

Colombian fighting displaced more than 900 families since January – UN agency

10 March 2017 – Despite a peace agreement, ongoing fighting in the Colombian Pacific Coast has displaced more than 3,500 people so far this year – many of them from the Afro-Colombian or indigenous communities, the United Nations refugee agency today announced.

The violence comes despite a peace agreement signed last November between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC.

“Since the signing of the peace agreement, increased violence by new armed groups has resulted in killings, forced recruitment – including of children – gender-based violence and limited access to education, water and sanitation, as well as movement restrictions and forced displacement of the civilian population,” said William Spindler, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Mr. Spindler said that the families most affected are from the Chocó, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño departments.

About 13 per cent of the 7.4 million internally displaced persons in the country are from the Afro-Colombian communities and indigenous peoples.

The UN refugee agency reiterated the need to ensure that the civilian population has access to protection and assistance.

“At the same time, any eventual returns of IDPs to their areas of origin need to take place in conditions of safety and dignity,” Mr. Spindler stressed.

Promoting Cruise in Wales at a Global event

SeaTrade is the cruise industry’s premier global event and is the only event guaranteed to bring together every facet of the business, including cruise lines, suppliers, travel agents and partners. With 700+ Exhibitors from all over the world, SeaTrade Cruise Global draws in visitors to meet new vendors, and source new products, ideas and solutions.

Cruise is big business for Wales and is worth nearly £3 million to the Welsh economy – 2017 will see 89 cruise calls to Wales with 37,000 passengers and 15,000 crew – an increase in calls of 33% year on year.

Previous attendance at the SeaTrade event has secured further business from new cruise lines who wish to visit Wales.

For the 2017 event, Visit Wales will be promoting the arrival of the Volvo Ocean Race along with Year of the Sea in 2018. Cardiff has been chosen as the destination for the first Volvo Ocean Race transatlantic leg to the United Kingdom in 12 years when the world's leading offshore race makes its debut visit to Wales in 2018. This around the world yacht race is held every three years and is widely regarded as one of the most challenging endurance events of its kind.

The cruise ship market is big business for Wales – and Cruise Wales and partners are working hard to grow the market. An increasing number of visitors from Germany are coming to south west Wales through cruise ships docking at Swansea, Milford Haven Port, Pembroke and Fishguard. Following Tourism Investment Support Scheme funding for the floating pontoon at Fishguard to allow larger vessels to anchor, Fishguard calls have increased from 5 in 2015 to 31 for 2017.

Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, said:

“The cruise market has been highlighted in the tourism strategy for Wales as one way of growing the tourism industry in Wales by 10% by 2020 and Cruise is one of the fastest growing sectors year on year. We are working with many outside stakeholders and are looking at various infrastructure developments for cruise. SeaTrade gives us a great opportunity to keep Wales front of mind with cruise liners, travel agents and partners and to promote Wales as a new product.

The arrival of the Volvo Ocean Race also gives a great platform to talk about what Wales has to offer – but also to promote next year's Cardiff stopover to an important US audience.”

[Chinese leaders discuss economy, B&R with lawmakers](#)

Premier Li Keqiang and other leaders on Thursday discussed economic upgrading, Belt and Road Initiative, people's congress system, poverty alleviation, anti-corruption campaign and other topics with national lawmakers.



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang joins a panel discussion with deputies to the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) from Shaanxi Province at the annual session of the NPC in Beijing, capital of China, March 9, 2017. (Xinhua/Xie Huanchi)

They joined deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) in separate panel discussions at the NPC annual session.

Joining NPC deputies from Shaanxi Province, Premier Li called for developing high-end equipment manufacturing, information industry, modern logistics and rural e-commerce. Tourism and culture should also be boosted to create more jobs.

The provincial government should further streamline administration, delegate power to lower levels, improve services, play well the province's role as a key junction in implementing the Belt and Road Initiative, and take a lead in the development of China's western region.

Joining lawmakers from Jiangsu Province, Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said people's congresses at various levels should implement the decisions made by the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee to ensure effective state governance under the Party's leadership.

He called for innovation in theory and practice of the people's congress system, which is China's fundamental political system.

Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, joined NPC deputies from Guizhou Province in a panel discussion.

Yu urged the province to continue optimizing the environment for developing private businesses, invigorating the private economy, and supporting private businesses' efforts to speed up transformation and upgrading.

Yu also highlighted targeted poverty alleviation, stressing more effective measures, enhanced implementation of policies and mobilization of all resources to win the battle against poverty.

Wang Qishan, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, joined NPC deputies from Yunnan Province, calling for advancing the anti-corruption campaign, which accords with the aspirations of the Party and the people.

Calling inspections a kind of “political checkup,” Wang said undesirable working styles including formalism and bureaucratism during the implementation of CPC Central Committee decisions must be rooted out.

Senior officials at key positions must guard against perfunctory working style and endeavor in a pragmatic way to live up to the people’s expectations, he said.

Joining lawmakers from Chongqing Municipality, Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli highlighted the city’s role as a strategic pivot in China’s “Go West” strategy and asked the municipal government to actively fit into the Belt and Road Initiative and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

He also urged Chongqing to push forward the supply-side structural reform, promote innovation-driven development and high-end manufacturing, coordinate rural and urban development, and protect the Three Gorges Reservoir and the Yangtze River.

Li Keqiang, Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Wang Qishan and Zhang Gaoli are all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

News story: British military chief welcomes largest number of female Afghan officer graduates

Updated: new pictures

Speaking today at a graduation ceremony for new Afghan officers at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger welcomed the increasing female participation in the Afghan security forces.

This year’s class has the largest number of female graduates to date, with 23

officer cadets graduating today.



Female officer cadets march at the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony took place the day after General Messenger, the MOD's Gender Champion, participated in International Women's Day events in Kabul, including meeting with British Council and Embassy staff who work closely with the Afghan Government and Civil Society to create a better future for women and girls, including increasing awareness of gender issues in Afghanistan's security institutions.



A British officer presents an Afghan cadet with their graduation award.

This work includes supporting efforts to make the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) a more attractive career choice for women, including improving accommodation arrangements for female ANAOA cadets. Training in the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is also provided to cadets as part of the Academy's programme.

Britain is also working to strengthen the role of women in the Afghan security forces through the training of future female leaders at ANAOA. The 23 graduates from the class of 2017 join the 57 female officers who have previously passed the intensive and sought after training. Today's ceremony also saw the Academy's total number of graduates going over 2000.



General Messenger attends the graduation ceremony at ANAOA.

With Afghans in the lead for providing security throughout the country and training their next generation of future leaders, Britain is helping to 'mentor the mentors' at the ANAOA, where over 30 British personnel provide advice and assistance to Afghan trainers.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

Today's largest ever female graduate class demonstrates the progress the Afghan security forces are making in allowing women to help defend their country.

Britain's enduring commitment to Afghanistan means we're helping them in this task, as well as offering broader support to Afghanistan's security institutions.

UK assistance at ANAOA is an important part of NATO's non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists Afghan security forces, building their capacity to provide security for the country.

Britain recently increased the number of personnel in Afghanistan, with 500 people now providing advice to Afghan instructors, developing the fledgling Afghan Air Force, advising Afghan security institutions and providing security as part of the Kabul Security Force.

As part of the UK's long term commitment to Afghanistan, Britain has pledged

over £200million to support the ANDSF.

As Her Majesty The Queen today [unveiled](#) a Memorial in London recognising the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, General Messenger on his visit laid a wreath at the Graves of the Fallen in Kabul.



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