack of power is also preventing sewage from being treated. The equivalent of 40 Olympic-size swimming pools of raw sewage is being dumped into the Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis.

"An environmental disaster for Israel, for Egypt and Gaza is in the making," Mr. Mladenov said.

The Special Coordinator also expressed concern for the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian detainees protesting against their conditions in Israeli jails, which, on the eve of Ramadan, has now entered its 40th day.

"I call for a re-doubling of efforts to end the strike as soon as possible. The crisis must be resolved in line with International Humanitarian Law and Israel's human rights obligations," he said, calling for maximum restraint and taking any steps to avoid further escalation.

Among other issues raised, Mr. Mladenov noted that while the Lebanese Parliament has not yet reconvened after adjourning in April, he hoped it would agree to an electoral law before the tenure ends on 20 June.

Noting that the deteriorating conditions in Gaza and the West Bank only fuel anger and instability, Mr. Mladenov urged all sides to forge a genuine reconciliation.

"If Israelis and Palestinians hope to extract themselves from the immeasurable burden this conflict has wrought, they must be willing to take the painful steps that will ultimately lead to peace," he said. "Neither side can afford another missed opportunity."