

Atrocities will end in South Sudan only when perpetrators 'face consequences' – UN rights official

17 February 2017 – A senior United Nations human rights official today called for holding accountable those committing atrocity crimes in conflict-torn South Sudan.

"This is a war that has been waged against the men, women and children of South Sudan," said the UN Assistant Secretary-General for human rights, Andrew Gilmour, as he wrapped up a four-day visit to country. "And the only way of ending this onslaught, will be when the perpetrators face consequences for what they are doing."

According to a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mr. Gilmour travelled to Malakal, where he received further information concerning the suffering of the civilian population in the area.

"Although this is the fourth time I've been in South Sudan since 2011, I wasn't prepared for the shocking devastation I witnessed in Malakal and even more by the clear pattern of systematic human rights violations and abuses suffered by the population," he said.

The release said that women have been frequently subjected to rape, both by non-government militias and Government forces known as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), on their route to the market in Malakal town. Rape and gang rape is present in the testimonies of numerous women in the area, though this was categorically denied by the SPLA Division Commander with whom Gilmour spoke.

"It is utterly abhorrent that women in this area have to choose between getting raped or getting a livelihood," Mr. Gilmour said, "But this seems the brutal reality of what South Sudan has become."

RELATED: Killings and rapes in South Sudan continued 'unabated' after July 2016 violence UN

In his meetings with the authorities in Juba, Gilmour urged them to combat the worrying rise of hate speech and to do more to protect human rights defenders.



Inside the UN Protection of Civilians site, Malakal, South Sudan. Photo: UNMISS/Isaac Billy

To the Chief of General Staff of the SPLA, General Paul Malong, Mr. Gilmour

emphasized the severe restrictions on access that the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces when trying to protect civilians, provide humanitarian assistance and monitor the human rights situation in the country.

He stressed his concern that elements of the SPLA had engaged in what could well amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the other hand, he welcomed the recent start of UN human rights training for the SPLA and the appointment of SPLA focal points on conflict related sexual violence.

Mr. Gilmour urged the Director General of the National Security Service to put an end to the practice of arbitrary and prolonged detention without charge, bring detainees before the courts, and allow them access to their lawyers and family.

Meanwhile, the three-member UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan has called for the immediate launch of an independent mechanism to assist in investigating violations in the country, ahead of the establishment of the hybrid court.

As part of the 2015 Peace Agreement, the African Union is mandated to establish a hybrid court for South Sudan, with the accord also providing for a truth commission and reparations authority.

Critical evidence is being lost every day as witnesses are killed or disappear, as memories fade, and physical evidence degrades, which means investigations need to start now so the hybrid court has cases to hear, said Commissioner Ken Scott at the end of a transitional justice workshop held in Ethiopia.

[Press release: PM meeting with French Prime Minister Cazeneuve: 17 February 2017](#)

From:

First published:

17 February 2017

Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May met the Prime Minister of France Bernard Cazeneuve and discussed a range of bilateral and foreign policy issues.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister met Prime Minister Cazeneuve of France at Downing Street today. They talked about a range of bilateral issues and also discussed foreign policy and Brexit.

The Prime Minister was clear that while the UK is leaving the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and they talked about the importance of coming to an early agreement on the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU.

They agreed on the need to maintain our close co-operation on security and defence, including through NATO. They discussed how we can work together to address the shared global challenges we face, including migration, the situation in Syria and in Ukraine, and the threat of terrorism.

News story: UK Government proposes new approach to boost banking competition and resolve RBS' State aid commitments

The proposal, put forward by HM Treasury with the agreement of RBS, has been designed to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) access and benefit from greater choice in the banking services available to them.

As part of the State aid commitments agreed with the European Commission in 2009 and updated in 2014, RBS undertook to carry out five major divestments. Four have been successfully implemented. In line with its commitments, HM Treasury and RBS have put significant effort into achieving the fifth divestment, that of Williams and Glyn, which has to-date been unsuccessful mainly due to external factors. If adopted, this new plan would replace the need for the fifth divestment and would finally remedy the distortion in the UK's business banking market which flowed from the provision of state support, with greater speed and certainty than a divestment.

HM Treasury has been in constructive contact with the European Commission in recent months and HM Treasury will now seek formal amendment to RBS's State aid commitments. The Commissioner responsible for EU competition policy, Margrethe Vestager, plans to propose to the College of Commissioners in the coming weeks to open proceedings in order to gather evidence on the new plan. HM Treasury will carry out a market testing exercise in parallel. The opening of proceedings does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation.

The proposed package of measures includes:

- a fund, administered by an independent body, that eligible challenger

- banks can access to increase their business banking capabilities
- funding for eligible challenger banks to help them incentivise SMEs to switch their accounts from RBS paid in the form of “dowries” to challenger banks to use to incentivise switching
 - RBS granting business customers of eligible challenger banks access to its branch network for cash and cheque handling, to support the measures above
 - an independent fund to invest in fintech to support the business banking of the future

An HMT spokesperson said:

RBS must deliver on its remaining State aid commitments and this new plan represents the most effective way of delivering the pro-competition objectives behind them.

This new plan provides a clear blueprint to increase competition in the UK’s business banking market, and would help RBS resolve one of its most significant legacy issues which has held back the sale of the taxpayers’ stake.

The estimated upfront cost of the proposed package to RBS is expected to be in the region of £750m. In keeping with the original commitments, the other large incumbent banks (HSBC, Lloyds, and Barclays) would not be eligible to benefit from the proposal. Further details, including precise eligibility criteria for challenger banks, will be announced in due course.

[Central African Republic: UN mission reinforces presence in restive Bambari](#)

17 February 2017 – Amid ongoing rebel activity in and around Bambari in strife-torn Central African Republic, the United Nations mission – known as MINUSCA – said today that it has reinforced its presence in the city with the arrival of additional troops, including a quick reaction unit and Special Forces.

This reinforcement makes it possible to better protect Bambari and its inhabitants, as, for the time being, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission is the only legitimate authority mandated by the Government to control the city. As Mission chief Parfait Onanga-Anyanga recalled: “Bambari should not belong to armed groups.”

In a news release, the Mission stressed that the FPRC (*Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique*)’s coalition and UPC (*Mouvement pour l’Unité*

et la Paix en Centrafrique) represent a threat for civilian populations and that UN peacekeepers will respond in case of violence.

However, discussions are ongoing and a UN civilian-military delegation will soon meet with the leader of one of the armed groups. The MINUSCA stressed that Bambari “must be free of armed groups in the coming days.”

And the UN Mission today also welcomed the nomination of Toussaint Muntazini Mukimapa as Special Prosecutor to the CAR’s Special Criminal Court.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. According to the UN, more more than half the population is in dire need of assistance. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

In December 2016, the Mission supported a new dialogue between 11 of the 14 armed groups, as part of an ongoing effort to disarm the factions.

[The Government is failing to provide British businesses with the much needed certainty they need – Rebecca Long-Bailey](#)

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Labour’s Shadow Business Secretary, commenting on reports of a proposed takeover of Unilever by Kraft, said:

“The Government is failing to provide British businesses with the much needed certainty they need.

“With Sterling depreciating against the Dollar and the Euro since last summer, unwelcome takeover bids aimed at buying UK business assets could well increase.

“This makes the need for a proper industrial strategy all the more important. At the moment all we are getting from this failing Tory Government is more of the same, mismanagement and uncertainty.”