

[UN chief Guterres visits Saudi Arabia's relief aid centre, stresses its catalytic role in region](#)

12 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today visited the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, as part of his first major trip to some Arab countries.

"I was very encouraged today to see the centre developing its activities, with a strong commitment to humanitarian principles, not only in Syria and Yemen, but in so many countries around the world," Mr. Guterres said after being briefed on the activities of the center, which was established in May 2015, under the sponsorship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

On the importance of partnership between the centre and the UN, Mr. Guterres said that the dramas and suffering in today's world are so big that no one can do anything alone. "Together we can do a lot. So, partnership is a key word," he said, noting that the centre can play an important role as a catalyst around the world and the region.

On Sunday, the Secretary-General was expected to meet with King Salman, Crown Prince and Deputy Crown Prince, as well as senior officials before travelling to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in the late evening.

Mr. Guterres visited Turkey en route to Saudi Arabia. He is also scheduled to visit Oman, Qatar and Egypt and Germany.

[Afghanistan: UN mission expresses grave concern at high civilian casualties in Helmand](#)

12 February 2017 – The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today expressed its grave concern at the recent escalation of violence in Helmand province, which reportedly claimed the lives of at least 25 civilians, mostly women and children, and injured many more.

On 9 and 10 February, international military forces conducted airstrikes in Helmand's Sangin District reportedly targeting anti-Government elements, according to a news release. UNAMA's initial enquiries suggest that the airstrikes killed at least 18 civilians, nearly all women and children. UNAMA

notes that Resolute Support has initiated an investigation into the incident.

On 11 February, Taliban conducted a suicide attack targeting Afghan National Army soldiers outside of Kabul Bank in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand. The attack killed at least seven civilians, and at least as many were injured, mainly child vendors outside the bank, the release added.

The people of Helmand have suffered greatly due to the armed conflict in Afghanistan, with 891 civilians killed or injured during 2016. This figure was the highest in the country in 2016 outside of Kabul.

UNAMA reiterated the need for all parties to the conflict to strictly adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to take all feasible measures to protect civilians from harm while expressing its sincere condolences to the families of victims and hopes for a speedy recovery to those injured.

Afghanistan has been in protracted conflict for some 35 years, which has seen an ever-growing number of civilians killed and poverty reduction and development efforts seriously hampered.

UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other measures. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading.

UNAMA also promotes coherent development support by the international community; assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights and the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.

DR Congo: UN mission strongly condemns persistent violence in Kasai Provinces

11 February 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today expressed its concern about the persistent conflict in the Kasai provinces where violent atrocities are being committed by the Kamuina Nsapu militia.

The militia is recruiting and using child soldiers while targeting symbols and institutions of State authority, according to a news release issued by the UN Stabilisation Mission in the African country (MONUSCO), which also cited the disproportionate use of force by Government security forces known as FARDC in their response to the situation.

Particularly, since 9 February 2017, there have been ongoing clashes between Kamuina Nsapu militia and Congolese security forces within the area of Tshimbulu (160 Kilometers South East of Kananga) with unconfirmed reports of 30 to 50 deaths resulting from these clashes.

The news release stated that the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of MONUSCO, Maman S. Sidikou, strongly condemned the actions of the militia, and expressed his concern about repeated reports of the disproportionate use of force by the FARDC.

Mr. Sidikou expressed regret about the deaths and injuries suffered in these clashes and called upon the Congolese security forces to act in line with acceptable standards of national and international laws in their response to the situation. He offered the Mission's support to a credible investigation of this regrettable situation.

MONUSCO has deployed one of its mobile monitoring response team in the area covering Tshikapa, Dibaya, Bunkode, Tshimbulu and Luiza to possibly prevent, investigate and document human rights violations in line with its mandate.

MONUSCO redeployed most of its resources to the country's east in 2014. Given the improved security situation at the time, there was also a drastic reduction of military and civilian personnel affecting the Mission's presence in Kananga in central Kasai. However, since December 2016, MONUSCO has deployed a military company of soldiers in Kananga with the task of protecting the Mission's personnel and assets as well as protecting civilians.

[In Turkey, UN chief Guterres discusses Syria, Iraq, Cyprus with President](#)

11 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul to discuss the situations in Syria, Iraq and Cyprus.

Mr. Guterres is on his first major trip since taking the helm of the UN on 1 January, which will also take him to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Egypt as well as Germany.

According to a readout issued by the office of Mr. Guterres' spokesperson, the Secretary-General and the President discussed the Syrian conflict and the ongoing diplomatic efforts to end it.

“The Secretary-General said he was grateful that the Astana conference was held in support of the Geneva process,” the readout said.

The talks between the Syrian government and the opposition brokered by Russia and Turkey were held in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, on 23-24 January. The United Nations-facilitated intra-Syrian talks are scheduled to resume in Geneva on 20 February.

The Secretary-General underscored the need to fight terrorism and extremists in Syria but that effort would not be successful without a political solution supported by the people of country, the readout added.

On Iraq, the Secretary-General expressed the need that the on-going operations to liberate Mosul and other areas from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) not exacerbate sectarianism but instead be a symbol of national reconciliation.

The Secretary-General commended Turkey for its outstanding generosity in hosting millions of refugees from Syria and Iraq.

The two leaders also discussed the latest developments in the peace process in Cyprus, the readout said.

Security Council strongly condemns continued fighting in South Sudan

11 February 2017 – The Security Council has strongly condemned continued fighting across South Sudan, particularly incidents in the country's Equatoria and Upper Nile regions, and called on all parties to cease hostilities immediately.

In a Press Statement issued overnight, the Council also condemned in the strongest terms all attacks directed against civilians and expressed serious concern, once again, about reports of killing of civilians, sexual and gender-based violence, destruction of homes, ethnic violence, and looting of livestock and property.

The Council urged the Transitional Government of National Unity to take measures to ensure that those responsible for the attacks are held accountable, and expressed deep alarm that more than 84,000 individuals have fled South Sudan since the beginning of January and that many continue to be displaced internally.

The Council stressed that there is no military solution to the conflict, and in this regard, welcomed the continued and collective commitment in the search for lasting peace, security and stability expressed by the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the UN during the joint consultative meeting on South Sudan that was held in Addis

Ababa, Ethiopia, on January 29, 2017.

The Council expressed deep concern that the Transitional Government of National Unity is hindering the ability of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to carry out its mandate to protect civilians and create conditions conducive to delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The Council reminded the transitional government of its commitment in the September 4, 2016, Joint Communique to permit freedom of movement of UNMISS.

The Council reiterated that targeting civilians may constitute war crimes and those involved could be subject to sanctions under resolution 2206 (2015).