

Somalia: UN mission condemns Al-Shabaab attack on popular Mogadishu hotel

25 January 2017 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has condemned the coordinated suicide bombing attack earlier today at a hotel in Mogadishu for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility and which reportedly killed dozens of people.

According to the United Nations, the attack, on the Dayah Hotel (known locally as the Dayax), reportedly killed dozens of Somali civilians and soldiers, while wounding many more. The hotel is located near the Presidential palace and is frequently visited by lawmakers in the capital.

In an interview with *UN News*, Joseph Contreras, the spokesperson for the Mission, said the attack provides fresh evidence of the violent extremists' desperate attempts to derail Somalia's electoral process. Moreover it reflects the terrorists' frustration over their inability to sabotage the recent voting for seats in the two Houses of Somalia's new Parliament.

As for the scene on the ground, he pointed out that first responders arrived at the hotel targeted by the attack "quite quickly and brought the situation under control."

"The latest figures that we have been seeing range from between 15 and 20 dead, some of whom were the attackers themselves, some of them Somali soldiers," Mr. Contreras said, adding that perhaps about half of were civilians and among the dozens of injured were at least 5 journalists. He was not aware if any lawmakers were visiting the hotel.

Hard Brexit will devastate small businesses warns Green MEP



Green Party

25 January 2017

South West Green MEP, Molly Scott Cato, who is Green Party economics and finance speaker, has warned that the hard Brexit being pursued by the Conservative government will prove disastrous for small businesses in the UK. Dr Scott Cato says that exiting the single market, leaving the customs union and ending free movement will all hit small businesses hard.

A new report by the Federation of Small Business (FSB) [1] paints a mixed picture of the potential impacts for small businesses of leaving the EU. However, the FSB recognises that 92% of small business exports go to the EU, but a third of small businesses surveyed for the report expect a decrease in their exports as a result of the UK leaving the EU. Around 1 in 5 of FSB members employ at least one or more non-UK EU citizens and the organisation acknowledges the importance of being able to continue accessing appropriately skilled workers for jobs that they create. Molly Scott Cato said:

“Small businesses are the bedrock of the local and regional economy. They account for more than 99% of all businesses in the UK and small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) between them employ almost 16 million people; 60% of the private sector workforce [2]. With such a huge percentage of their exports going into the EU single market, withdrawal from this market is clearly going to have a massive impact on thousands of UK workers.

“Many small firms are also heavily reliant on mid-skill and unskilled workers; the very people who will not be covered by agreements over employment quotas if we lose freedom of movement.

“Furthermore, the costs of meeting new bureaucratic requirements if we leave the customs union will make exports unviable at a small scale.

“So, the extreme form of Brexit that the government is pushing for will have hugely negative impacts on thousands of small businesses and millions of workers. But this is not what we were told would happen as a result of leaving the EU. No one voted for a decline in our exports and loss of jobs. It is clear that the Tories can no longer claim to be the Party of business”.

Earlier today, Dr Scott Cato met with the EU and International chair of the FSB, Ken Moon, to discuss concerns his members have about the UK leaving the EU, the single market and the customs union.

[1]

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/fsb-brexit-interim-survey-exec-summary-jan-25-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

[2]

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/media-centre/small-business-statistics>

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Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement on settlement units in the West bank

From:

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Part of:

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood statement on the Israeli Government's announcement to build 2,500 settlement units in the West Bank.

Foreign Office minister, Tobias Ellwood, said:

The British Government reiterates its support for a two-state solution leading to a secure Israel that is safe from terrorism, and a contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian state. We have consistently been clear that settlements are illegal under international law, are not conducive to peace and their construction must stop. We condemn the increased pace of settlement activity.

Further information

UN relief official urges calm amid fears of fresh violence in Central African Republic town

25 January 2017 – Amid rising tensions in Central African Republic's Ouaka prefecture and in and around its town of Bambari, a senior UN humanitarian official in the country has appealed for calm and refraining from any act that could further increase the fragility of an already vulnerable population.

“With a population of 42,000 and more than 26,000 displaced people, an open conflict in Bambari would be devastating to the civilian population,” said Michel Yao, the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator in the country.

Calling on all armed groups and non-State actors to realize the impact of a violent confrontation on the already sensitive situation of the local population, Dr. Yao added: “The likelihood of such a conflict suggests a dangerous increase in the fragility of the displaced population whose vulnerability remains a source of concern in several aspects.”

Further, urging armed and non-State groups not to jeopardize the achievements of the last two years in terms of reconciliation and social cohesion, as well as the improvement in the humanitarian situation, Dr. Yao encouraged and supported all efforts from the UN mission in the country, known by the French acronym MINUSCA, the international community and national authorities to avoid clashes that could threaten the protection of the civilians.

People in and around Bambari, located some 385 kilometres (about 240 miles) north east of the nation’s capital Bangui, have already suffered the consequences of several waves of violence by armed groups.

Additionally, since the start of conflict Bria – the capital of the neighbouring Haute-Kotto prefecture – last September, more than 18,000 newly displaced persons have arrived in the Ouaka prefecture, which borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Bambari town, there more than 300 newly displaced from the Bambari-Ippy-Bria axis, all in dire need of relief.

“I call on all parties to the conflict to ensure the unimpeded humanitarian access to the vulnerable groups of people by the humanitarians and vice versa” noted Dr. Yao.

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 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.

[News story: Welsh Secretary visits](#)

DECA, the North Wales home of the global F-35 hub as UK's Industrial Strategy Announced

As the UK Government launched its new industrial strategy, Alun Cairns took the opportunity to highlight the major contribution defence industry makes to the economy in Wales, as well as across the whole of the UK.

In November 2016, the UK was chosen to become the global repair hub for F-35 avionic and aircraft components, securing thousands of highly skilled jobs and millions in investment, with the potential to unlock more than £2bn of future F-35 support revenue over the lifetime of the programme. Mr Cairns viewed the future F-35 facilities and met senior figures from DECA, apprentices, local small businesses, and Joint Venture partners BAE Systems and Northrup Grumman.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

The decision to house the F-35 global repair hub in North Wales is testament to Wales' international reputation for technology and manufacturing. DECA Sealand and companies like Airbus show that this part of Wales is now a leader in aviation technology. The fact Wales is producing the next generation of army fighting vehicles in Merthyr shows we offer a highly skilled workforce and locations that work for business.

The industrial strategy is a plan for everyone; every sector and business in Wales has a stake in it. By pulling together we can build a Welsh economy that works for everyone supported by well-paid jobs for our young people.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

Britain's selection as a global maintenance and repair hub for F35s is a vote of confidence in our high-tech defence industry, generating billions of pounds for the UK and creating thousands of jobs.

But we want to do more through the industrial strategy to build on our strengths and get every part of the country, including Wales and North West England, firing on all cylinders.

Backed by our rising defence budget, a £4.7bn increase in R&D funding and Defence's £800m Innovation Initiative, we are determined to make the UK one of the most competitive places in the world to innovate, build business and help deliver security.

The government's Industrial Strategy will seek to make fresh choices about how the UK shapes its economy and presents an opportunity to deliver a bold, long term Industrial Strategy that builds on strengths and prepares for the years ahead.

With over 3,000 aircraft expected to be in service with 12 nations, the F-35 represents a truly international programme and supply chain, including in the UK, with British companies providing approximately 15% by value of every F-35 to be built.

The government will develop this strategy further with industry and ensure the UK remains one of the best places in the world to innovate and do business. Following a period of consultation, the government intends to publish an Industrial Strategy white paper in 2017 that will set out the plan for full and long term delivery.