

[South Sudan: UN depllores lack of information on 20,000 people displaced in Upper Nile](#)

16 February 2017 – The top United Nations peacekeeping official in South Sudan has described the lack of information about the situation of some 20,000 internally displaced people on the west bank of the Nile in the country's north, as a "real problem."

"We want to find out what has happened to those people, and provide them with assistance if they need it," said David Shearer, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), who was making his first field trip to the town of Malakal after taking up his position as Mission chief four weeks ago.

According to a press statement issued today by the office of the Mission's spokesperson, UNMISS believes that the 20,000 people have fled towards Kodok from Wau Shilluk, a town eight miles north of the UN base in Malakal on the west bank of the River Nile.

Fighting between the Government Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces and opposition forces has expanded geographically across the west bank over the past week, and shows no signs of abating, forcing more people to flee their homes.

On Thursday, UN peacekeepers attempted to carry out a foot patrol to Wau Shilluk, but were prevented from doing so by SPLA soldiers located at Wau Shilluk, a situation Mr. Shearer described as "very frustrating."

Meanwhile, the statement noted that UNMISS has described government relocations by air of internally displaced people through Juba into Malakal as unsustainable if they are not also supported with humanitarian assistance on arrival.

The Shilluk population of Malakal has abandoned the town and 33,000 people are currently taking refuge in the camp administered by UNMISS.

[New UN report reveals obstacles to combat impunity for conflict-related](#)

sexual violence in Ukraine

16 February 2017 – Lack of laws, capacity and professional experience to effectively investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine is not only resulting in widespread impunity, it is causing survivors of sexual violence to be “victimized twice”, according to a new United Nations human rights report.

“What’s the point of saying what happened to me? No one will be able to help and no one will be able to find those who did it. No one will punish them,” one survivor of sexual violence quoted in the report said.

The report, issued today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), also revealed that beatings and electrocution on the genitals, rape, threats of rape and forced nudity were used to punish, humiliate or extract confessions. In the territory controlled by armed groups, sexual violence was also used to compel people in detention to hand over property or to do as the perpetrators demanded, as an explicit condition for their release.

The majority of the documented cases happened when people, both men and women, were detained by either Government forces or armed groups.

“[...] he told me that if I refused to write, perpetrators would bring my [...] daughter in and will make me watch how they take turns one after another to rape her. After that I filled in eight pages with the text they dictated to me,” read the report, citing a woman who was detained on conflict-related charges.

“The investigation and conviction of perpetrators of sexual violence is vital for the victims who are entitled to justice and redress,” said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, underscoring that doing so can also have a decisive impact in preventing such crimes.

“Impunity encourages the criminals, for that is what they are, to continue.”

Furthermore, the report also noted that deteriorating economic situation, particularly in conflict-affected regions, combined with a breakdown of community ties due to conflict and displacement, has led some people to use harmful survival strategies and coping mechanisms that may increase the risk of sexual violence and trafficking.

The report was prepared by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) – deployed to the country in March 2014 upon the invitation of the Government of Ukraine – and looks at the period from 14 March 2014 to 31 January this year and covers all territory of the country, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, with a special focus on the eastern regions, parts of which are under the control of armed groups.

Lack of support for victims further complicated by restrictions placed by armed groups

The report also draws specific attention to the lack of support for victims, especially in areas of Donetsk and Luhansk controlled by armed groups.

Furthermore, medical professionals and state institutions throughout the country lack the specific knowledge and skills needed to deal with survivors of torture and conflict-related sexual violence.

In this situation, civil society organizations are stepping in through donor-funded programmes, as well as by various UN agencies and international organizations to offer support to the victims. However, these are mostly confined to urban areas and there is little or no assistance available in smaller towns and rural areas.

On top of this, restrictions imposed by the armed groups have hindered these organizations to carry out their programmes, particularly those linked to protection and psycho-social support and there are no real redress mechanisms available for victims in the territory controlled by armed groups, noted the report.

[Iraq: UN health agency delivers medical aid to newly retaken areas of Mosul](#)

16 February 2017 – The United Nations health agency has delivered medical supplies to parts of eastern Mosul, the Iraqi city liberated from the Islamic State (ISIL), where clinics are receiving an influx of people in urgent need of medical care.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the supplies will support treatment of patients with infectious diseases, chronic conditions, diarrheal diseases and trauma cases who have been deprived of medical care.

According to the press release, the supplies are a donation from the Government of Norway and include medicines, emergency health kits, surgical kits and an interagency diarrheal disease kits.

They were delivered to newly retaken areas of Mosul, including 16 primary health centres, one hospital and the Directorate of Health (DOH) of Ninewa – the governorate which includes Mosul.

WHO has appealed for \$65 million to support health interventions in this part of Iraq through the end of the year. So far, \$14 million has been received.

PODCAST: The power of bearing witness – how rape became an ‘act of genocide’

15 February 2017 – Shame and stigma prevent many rape survivors in conflict zones from reporting the horrific abuses they endure at the hands of war but the criminals whose sole aim in carrying out these horrific deeds is to torture and humiliate their enemy.

Yet the courageous testimonies of women who survived rape during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda provided the evidence required for a United Nations war crimes tribunal to find Jean-Paul Akayesu guilty, four years after the shocking conflagration, marking the first judgment for the crime of genocide under international law.

Rape was made a part of Akayesu’s genocide conviction.

In the latest episode of the *UN Radio* podcast series *The Lid is On*, Michele Mitchell, a co-director of the documentary film, *The Uncondemned*, was researching how and when rape was first prosecuted as a crime of war for her next project when she first heard about the so called ‘Akayesu’ case.

She began by studying the wrong case. Most of the documentation she found had to do with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

It was not until Ms. Mitchell spoke to a human rights lawyer Sara Darehshori, a senior counsel for the Human Rights Watch United States’ programme, that she found out about a historic trial that went before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

We promise to speak only the truth, to say what we saw and not what we heard; for justice not revenge

At the time, almost 20 years ago, Sara was a co-counsel for the prosecution. She is the one who found the ‘smoking gun’ that allowed the UN tribunal to amend its indictment against the former Mayor of Taba town in Rwanda, Jean-Paul Akayesu, and try him for rape as an act of genocide.

During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in a span of one hundred days, between eight-hundred thousand and one million men, women and children were massacred by Hutu militia – a rate of killing four times greater than at the height of the Nazi Holocaust.

Michele said she did not want to do “just another prosecutor’s story.” She wanted to include the women who had testified during this historic trial. She said that she wanted to understand what motivated these women who had

suffered so much to say “enough” and to take action.

“They were killed simply because of who they are; because they are Tutsis. Hutus protecting Tutsis or those married to Tutsis were also killed,” said Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide said during a screening of the film on the ground-breaking trial, organized by the Outreach Programme on the Rwandan Genocide and the United Nations.

As the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) came to a close, the world body’s Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide and former ICTR Registrar Amada Dieng shares his experience in bringing innovation to the Tribunal.

In Taba alone, close to 2,000 Tutsis were murdered.

Many of the women were raped by the armed local militia, or *Interahamwe*, and communal police, investigations by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, or ICTR, uncovered.

These acts of sexual violence were often accompanied by death threats. The women were also forced to endure multiple acts of sexual violence that were at times committed by one or more assailants.

The courageous testimonies of the rape survivors provided the evidence required for the ICTR’s Trial Chamber to find Akayesu guilty of rape.

One witness, known as ‘JJ,’ and other rape survivors placed him at the scene of the crime, and confirmed that he used his authority to incite and encourage the militia and police to carry out these acts, although he was not accused of rape by any of the women.

On 2 September 1998, Jean Paul was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. With this case, the ICTR became the first international tribunal to enter a judgement for genocide and the first to interpret the definition of genocide set forth in the Geneva Conventions, according to the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals.

AUDIO: “The Lid is On” – UN Radio Podcast: “How rape became an act of genocide”

In the same judgement, the ICTR also defined the crime of rape in international criminal law and recognized rape as a means of perpetrating genocide.

Akayesu was sentenced to life for “criminally responsible for aiding and abetting” for rape as a crime against humanity.

Delivering a statement following the ruling, Judge Navanethem “Navi” Pillay, who went on to become the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the UN tribunal wanted to “send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war.”

As the Rwandan women sat behind a curtain in a tiny court in Arusha, Tanzania and recounted in painful detail the brutal and violent sexual assaults they endured during the genocide, they had no idea they would make history. And that by doing so, they would give hope to survivors like them.

[UN kicks off preparations for upcoming summit on oceans, launches voluntary commitment website](#)

15 February 2017 – The world dumps the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic into the ocean every minute, the United Nations heard today at the start of a two-day meeting to prepare for this June's Ocean Conference that will aim to help safeguard the planet's oceans and help them recover from human-induced problems.

When leaders from across Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific and academic communities, gather together in New York, from 5-9 June for The Ocean Conference, we will be witness to a turning point, the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, told the participants, who also included the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden and the Minister for Fisheries of Fiji, the countries co-hosting the conference.

We will witness the point in history when humanity truly began the process of reversing the cycle of decline that accumulated human activity has brought upon the Ocean, Mr. Thomson added.

The high-level Oceans Conference aims to get everyone involved in conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 14.

The UN has called for voluntary commitments to implement Goal 14 and today launched an online commitment registry which has its first three commitments the Swedish Government, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and Peaceboat, a non-governmental organization. The site will be up through the end of the Conference, which starts on World Environment Day, marked annually on 5 June, and includes 8 June, celebrated as World Oceans Day.

The voluntary commitments underscore the urgency for action and for solutions, said Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo, who heads the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Addressing participants today, Mr. Wu said preparations for the Conference are on track.

“The health of our oceans and seas, and the future wellbeing of our planet and our society, demand no less,” he said.

In addition to pollution, The Oceans Conference and SDG 14 address overfishing, as well as acidification and increasing global water temperatures linked to climate change.

Discussing the problems ahead of today’s preparatory meeting, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Isabella Lovin said in a video log on Twitter that the Conference could be a “chance of a lifetime” to save the oceans under enormous stress.

“We don’t need to invent or negotiate something new, we just need to have action to implement what we already agreed upon,” she said in reference to the expected ‘Call to Action’ that will result from the Conference in connection with stopping illegal fishing, stopping marine pollution and addressing the special circumstances of small island developing States.

Representing one of the many small island nations struggling with these issues, the Minister for Fisheries of Fiji, Semi Koroilavesau, urged Conference participants to make voluntary contributions, saying the oceans are of “utmost importance” to his country.