

UN fund allocates \$6 million to help thousands in violence-hit parts of Central African Republic

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The top United Nations relief official today approved an allocation from the organization’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support response to assist the response to new emergencies triggered by a surge of violence in the Central African Republic (CAR)’s Kaga Bandoro, Bambari and Bria areas.

The allocation, amounting to \$6 million and allocated by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien today, will enable the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to reach some 36,800 people facing food insecurity due to the crises in the last few months of 2016 that not only led to new displacements but also caused a significant decline in commercial activities in the areas.

“The humanitarian community is deeply concerned that a crisis linked to the scarcity and soaring prices of essential foodstuffs will aggravate a situation that is already extremely worrying,” warned Joseph Inganji, the head of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in CAR.

The CERF allocation, with approximately 3,600 tons of food, will meet urgent food needs for four months. In Bria and surrounding areas, located about 600 kilometres north-east of the national capital, Bangui, 12,800 affected people will receive assistance.

Similarly, about 10,000 people in Bambari, Grimari and the region (about 300 kilometres from Bangui), and 14,000 people in the Kaga Bandoro (some 330 kilometres from Bangui), will also benefit from the allocation.

According to OCHA, the CERF support will partially cover the urgent humanitarian needs of newly displaced people with regards to food security.

In addition to these funds, the Humanitarian Fund in CAR also triggered its emergency reserve mechanism on two occasions: first in December 2016 with \$1 million to support the response to the food crisis in Bria; and then, in January 2017, it complementary addressed needs including shelter and non-food items, camp management, water, sanitation and hygiene, logistics, protection and health.

OCHA further noted that the humanitarian community in country continues to advocate for additional funds to cover the remaining needs.

CERF is one of the fastest and effective ways in which the UN supports rapid humanitarian response for people affected by natural disasters and conflict.

The Fund receives voluntary contributions throughout the year to provide immediate funding for lifesaving humanitarian action anywhere in the world.

It is managed by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator on behalf of the UN Secretary-General.

Yesterday, the Fund had allocated some \$100 million to sustain operations in nine “neglected crises” around the globe, enabling life-saving assistance for more than six million people in Cameroon, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda.

Syria: UN-supported talks delayed until 20 February to give opposition time to unite

31 January 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Syria today said that he asked the Security Council to postpone the UN facilitated talks that had been scheduled for 8 February in Geneva until 20 February, in order to give the war-torn country’s opposition time to unite and participate as one group.

“We want to give a chance to this Astana initiative to actually implement itself,” Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura told reporters at the UN Headquarters in New York, referring to the talks held last week in the Kazakh capital on solidifying a ceasefire in Syria, which had been brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey.

He said that in Astana, the Syrian Government, the opposition and the three guarantors of the ceasefire agreed on a mechanism – a group of experts – to monitor the truce, adding that a technical follow-up meeting on the creation of the mechanism is scheduled to take place in the Kazakh capital on 6 February with the participation of the UN.

He explained that the delay of UN-supported intra-Syrian talks would give time for the ceasefire to solidify, give the Government a chance to consider concessions, and give a chance for the armed groups to come as “one unified opposition.”

Mr, de Mistura said he will issue invitations for the Geneva talks around 8 February.

He reiterated that his work is guided by UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which endorsed a roadmap for a peace process in Syria, including issues of governance, constitution and elections.

Weekly bin collections

I have been asked by Councillors what I think about the Wokingham Borough policy of having weekly bin collections. I said I was strongly in favour and did not wish to see the frequency reduced. It is a good idea to tell the Council if you agree – or if you want a change in the arrangements.

Founders of 'Lonely Planet' awarded UN agency's lifetime achievement award

31 January 2017 – Hailing the impact of the popular 'Lonely Planet' travel guidebook series on global tourism, the United Nations tourism agency today awarded its founders with its 13th Lifetime Achievement Award.

"The inspirational role that Lonely Planet inferred worldwide to travellers, writers and the tourism sector in general has been the major reason to concede the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Lifetime Achievement Award to [Tony Wheeler and Maureen Wheeler]," noted the UN agency in a news release.

According to the agency, the Wheelers founded Lonely Planet Publications in 1972, after a trip across Asia.

In the last 40 years, their guidebooks have sold over 100 million copies in English and other languages. The books also ventured into many other travel areas including a television series and an award-winning travel website.

In addition, through their Planet Wheeler Foundation, Tony and Maureen Wheeler, have been involved in more than 50 projects in the developing world, principally in south-east Asia and east Africa, with a focus on poverty alleviation.

They are also involved in a number of ventures, including promoting literature and the arts, as well as entrepreneurship and protection and development of archaeological sites in developing countries.

The UNWTO Lifetime Achievement Award is conferred every year to individuals with visionary leadership and significant contributions to the global tourism sector.

[Sarah Champion responds to posthumous pardons for thousands of gay men](#)

Sarah

Champion MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, commenting on the posthumous pardons for thousands of gay men as Turing's Law receives Royal assent, said:

"The Government's decision on pardons is welcome and long overdue. Sadly, nothing can undo the suffering of those men convicted, but at least they, or their families, will now be able to clear their name.

"I hope this announcement will bring some comfort. However, with reported incidents of hate crime against the LGBT community increasing, high levels of LGBT homelessness and cuts to LGBT youth services across the country, we still have such a long way to go in terms of real LGBT equality."