

Conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan tortured, ill-treated in government facilities – UN

24 April 2017 – A record number of people detained by Afghan police say that have been tortured or ill-treated in the past year, according to a new United Nations report, which notes however that the Afghan Government has committed to eliminating torture and ill-treatment in national detention facilities.

“The continuing torture and ill-treatment of conflict-related detainees is [a matter of serious concern](#), but we acknowledge the genuine commitment and the efforts of the Government to deal with this issue,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

The report, [Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees: Implementation of Afghanistan’s National Plan on the Elimination of Torture](#), is produced by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

The findings are based on interviews with 469 conflict-related detainees conducted from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2016 in 62 detention facilities administered by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghan National Police (ANP) and other Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) across the country.

Some 45 per cent of the people interviewed said that they were tortured or ill-treated, according to UNAMA and OHCHR.

The figure represents the highest level documented since UNAMA began its current monitoring programme in 2010, according to the UN political mission.

Among other findings, the UN reported that about 45 per cent of the child detainees – 38 out of 85 children interviewed – gave credible accounts of being tortured or ill-treated.

The torture appears to be linked to forcing confessions, according to the report, and stopped once detainees signed a confession – even in cases when the interviewed detainees did not understand or could not read what was written in the confession.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, has spoken out against torture of detainees, saying that confessions produced in this matter are totally unreliable.

“People will say anything to stop the pain,” Mr. Zeid said.

He called for proper monitoring of detention facilities in Afghanistan and meaningful investigations to ensure that those accused of torture are brought to trial and held accountable.

Ensuring accountability for such acts sends a strong message and helps to prevent future violations, he added.

The report does commend the Government, however, for implementing its National Plan on the Elimination of Torture.

If the proposed legislative changes are adopted, Afghanistan would formally recognize the UN Committee against Torture to conduct in-country visits to detention centres and establish an independent monitoring body to visit the sites, according to the report.

Among other recommendations, the report urges Afghan authorities to provide access for victims of torture to effective legal remedy and reparation for harm suffered.

[Ahead of World Malaria Day, UN says 'let's close the gap' in prevention coverage](#)

24 April 2017 – On the eve of World Malaria Day, the United Nations health agency called today for accelerating scaled-up efforts to prevent malaria, which remains a major public health threat, killing one child every two minutes worldwide in 2015.

The UN World Health Organization's (WHO) latest report, [Malaria prevention works: Let's close the gap](#), spotlights critical gaps in prevention coverage, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

WHO-recommended tools have made a measurable difference in the global malaria fight, but we need a much bigger push for prevention especially in Africa, which bears the greatest burden of malaria, said WHO Director-General Margaret Chan.

WHO said that since 2001, more than 663 million cases have been averted in sub-Saharan Africa, which shoulders 90 per cent of the global malaria burden. Insecticide-treated nets have had the greatest impact, accounting for an estimated 69 per cent of cases prevented through control tools.

However, WHO estimates that 43 per cent of people at risk of malaria in the region were not protected by either an insecticide-treated net or indoor insecticide spraying in 2015. About 69 per cent of pregnant women in 20 African countries did not have access to the recommended three or more doses of preventive treatment.

Malaria: Facts, figures and prevention strategies

According to the most recent [World Malaria Report](#), the global tally of malaria reached 429,000 malaria deaths and 212 million new cases in 2015. The rate of new malaria cases fell by 21 per cent globally between 2010 and 2015, and malaria death rates fell by 29 per cent in the same period. In sub-Saharan Africa, case incidence and death rates fell by 21 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively.

Together with diagnosis and treatment, WHO recommends a package of proven prevention approaches, including insecticide treated nets, spraying indoor walls with insecticides, and preventive medicines for the most vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and children under the age of five.

Across the Sahel, where most malaria cases and deaths among children occur in the rainy season, WHO recommends seasonal malaria chemoprevention – a preventive therapy shown to reduce new cases of severe malaria in young children by roughly 75 per cent. As of 2015, 10 countries – Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo – had adopted the preventative therapy and begun implementing it.

“Any death from malaria – a preventable and treatable disease – is simply unacceptable,” said Pedro Alonso, Director of WHO’s Global Malaria Programme. “Today we are urging countries and partners to accelerate the pace of action, especially in low-income countries with a high malaria burden.”

Ninety-one countries reported ongoing malaria transmission in 2015; all are working to reduce their malaria burden through the deployment and use of WHO-recommended preventive, diagnostic and treatment tools.

In recent years, seven countries have been certified as having eliminated malaria: United Arab Emirates (2007), Morocco (2010), Turkmenistan (2010), Armenia (2011), Maldives (2015), Sri Lanka (2016) and Kyrgyzstan (2016). This certification is granted by WHO when countries achieve at least three consecutive years of zero locally-acquired cases of malaria.

WHO said future progress in the fight to prevent malaria will likely be shaped by technological advances and innovations in new tools, including new vector control interventions, and possibly a vaccine.

[World Malaria Day](#) falls in [World Immunization Week](#), 24-30 April, which celebrates the widespread use of vaccines that protect people against 26 diseases. Overall, vaccines prevent an estimated two to three million deaths each year.

Girls worst affected as more than 25 million children out of school due to conflict – UNICEF

24 April 2017 – Conflict and violence has driven more than 25 million children between 6 and 15 years old – about 22 per cent of children in that age group – from schools in warzones across 22 countries, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has said.

“At no time is education more important than in times of war,” Josephine Bourne, the Chief of Education at UNICEF, said in a [news release](#) issued today.

“Without education, how will children reach their full potential and contribute to the future and stability of their families, communities and economies?”

Schools also provide a safe haven to children, protecting them from risks of abuse, exploitation and recruitment by armed groups. However, in numerous conflict zones around the globe, the number of children out of school is increasing dramatically.

According to UNICEF, at the primary school level, South Sudan has the highest rate of out-of-school children with close to 72 per cent of children missing out on education, followed by Chad (50 per cent) and Afghanistan (46 per cent).

These three countries also account for highest rate of girls who are out of school, at 76 per cent for South Sudan, Afghanistan (55 per cent) and Chad (53 per cent).

Without education, how will children reach their full potential and contribute to the future and stability of their families, communities and economies?
Josephine Bourne, UNICEF Chief of Education

Similarly, at the lower-secondary level, the highest rates are in Niger (68 per cent), South Sudan (60 per cent) and the Central African Republic (55 per cent).

Out-of-school rates for girls spike for this age group: Nearly three quarters of girls in Niger and two in three in both Afghanistan and the Central African Republic are not in school.

Conflict can take away everything but it can never take away your knowledge – young refugee and education activist

To help raise awareness on challenges that children affected and uprooted by

conflict face in accessing school, UNICEF has been working with Muzoon Almellehan, a 19-year-old Syrian refugee and education activist.

Ms. Almellehan fled the violence in her home country about four years ago with her school books as her only belongings.

She spent nearly three years in Jordan, including 18 months in Za'atari refugee camp, where she made it her personal mission to get more girls into education, said UNICEF, noting that she went from tent to tent talking to parents to encourage them to send their children to school.

Education gave me the strength to carry on. I wouldn't be here without it Muzoon Almellehan, a 19-year-old Syrian refugee and education activist

Dubbed 'the Malala of Syria', Ms. Almellehan has travelled to areas affected by conflict, including in Chad and in Nigeria and spoken to children facing these challenges.

Conflict can take away your friends, your family, your livelihood, your home. It can try to strip you of your dignity, identity, pride and hope. But it can never take away your knowledge," said Ms. Almellehan.

Meeting children in Chad who had fled Boko Haram reminded me of my own experiences in Syria. Education gave me the strength to carry on. I wouldn't be here without it.

UNICEF response

In its response to this grave crisis in conflict-affected countries, UNICEF is running programmes to get children back to learning, providing catch-up education and informal learning opportunities, training teachers, rehabilitating schools and distributing school furniture and supplies.

In Chad, one of the worst hit by this 'education crisis', UNICEF has so far this year provided school supplies to more than 58,000 students, distributed teaching materials to more than 760 teachers, and built hundreds of classrooms, learning spaces, latrines and sports fields. It has also supported the salaries of some 327 teachers for the 2016-2017 school year.

However, despite these efforts, funding shortfalls are affecting its efforts and only 40 per cent of the UN agency's 2017 education funding needs in Chad have been met.

Accountability for rights abuses in South Sudan 'more important than ever,' says senior UN official

23 April 2017 – A lack of accountability for crimes perpetrated during the ongoing conflict in South Sudan remains one of the country's "biggest challenges," the Human Rights Director for the United Nations Mission (UNMISS) said today as he wrapped up a visit to the north-western Wau region.

Violence earlier in April led to the death of 19 Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers and at least 28 civilians, according to State officials. The killing of civilians in Wau town followed the ambush and killing of the SPLA soldiers by suspected SPLA-In Opposition fighters.

According to a news release, the Human Rights Division of UNMISS has interviewed 43 individuals, including eight women and two children, from 11 April, to collect information about alleged human rights violations perpetrated by government forces and aligned armed groups in Wau town on 10 April.

"I can confirm that, as of Sunday, nobody is being detained in connection with this attack against civilians," said Eugene Nindorera. "I talked to victims and witnesses and was shaken to hear their testimonies of how they had to flee their houses after being attacked. It's more important than ever before that people are held accountable for the crimes they have committed."

He further confirmed after meeting the Governor of Wau state that the Governor had established a committee to produce a comprehensive report to determine the motive for the attacks and identify the perpetrators in order to hold them accountable.

"I welcome this move," Mr. Nindorera said, "and I encourage Governor Andrea Mayar Acho to exert his authority to ensure that people are held responsible for the crimes they have committed."

Meanwhile, UNMISS has confirmed that by Thursday (20 April) the protection of civilians site adjacent to the UNMISS base in Wau had registered some 17,000 new arrivals, mainly women and children, while around 5,000 people had sought sanctuary inside the compound of the Wau Catholic Church. The influx of newly displaced people has led to over-crowding and pressure on humanitarian services.

UN and World Bank sign new partnership to build resilience for the most vulnerable

22 April 2017 – Building resilience for the world’s most vulnerable people by reducing poverty, promoting shared prosperity, enhancing food security, and sustaining peace in crisis-affected situations will be the focus of a new partnership framework agreed by the United Nations and World Bank.

According to a [joint statement](#), the framework, signed by UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, is in response to global calls for the two institutions to work more closely together on prevention and reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability as the world faces a spike in violent conflict.

The Secretary-General has been at World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., for the past two days for the Spring Meetings convened annually by the Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, and academics to discuss issues of global concern, such as the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness.

The UN and World Bank noted that human and economic costs of conflict are massive, affecting long-term stability and prospects for economic development and poverty reduction. Violent conflict drives 80 per cent of humanitarian needs costs, with the UN estimating that \$22.1 billion is required in 2017 for humanitarian assistance – a sharp increase from the \$9 billion needed just five years ago.

Under the framework agreed today, the UN and World Bank will work in complementary ways to: reduce the multi-dimensional risks of crisis and help prevent violent conflict; develop joint analyses and tools for more effective solutions; coordinate support to address protracted crises including forced displacement; and scale up impact by leveraging financing.

This framework [...] is in response to global calls for our institutions to work more closely together on prevention and reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability as the world faces a spike in violent conflict

Building on nearly a decade of efforts to strengthen UN-World Bank collaboration in crisis-affected situations, and updating an earlier framework signed in 2008, the new partnership also reflects developments since then, including commitments made at the 2016 [World Humanitarian Summit](#) calling for a “new way of working” that shifts the focus from “meeting needs” to “reducing needs, risks, and

vulnerability.”

The framework also notes the importance of aligning and leveraging financial resources, doing more through innovative, data-driven operational responses.

To advance this work, the two institutions will focus on building resilience in, among others: situations where there is a risk of violent conflict or ongoing conflict; situations with high levels of forced displacement; protracted and post-crisis situations; and when climate change and natural disasters affect these situations.

The framework notes areas for operational collaboration in which the UN and World Bank will:

Identify and reduce critical multi-dimensional risks of crisis, and prevent violent conflict in relevant countries or regions within the mandate of both institutions;

Coordinate support for situations of protracted crisis, including aligning strategies, objectives and collective outcomes, in particular for populations affected by forced displacement, and based on joint analyses and assessments

Develop joint analyses and tools where the complementarity of mandates may enable more effective solutions; and

Scale up impact, by leveraging existing financing and comparative advantages, and ensuring that operational policies, frameworks, and tools used by both organizations facilitate cooperation and improve efficiency and complementarity.