

In Baghdad, UN chief Guterres pledges solidarity with Iraqi government and people

30 March 2017 – On what he called a “visit of solidarity” with Iraq, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today welcomed the commitment of the country’s leaders to civilian protection and national dialogue, and pledged the ongoing support of the United Nations as the Government seeks to bolster aid delivery to needy populations and rebuild Iraq institutions.

“This is a [visit of solidarity](#) with the Iraqi people; solidarity with Iraqi Government and institutions; solidarity in what I believe is an historic moment for Iraq,” the Secretary-General said during a press encounter in Baghdad, with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

Noting that Iraq is in the final stages of its fight against terrorism, Mr. Guterres said the UN is “strongly hopeful” that the liberation of Mosul from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/D’aesh) will soon be complete.

“At the same time, I was extremely encouraged by the commitment expressed by the Prime Minister, both in relation to the protection of civilians, in the conduct of the operations and the full respect of international humanitarian law,” said the UN chief.

He said he was also encouraged by the Iraqi leader’s commitment to a national dialogue and an effective process of reconciliation. This, he said, would allow after the liberation of Mosul for Iraq to progressively create the conditions for, “a normal life of a State; a State in which all communities can feel they belong; a State in which all communities respect each other and reconciliation becomes something natural.”



Secretary-General António Guterres receives a bouquet of flowers on his arrival in Erbil, Iraq. UN Photo

Mr. Guterres went on to express the total support of the UN to the Iraqi Government’s efforts in humanitarian aid to the populations that have been affected by terrorism. At the same time, he appealed to the international community to support Iraq both in relation to the relief to the victims but also in relation to the stabilization, reconstruction and build-up of national institutions.

As for his talks with the Prime Minister, the Secretary-General said the two felt it was important that the Da’esh is held accountable for the crimes committed by the terrorist group.

“Those crimes need to be well known, need to be punished,” he said, stressing

that it is important that the international community is fully of the terrible sacrifices of all the populations of Iraq –Sunni and Shia, Muslims and Christians – that were victims of the cruelty of Da’esh. “This is something that needs to be known and that needs to find the adequate mechanism of effective accountability.”

The UN chief said the world’s young people must understand that “terrorism is not the way to express their anger [...] even if in some moments they might be angry or anxious in relation to the events that take place.” Indeed, the fight against terrorism must be accompanied by the fight to tackle its root causes, and by making it very clear the horrendous nature of the crimes committed by organizations like Da’esh.

Finally, the Secretary-General expressed to the Prime Minister, his “total solidarity, and our total commitment to work together with your Government.” Iraq’s leaders have a very important task ahead with the full liberation of the country and with the full reconciliation of Iraqis “for a future of democracy and prosperity.”

While in Baghdad, he also met with the Iraqi President, Foreign Minister and Speaker of the Parliament, before heading later in the day to Erbil. Mr. Guterres has been in the region since Monday, when he began his visit in Jordan. Yesterday, he addressed the Summit of the League of Arab States.

[Children in countries facing famine threatened by lack of water, sanitation – UN agency](#)

29 March 2017 – In African and Middle Eastern countries facing famine, unsafe water is as dangerous for severely malnourished children as lack of food, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today warned, noting that nearly 27 million people are at risk in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

“[Unsafe water](#) can cause malnutrition or make it worse, no matter how much food a malnourished child eats, he or she will not get better if the water they are drinking is not safe,” said Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes.

The UN agency is warning that a combination of malnutrition, dirty water and poor sanitation sets off a vicious cycle from which many children never recover.

In northeast Nigeria, where the fight on Boko Haram damaged or destroyed 75 per cent of water and sanitation infrastructure, some 3.8 million people have

no access to safe water, according to UNICEF.

In Somalia, about one-third of the population is expected to need access to water and sanitation in the coming weeks, according to the UN agency, pushing the current needs from 3.3 million to 4.5 million of people.

Some 5.1 million people lack safe water, sanitation and hygiene in South Sudan, where half of the water points in the country have been damaged or destroyed.

RELATED: [UN aid chief calls for access, funds to prevent spread of South Sudan's famine](#)

The fighting in Yemen has displaced at least 14.5 million people, leaving them without basic sanitation and adequate drinking water, UNICEF cautioned. According to the latest figures, almost 2 million children are at risk of diarrheal diseases which, even before the conflict, were the second leading cause of death among children under the age of five.

UNICEF is working with other UN agencies, national authorities and local partners to provide safe water and sanitation to children.

But without an end to the conflicts plaguing these countries, without sustainable and unimpeded access to the children in need of support and without more resources, even our best efforts will not be enough, Mr. Fontaine said.

[Mobile solutions to empower, educate refugees and displaced persons take spotlight at UN forum](#)

28 March 2017 – Several initiatives to improve learning through mobile technologies were presented during the Mobile Learning Week 2017, a recently-concluded five-day event held at the Paris headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

[Mobile Learning Week](#), which wrapped up last Friday, hands-on education specialists, private sector and policy makers, and focused on the theme 'Education in Emergencies and Crises.'

While smartphone apps and interactive workshops demonstrated how mobile solutions could meet some of the challenges faced by displaced people, two tents set up by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) at the event facility gave participants an idea of the living and learning conditions faced by refugees, including the lack of Internet connection.

“While refugee learners face numerous obstacles, they also carry the potential to transform educational practices,” the Congolese university student and youth community activist Roland Kalamo [told](#) UNESCO. He lives and studies at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, and was one of the presenters at the event.

Mr. Kalamo is also the founder of Movement of Youth for Peace and Change, an organization that teaches young people at Kakuma about human rights, peacebuilding and conflict resolution through arts like cinema and music, language, journalism and sports. Through his organization, he seeks to empower the youth to be part of the solutions to their own problems.

Although lack or unstable Internet connection can be one of the multiple obstacles to refugee learners, [mobile learning](#) – which enables, through mobile technology, learning anytime and anywhere – can be an opportunity for them to invest in their own lives and future.

“When a refugee is using mobile learning, they enjoy the same rights as a normal citizen and no matter the circumstances,” said Mr. Kalamo, adding that: “If they’re alive and have access to internet, nothing will stop them from learning.”

According a report from UNHCR – which co-organized the event together with UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)) – only [50 per cent of refugee children have access to primary education](#), while the global average is of more than 90 per cent.

Source: UNESCO (2014) | UNHCR (2015)

As these children grow older, there is an even larger gap: only 22 per cent of refugee adolescents attend secondary school compared to a global average of 84 per cent. At the higher education level, just 1 per cent of refugees attend university, compared to a global average of 34 per cent.

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