

## Fresh violence in Central African Republic's western town displaces thousands, UN office says

3 February 2017 – Condemning attacks on civilians and non-governmental organizations in a town in Central African Republic (CAR)'s Ouham-Pendé province, a senior United Nations humanitarian official has called for protecting civilians as well as for unhindered relief access to the affected areas.

According to the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in CAR, outbreak of violence between two armed groups in the town of Bocaranga reportedly killed and injured civilians as well as displacing some 9,000 people are sheltering in forests about 15-20 kilometres away from the town.

In the clashes, international non-governmental organization compounds were attacked and pillaged and at-least one office was burnt down. Moreover, shops and markets were “systematically pillaged,” as was one church.

“I urge all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure the protection of civilians,” said Michel Yao, the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator in the country.

“Attack against aid workers is a crime against humanity,” he added.

Prior to the latest flare-up of violence there were already 15,000 persons from Kouï (located about 35 kilometres east of Bocaranga) who were displaced the town due to the violence that occurred there last September.

These displacements come on the back of already more than 400,000 persons displaced due to conflict.

The humanitarian needs in CAR are increasing while financial resources remain scarce.

In January, together with the Government, the humanitarian community in CAR launched a \$400 million response plan for the 2017-2019 period to meet the basic needs of 2.2 million people.

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. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

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## Refugees fleeing danger are 'not dangerous themselves' – UN agency chief

3 February 2017 – The head of the United Nations refugee agency today warned developed countries against politicizing the issue of refugees, stressing that the move risked undermining the principle of international solidarity with those fleeing war and persecution.

“These are people that flee from danger, they’re not dangerous themselves,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi told reporters in Lebanon’s capital, Beirut following a four-day visit to Syria, where he witnessed first-hand the massive destruction caused by nearly six years of conflict.

“We have serious concerns, and these are not new concerns, we’ve had them for some time, that the refugee issue in the industrialized world – in Europe, the US, Australia – is very politicized. It shouldn’t be,” Mr. Grandi said, urging rich countries to show generosity to refugees, rather than regarding them as a threat.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Grandi is the first senior UN official to visit Syria since Turkey and Russia brokered a ceasefire last month.

Mr. Grandi said that the recent decision by the United States to suspend its refugee resettlement programme would negatively impact the most vulnerable individuals.

“Resettlement means taking refugees from places like Lebanon, where they are already refugees, selecting the most vulnerable and taking them to other places,” he said. “If we weaken that programme, as has been done in the United States, this is a very dangerous weakening of the international solidarity for refugees.”

UNHCR estimates that 20,000 refugees in precarious circumstances might have been resettled to the US in the 120 days covered by the suspension set out in an Executive Order signed one week ago by President Donald Trump.

Mr. Grandi expressed his hope that the US would resume resettlements following its internal review of the programme.

As for the situation in Syria, he described progress in his discussions with the Government on humanitarian access in hard-to-reach areas, and expressed hope that some aid convoys could reach parts of Homs in the coming days.

On the issue of refugees returning to Syria, the High Commissioner said that while many were keen to go home, the political and security situation in the country currently made it impossible for large numbers to do so.

“People need to return eventually to Syria, and we all agree that that’s the ideal solution. But we need to be patient,” Mr. Grandi said. “More progress needs to be made politically, then economically and infrastructure-wise in order for conditions to be there to have large returns.”

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## [Press release: Capacity Market confirms guaranteed electricity security for next winter at low cost](#)

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Auction closes at a low price to consumers and ensures that homes and businesses have a reliable electricity supply all year round

With the conclusion of the latest round of the Capacity Market this Government continues to guarantee homes and businesses have a reliable electricity supply all year round.

The auction closed today at the low final price of £6.95/kWh, providing guaranteed electricity capacity at a low cost to bill payers. Having capacity guaranteed in advance protects bill payers from increases in their electricity bills.

This Government has set out exactly how electricity capacity will be guaranteed for the entirety of this Parliament. We are also making progress in decarbonising the energy system in a way that is affordable for households and businesses. Following the Government’s proposals to phase out unabated coal power generation by 2025 there is a significant reduction in the role that it will play in the Capacity Market year on year; with over 30% less coal capacity winning agreements for 2021 than for 2018.

We are also seeing more innovative, low carbon technologies coming into the capacity mix, such as battery storage.

### **Energy Minister Jesse Norman said:**

“Reliable power supplies are essential for businesses to thrive and succeed. Thanks to this auction, homes and businesses can have confidence in the availability of that electricity at the lowest possible cost.

“More widely, the composition of the UK’s electricity supply is now clear beyond the end of this Parliament.”

The Capacity Market auction ensures that extra electricity capacity is available in case of unexpected power station outages or peaks in demand. Agreements won in this week’s auction run from the start of winter 2017 to the beginning of winter 2018, at which point agreements already secured in previous auctions will commence to provide electricity capacity in the years up to and including 2021.

[Provisional results report](#)

## Notes to Editors

- Within two working days of the Capacity Market closing, the Auction Monitor must report to the Secretary of State on whether the procedures in the Rules and Action Guidelines have been properly followed.
- The Secretary of State decides whether the auction results should stand based on the Auction Monitor’s report. Unless instructed otherwise by the Secretary of State, National Grid will then make public the Final Auction Results within eight working days of the Capacity Auction concluding.
- National Grid will then issue capacity agreement notices to those awarded a Capacity agreement within 20 working days of the auction results day.

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## [Adhere to safeguards, avoid measures that push back refugees, UNICEF, UN rights experts urge Europe](#)

3 February 2017 – As Europe Union leaders gather today in Malta to discuss new measures on migration, including increased cooperation with Libya, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and UN rights experts underlined the need to ensure that children are protected and that migrants should not be pushed back to places where their safety is at risk.

Emphasizing the need to prevent exploitation and trafficking of children, UNICEF called on the European Union (EU) and its member States to “adhere fully to the principle of *non-refoulement* as sending children back into harm’s way or returning boats to Libya without a proper plan to protect them,

would only add to their hardship.”

It also called for committing resources to strengthen child protection programmes in Libya and for investment in reception and care centres in the country.

“These centres should provide education and health services, and should never be used to detain children based on their migration status,” the agency added.

It also called for additional support to credible resettlement and family reunification programmes so that desperate refugees and migrants do not have to turn to smugglers and risk their lives.

According to the UN agency, a record number of refugee and migrant deaths in the Mediterranean have been reported over the past three months, including an estimated 190 children.



Tripoli Red Crescent teams salvage another body of a migrant, found floating in the sea water in Libya. Photo: Mohamed Ben Khalifa/IRIN

“The growing number of children lost at sea underscores the acute danger of the journey from North Africa to Italy, as well as the pressing need for governments on both sides of the Mediterranean to do more to keep them safe,” said UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth.

“The decisions taken at the summit could literally mean the difference between life and death for thousands of children transiting or stranded in Libya. They need urgent action now.”

Also today, a group of human rights experts cautioned the EU against supporting a system in which migrants are pushed back to places where they may be at risk of torture, and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

In a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), François Crépeau, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture; Urmila Bhoola, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery; and Sètondji Roland Adjovi, Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, stressed that any engagement with third countries needs to be in line with international human rights standards.

“The EU member States cannot balk from their responsibility and are accountable for any human rights violation under such an agreement,” noted the release.

While the experts commended the EU for any action directed at saving lives, they, however, expressed concern that “by agreeing to a deal with Libya, whereby migrants trying to flee human rights violations are being pushed back to those same conditions, the principle of *non-refoulement* will be violated.”

They raised the concern that limiting departures from Libyan coasts meant “accepting and legitimizing” the human suffering prevailing there and pushing people back to conditions where migrants suffer arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment, unlawful killings, trafficking and enforced disappearance. Migrants are also at a risk of labour exploitation and vulnerable to other forms of contemporary slavery, migrant women, in particular, remain at high risk of rape and other sexual violence.

The rights experts further noted measures must allow migrants to disembark immediately at the nearest port where their lives and freedoms would not be threatened, providing them with information, offering care and support, processing their asylum claims equitably.

“From what we know on the conditions in Libya, this country cannot be a port of disembarkation,” they stressed.

Independent experts and Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva based UN Human Rights Council – an inter-governmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world – to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

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## **[Rights expert urges UN Member States to halt Israel’s illegal settlements in West Bank](#)**

3 February 2017 – A United Nations human rights expert has called on the Security Council and the General Assembly to explore effective diplomatic and political measures to ensure Israeli compliance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which affirms that all Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

“The settlement announcements by the Israeli Government, only a month after the clear direction of the international community, are a defiant and troubling repudiation of resolution 2334,” said Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk, who is mandated by the UN Human Rights Council to monitor and report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

“If Israel understands that the international community will take no meaningful steps to enforce the Council’s resolution, it will continue to intensify its settlement project undeterred,” the Rapporteur warned in a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

(OHCHR).

“And if the international community intends to preserve what remains of a viable two-state solution, it must not assume that resolutions, critical statements and international conferences alone will change state behaviour in these circumstances,” he stressed.

The human rights expert’s appeal comes as, according to the press release, the Israeli Government approves the construction of over 6,000 new settlement homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and as the Israeli Knesset moves closer to adopting the ‘Settlement Regularization Bill,’ which will legalize the homes of more than 4,000 settlers in dozens of illegal outposts built on private Palestinian lands throughout the West Bank.

“Continued settlement activity poses a grave threat to Palestinians’ right to self-determination,” the Rapporteur noted.

“The policies and practices of the Israeli authorities that suggest an advance towards *de facto* annexation of parts of the West Bank are increasingly alarming,” the expert said. “Annexation of occupied land likewise is a grave breach of international law,” the Rapporteur stated.

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