

## Scale of civilians fleeing Iraq's Mosul 'staggering' – senior UN relief official

17 April 2017 – Noting that nearly half a million people have fled Mosul since the start of military operations to retake the city from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorists, a senior United Nations humanitarian official in Iraq warned that the scale of the displacement has stretched relief efforts to their operational limits.

Our worst case scenario when the fighting started was that up to one million civilians may flee Mosul. Already, more than 493,000 people have left, leaving almost everything behind, Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, [said in a news release](#) issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The sheer volume of civilians still fleeing Mosul city is staggering [...] we are doing everything we can but this has been a long battle and the assault on the old city hasn't started, she added.

According to estimates, as many as 500,000 people still remain in ISIL-controlled areas in western Mosul, including about 400,000 in the densely populated old city.

Humanitarian agencies are scaling up their response, preparing emergency sites and camps to shelter the hundreds of thousands more who may flee in coming days and weeks, but they are under increasing strain.

Since the [fighting began last October](#), some 1.9 million people have been provided live-saving assistance, including food, water, shelter, emergency kits, medical support and psycho-social services, since fighting began last October.

We're reaching families who have fled and families who have stayed [but] Mosul has pushed us to our operational limits, said the Humanitarian Coordinator.

***'Nothing is more important than protecting civilians & nothing'***

The battle for western Mosul is very different from the one in the east and so is the consequent impact on civilians. More trauma injuries are reported and there are fears that food stocks and drinking water could run out.

Civilians in Mosul face incredible, terrifying risks. They are being shot at, there are artillery barrages, families are running out of supplies, medicines are scarce and water is cut-off, noted the UN humanitarian official.

The news release also underscored that all parties to the conflict are

obliged, under International Humanitarian Law, to do everything possible to protect civilians, ensure they have the assistance they need, and limit damage to civilian infrastructure.

Nothing is more important than protecting civilians nothing, stressed Ms. Grande.

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## **'Monstrous, cowardly' attack on Syrian evacuees a show of shameless disregard for human life – UN aid chief**

16 April 2017 – Expressing horror at the attack on civilians evacuating from the besieged Syrian towns of Foah and Kefraya, the United Nations humanitarian chief has called on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international law and protect civilians.

The perpetrators of such a monstrous and cowardly attack displayed a shameless disregard for human life, Stephen O'Brien, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in a [statement](#).

International humanitarian law is very clear: warring parties must protect civilians and distinguish between military and civilian targets, he underscored.

Some 5,000 people were travelling from the two towns to Government-controlled areas when an [explosion occurred near their convoy as it passed Rasheedin](#), western Aleppo, yesterday. Scores of people have been killed and many injured.

In the aftermath of the attack, humanitarian organizations, including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and UN partners, are providing assistance to the injured, including transferring them to hospitals.

The evacuation from Foah and Kefraya was a part of an agreement, popularly referred to as the 'Four Towns' Agreement meant to facilitate humanitarian access to the people in need in those besieged towns. In addition to these two places in Idlib, the Agreement also includes Madaya and Zabadani in rural Damascus.

In the statement, the UN humanitarian chief further noted that while the UN was not involved in the agreement or evacuation process, it stands ready to scale up its support to evacuees.

In that regard, I call on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to

facilitate safe and unimpeded access for the UN and its partners to bring life-saving help to those in need,&#8221 he said.

Also in the statement, Mr. O'Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, expressed his deepest sympathies to the families of those killed and injured.

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## **UN condemns attack on evacuees in Syria; underscores need to ensure safety of those trying to evacuate**

15 April 2017 – Condemning today's attack in Rasheedin, western Aleppo, Syria, on some 5,000 evacuees traveling from the besieged towns of Foah and Kefraya to Government-controlled areas, the United Nations has underlined the need to bring those responsible for the violent act to justice.

According to reports, at least 43 persons, including children, have been killed and many more injured.

"We call on the parties to ensure the safety and security of those waiting to be evacuated," Stephane Dujarric, the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, said in a [statement](#).

Mr. Dujarric added that the evacuations were being conducted in accordance with the agreement reached pursuant to the "Four Towns" Agreement, covering Foah, Kefraya, Madaya and Zabadani.

These four locations were referred to specifically in the Agreement to facilitate humanitarian access to the people in need.

In the statement, Mr. Dujarric also expressed condolences to the families of the victims of the incident and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

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## **UN Mission calls for restraint as violence erupts in a number of places across South Sudan**

15 April 2017 – A senior United Nations official in South Sudan has called

for restraint and underlined the need to ensure the protection of civilians as fresh fighting has erupted between Government and opposition forces in a number of locations across the country.

According to a [news release](#) issued by the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and opposition groups have taken place in Raga (western South Sudan), Waat (Jonglei state, eastern South Sudan), and in Wunkur and Tonga towns (northern, Upper Nile state).

"[The warring parties] must once and for all silence the guns, return to dialogue, reconcile their differences and bring the peace the South Sudanese people want and deserve," said Moustapha Soumaré, the acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the country.

"During this holy celebration of Easter, which for many symbolises reconciliation and the rebirth of hope, I call on all parties to prove their commitment to peace," he added.

The escalation of violence follows recent fighting in Pajok (near the border with Uganda) that [caused some 6,000](#) to flee across the border as well as in Wau that displaced many civilians and also [claimed the lives](#) of three workers contracted by the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

According to UNMISS, the Protection of Civilians site adjacent to its base in Wau has received some 13,500 newly displaced persons, taking the total number of the displaced sheltering there to 38,746. Around 3,000 others are also reportedly seeking refuge at other non-UN compounds.

SEE ALSO: [‘Horrible attack’ in South Sudan town sends thousands fleeing across border](#) UN refugee agency

The Mission also noted that it continues to push for access to areas affected by the conflict and that, despite challenges in reaching some parts of the country, it has successfully deployed a number of peacekeeping patrols to deter violence and protect civilians.

It also continues to monitor the human rights situation in line with its mandate.

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## [UN food relief agency ‘outraged and heartbroken’ by killing of three workers in South Sudan city](#)

14 April 2017 – Expressing horror at the killing of three workers

contracted by its office in Wau, South Sudan, during violence that wracked the city earlier this week, the United Nations emergency food relief agency has called on the authorities to bring those responsible for the unspeakable violence to justice.

In a [news release](#) today, the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) said that the three men Daniel James, Ecsa Tearp and Ali Elario, all citizens of South Sudan appeared to have been killed on Monday as they tried to make their way to the UN agency's warehouse, where they worked as porters.

Two died of machete wounds and the third was shot.

"We are outraged and heartbroken by the deaths of our colleagues, who worked every day to help provide life-saving food to millions of their fellow countrymen," said Joyce Luma, the WFP Country Director for South Sudan.

"Our sympathies and condolences are with their families. Their dedication will not be forgotten," she added.

The UN agency said that it received the information on the deaths yesterday from the company that employed them. The company is contracted by WFP to provide loading and unloading services at its Wau warehouse.

Also in the news release, the WFP Country Director underlined that those responsible for the killings must be brought to justice.

"We call on the South Sudanese authorities to hold those responsible for this unspeakable violence accountable for their actions," stressed Ms. Luma.