

## UN rights expert calls on Myanmar authorities to protect the Rohingya population

27 February 2017 – Concluding a four-day visit to parts of Bangladesh where she met with members of Myanmar's Rohingya community who fled there after violence following attacks on a border post in early October and the ensuing military operations, a United Nations expert called for urgent action by the Government of Myanmar to end the suffering of the Rohingya population in the country.

"The magnitude of violence that these families have witnessed and experienced is far more extensive than I had originally speculated," highlighted Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

She recounted several allegations of horrific attacks including the slitting of some people's throats, indiscriminate shootings, houses being set alight with people tied up inside and very young children being thrown into the fire, as well as gang rapes and other sexual violence.

Earlier this month, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a flash report, based on its interviews with the people who fled Myanmar, in which it documented mass gang-rape, killings, including of babies and young children, brutal beatings, disappearances and other serious human rights violations by the country's security forces.

In addition to the alleged human rights violations occurring within the context of the security operations that followed the 9 October attacks, Ms. Lee also highlighted today how the Government of Myanmar appears to have taken, and continues to take, actions which discriminate against the Rohingya and make their lives even more difficult.

RELATED: UN report details 'devastating cruelty' against Rohingya population in Myanmar's Rakhine province

"I urge the Government of Myanmar to immediately cease the discrimination that the community continues to face, to act now to prevent any further serious rights violations and to conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into those already alleged to have occurred," said the UN rights expert.

"We all owe it to those I have met and their fellow community members to do everything in our power to ensure this is done and to give the Rohingya people reason to hope again," she added.

During her mission to Bangladesh, Ms. Lee visited the capital Dhaka and the town of Cox's Bazar, located near its border with Myanmar, where many members

of the Rohingya community had fled to. Ms. Lee will present her full report to the UN Human Rights Council on 13 March.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council 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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## [In Geneva, UN urges upholding human rights amid rising populism and extremism](#)

27 February 2017 – Disregard for human rights is a “disease,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today told the opening session of the UN Human Rights Council, urging Member States to uphold the rights of all people in the face of rising populism and extremism.

Addressing the top UN human rights body for the first time since becoming Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres appealed to world governments to speak up for human rights in an “impartial way.”

“Disregard for human rights is a disease, and it is a disease that is spreading North, South, East and West,” the Secretary-General told the high-level segment of the 34th regular session of the Human Rights Council, alongside UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. “The Human Rights Council must be part of the cure.”

Having lived under the dictatorship of Portugal’s António de Oliveira Salazar, Mr. Guterres explained that he was 24 before he knew democracy. Denying his compatriots their human rights had oppressed and impoverished many of them, resulting in a mass exodus, and also brought bloody civil wars to Portugal’s former colonies in Africa.

Calling today’s world “more dangerous, less predictable, more chaotic,” the Secretary-General called for making prevention a priority, tackling root causes of conflict and reacting early and more effectively to human rights violations.

He highlighted the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the treaties that derive from it, and urged the Council to be “fully engaged” on the issues that require their attention.

“We are increasingly seeing the perverse phenomenon of populism and extremism feeding off each other in a frenzy of growing racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of intolerance,” Mr.

Guterres said.

“Minorities, indigenous communities and others face discriminations and abuse across the world,” he added, noting abuse targeting refugees and migrants, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex (LGBTI).

Among other issues raised, Mr. Guterres also called for protection of the human rights defenders and of journalists who are “essential” to the checks and balances of any society.

In his address, UN High Commissioner Zeid denounced “reckless political profiteers” who threaten the multilateral system or intend to withdraw from parts of it.

“We have much to lose, so much to protect,” the UN High Commissioner said.

“Without a commitment to fundamental human rights, to the dignity and worth of the human person and to the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, our world will become chaos, misery and warfare,” he warned. “Of all the great post-war achievements, it is this assertion of the universality of rights in human rights law that may be the most noteworthy.”

Speaking directly to the political actors, Mr. Zeid said “the sirens of historical experience ought to ring clear” and pledged that “we will not sit idly by” in the face of violations.

“Our rights, the rights of others, the very future of our planet cannot, must not be thrown aside by these reckless political profiteers,” he added.

For his part, the President of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, called for greater dialogue and cooperation for peace among Governments, the UN system, civil society and the private sector.

He lauded the Human Rights Council as “essential” to bridging divides, and called for advancing “with common purpose” towards sustainable peace.

“Just as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda recognizes human rights as a cornerstone for sustainable development, so too does the concept of sustaining peace,” stated Mr. Thompson, urging the Council members to put forward their best ideas, well-honed skills and most determined will to defend the place of human rights in the drive to implement sustainable development and sustaining peace in today’s challenging times.

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## Old town agrees to improve services



Lijiang Old Town [File photo]

The Old Town of Lijiang, a national 5-A scenic spot in Southwest China's Yunnan province, posted a statement on its official micro blog on Saturday afternoon, saying it was willing to accept punishment by the China National Tourism Administration and work to resolve issues with the services it provides.

"We apologize for our insufficient work. We are open to tourists' criticism and suggestions, and will make things right," said the government of Gucheng district, where the town is located, in the post.

The post came after the National Tourism Administration issued warnings to three 5-A scenic spots on Saturday morning, including the Old Town of Lijiang, demanding rectification of issues within six months.

The other two scenic spots are Jingpo Lake in Mudanjiang city, Heilongjiang province, and Laohutan Ocean Park in Dalian, Liaoning province.

Peng Decheng, director of the administration's Planning and Finance Department, said the number of tourist complaints about Lijiang has remained high, with frequent incidents relating to tourists' personal safety or property.

"Local residents have had serious conflicts with tourists," Peng said. "The scenic spot has failed to maintain quality equipment and services."

In recent years, there have been many reports of tourists being overcharged or being forced to shop in Lijiang.

This year alone, there have already been at least three incidents involving tourists being beaten in Lijiang. In one incident, a female tourist lost her purse and was disfigured after being beaten by a dozen people at a restaurant.

These high-profile incidents have attracted widespread public attention and put the town, well-known for its long history and as home to several ethnic groups, at the center of controversy.

Zheng Yi, mayor of Lijiang, said in a Government Work Report during the ongoing Lijiang People's Congress that Lijiang has gained a bad reputation for insufficient supervision and administration, as well as unsatisfactory services and public security.

Zheng requested that relevant departments shoulder responsibility and make efforts to solve the issues.

Liu Jian, a 31-year-old Beijing resident who traveled to the old town in September 2015, said: "I was lucky compared with some tourists who were beaten, as I was only overcharged there. But the experiences were enough to leave me with a bad impression.

"I'm glad to hear that the old town will start to rectify its issues and I hope it will be reformed."

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## [24 detained over Nanchang hotel fire that killed 10](#)



Emergency workers treat a victim after arriving at the scene of a fire at a hotel in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, on Saturday. [Photo provided to China Daily]

24 people have been detained by the police in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in connection with a hotel fire on Saturday, which killed 10 people.

14 others were injured in the blaze and have been hospitalized, with three still in critical conditions.

The fire affected 1,500 square metres of the first two floors of the building, which also housed a karaoke bar which was under renovation.

An initial investigation has suggested that the fire may have been caused by the cutting of renovation materials.

Of those arrested, two are said to be contractors of the construction project, along with 14 construction workers, seven shareholders and one porter from the karaoke bar. Eight other suspects are still being sought.

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## [H7N9 virus might become drug-resistant](#)



A worker disinfects poultry cages at a market in Suichuan county, Jiangxi province, on Sunday. The county has ordered the closure of local poultry markets from Saturday to March 10. [Li Jianping/For China Daily]

The new strain of H7N9 bird flu virus confirmed earlier this month could become drug-resistant, experts say, while a leading specialist in respiratory diseases warns that it might be resistant already.

Human cases have been rising in China.

The new strain, two human cases of which were reported in Guangdong province, shows resistance to oseltamivir phosphate, a commonly used drug in the prevention and treatment of flu, said Zhong Nanshan, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, according to a report published on Sunday by Nanfang Daily, a newspaper in the provincial capital of Guangzhou.

Although the two patients are resistant to the drug, oseltamivir phosphate has been effective for most human H7N9 cases, Zhong was reported as saying. "This shows most H7N9 viruses have not mutated to the new strain," he said.

He Jianfeng, chief expert in infectious disease at the Guangdong Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said that although the new H7N9 strain shows resistance to the drug, the drug could still have an effect on the strain.

"Both patients have used oseltamivir phosphate before, so it is not known whether the drug resistance is caused by previous use of the drug or by a mutation of the virus," He told Nanfang Daily. "But the possible drug-resistant nature of the new strain deserves more attention."

Much of China has seen the H7N9 outbreak since the start of winter. In most cases, it has been linked to exposure to live poultry. In January alone, the Chinese mainland reported 192 human cases of the virus, including 79 deaths, making it the worst outbreak since the virus was first reported in China in 2013, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

The total number of human cases this year increased to 296, including 94 deaths, as of Sunday, covering more than half of all provincial areas in China, China Central Television reported.

The new strain is more dangerous to poultry, but poses no new threat to humans, and it is not more infectious to humans at the moment, according to a statement by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention on Feb 19. Current research shows that the H7N9 virus is not easily transmitted between humans, according to the World Health Organization.

Zhong could not be reached for comment on Sunday.

He Xiong, deputy director of the Beijing Center for Disease Prevention and Control, said the new strain does not result in increased risk of human-to-human transmission of the virus, but unlike other H7N9 viruses, it can cause diseases in poultry, which should be studied further.

Only two human H7N9 cases have been reported in Beijing this year, and both of them involve patients who are from other parts of China and were transferred to Beijing for treatment, He Xiong said.

"There may be sporadic cases, but the possibility of a large-scale outbreak in Beijing is slim, as authorities and the public are well prepared," he said, adding that scientists are still conducting research into the virus to ascertain whether it is linked to climate, to ensure better prevention and control.