

PHOTO FEATURE: Mosul under siege – 100 days on, and the UN's humanitarian response

24 January 2017 – Armed conflict in Iraq has caused the displacement of more than three million people since June 2014 – one million of those displaced may be as a direct result of the Iraqi military's efforts to liberate Mosul and surrounding areas from the control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

One hundred days into the Iraqi military operation, people continue to be exposed to violence, human rights violations, restricted access to safety and freedom of movement, abduction and illegal detention, limited access to basic services. As well, many lack of the documentation necessary to enjoy their basic rights.

Before and after the start of the military operation, United Nations agencies rallied efforts to assist civilians with a range of targeted services, from distributing much-needed relief supplies, such as food and health care, to providing shelter and other humanitarian assistance.

Since 17 October 2016, when the Iraqi military operation to retake Mosul began, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has tracked the movements of more than 26,873 displaced families – 161,238 individuals – the majority of whom desperately need life-saving humanitarian assistance.

Emergency supplies are desperately needed. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is providing food, water and hygiene items to displaced families – these supplies include water purification tablets, high energy biscuits, jerry cans, baby hygiene kits and leaflets with information on child protection and basic mine awareness.

Knowing what is needed and when is crucial for helping those most in need in a timely fashion. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is monitoring the situation on the ground, and providing updates on funding and the humanitarian response – including gaps and constraints on camp coordination and management; shelter and non-food items; food security; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; logistics; and emergency telecommunications.

Providing those in need with the right sustenance to survive falls under the responsibility of the World Food Programme (WFP), which has been providing monthly food rations and ready-to-eat food to the affected people. These food rations contain items such as rice, lentils, wheat flour, bulgur wheat, beans and vegetable oil.

The need for impartial respect and protection of human rights is crucial in

Iraq to ensure that, among other things, women and children are protected from sexual and gender-based violence and diverse ethnic and religious minorities and persons with disabilities are granted access to basic services without discrimination. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has a human rights unit that works with the authorities and members of Iraqi civil society to support this requirement. The Mission's work includes tracking civilian deaths and injuries to tally casualty figures on a monthly basis. Shown here, the head of UNAMI's Human Rights Office, Francesco Motta, sits in a camp for displaced persons, hearing from a man whose children were abducted by ISIL (Da'esh).

Whether women live or die in a crisis often depends on their access to basic sexual and reproductive health services – often taking a back seat to other urgent needs, like food and shelter. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has been working with Iraq's Ministry of Health and civil society organizations to deliver these vital services to vulnerable populations. UNFPA has also been working hard in Mosul to provide immediate relief to women and girls affected by the conflict – including through the distribution of dignity kits, which contain hygiene supplies such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, sanitary pads and underclothes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been on the ground in Iraq since 1960. Through its various programmes, the UN health agency is currently work on revitalizing, strengthening and sustaining the Iraqi health system based on primary health care. For Mosul, in addition to delivering medicines and supplies to treat injuries and chronic conditions, WHO has conducted trauma management training for medical doctors in Erbil, Ninewa and Dohuk, and for paramedical teams engaged in managing civilian casualties from Mosul.

The fighting in Iraq has caused a massive displacement of people seeking safety – with some 3.1 million displaced inside Iraq, while another 220,000 are refugees in other countries. From Mosul, where, in early December 2016, the number of displaced people approached 100,000, UNHCR stepped up the distribution of winter material – providing thermal blankets and quilts to 11,200 people around Mosul.

[Press release: Minister Ellwood statement on the advance of Iraqi forces in eastern Mosul](#)

From:

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Part of:

FCO Minister Tobias Ellwood welcomes the progress of Iraqi forces as another step towards defeating Daesh.

Minister Ellwood said:

We welcome progress made by Iraqi forces in eastern Mosul which marks another step towards defeating Daesh.

There is still a long way to go. As Iraqi forces prepare for western Mosul, I pay tribute to their bravery and urge them to continue to put the protection of Mosul's innocent civilians at the heart of everything they do.

The UK, as part of the Global Coalition, is committed to continuing to provide the government of Iraq with political, military, humanitarian and stabilisation support, as they work to deliver the political reform, national reconciliation and basic services all Iraqis want and deserve.

Further information

Follow Foreign Office Minister Tobias Ellwood on Twitter: [@TobiasEllwoodMP](#).

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[Other public services should not be expected to cover for this Tory Government's cuts to the border agency – Diane Abbott](#)

Diane

Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, speaking after revelations that confidential NHS patient data is being gathered by the Home Office to trace suspected illegal immigrants, said:

"This

is unacceptable. We have already seen this government using schools to gather immigration data on children. Now we find they are using the NHS in the same way.

“Other public services should not be expected to cover for this Tory Government’s cuts to the border agency. People could be deterred from seeking medical care because they are worried their confidential information might be passed on. This could do irreparable damage to the people concerned and it may have public health implications. It should stop now.”

[News story: Avian flu confirmed at a farm in Preston, Lancashire](#)

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The UK’s Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed H5N8 avian flu at a premises in Preston, Lancashire.

The UK’s Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed H5N8 avian flu in a flock of farmed breeding pheasants at a premises in Preston, Lancashire. A 3km Protection Zone and a 10km Surveillance Zone have been put in place around the infected premises to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

The flock is estimated to contain approximately 10,000 birds. A number have died and the remaining live birds at the premises are being humanely culled. A full investigation is under way to determine the source of the infection. Public Health England advise that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency is clear that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

[Read the latest advice and information on avian flu in the UK](#), including actions to reduce the risk of the disease spreading, advice for anyone who keeps poultry or captive birds and details of previous cases. Journalists with queries should [contact Defra press office](#).

UN rights expert 'deeply concerned' about reprisals against those she met on official visit to Myanmar

24 January 2017 – A United Nations expert warned today about possible reprisals against the people she met during her recent visit to the country, noting that she was particularly struck by the fear of some she spoke to “who were afraid of what would happen to them after talking to me.”

“There is one word that has hung heavily on my mind during this visit – reprisals,” the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, said in a press statement wrapping up her 9 to 21 January mission to the country.

She said she is deeply concerned about those with whom she met and spoke, “those critical of the Government, those defending and advocating for the rights of others, and those who expressed their thoughts and opinions which did not conform to the narrative of those in the position of power.” Moreover, she noted the increasing use of section 66 (d) of the Telecommunications Law against many, “merely for speaking their minds.”

“It is particularly alarming to learn that the security forces’ counter operations in the villages of Maungdaw north in Rakhine state have reportedly been resumed following a brief lull, with raids conducted in several villages including nearby the villages I visited,” Ms. Lee stressed.

There are further allegations of arbitrary arrests and detention in relation to these latest reported raids.

The expert was especially dismayed to note that during the visit, feelings of optimism and hope had appeared to be fading among the country’s ordinary people – just one year after nationwide elation over the last general elections.

The Special Rapporteur regretted that due to security reasons, she was only allowed to go to Myitkyina, and not Laiza and Hpakant in Kachin, stating that the situation “at the northern borders is deteriorating.”

“Those in Kachin state tell me that the situation is now worse than at any point in the past few years. Whilst I was not able to travel to the areas most severely affected, the situation is now such that even in Myitkyina, the capital of the state and home to over 300,000 people, residents are afraid – and now stay home after dark,” the UN expert explained.

In visiting a hard labour camp in Mon state, Ms. Lee was concerned over prisoners’ living conditions, pointing to the use of shackles as a form of additional punishment and the lack of transparency regarding their transfer to the hard labour camp. Without an individual complaint system in prisons

she was “struck by the fear of those prisoners who were afraid of what would happen to them after speaking to me.”

A report from the visit will be presented in March to the UN Human Rights Council, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system. Ms. Lee’s position is honorary and she does not receive a salary for her work.