

Families report skyrocketing food prices, dire conditions in western Mosul – UN agency

27 February 2017 – The United Nations food relief agency today said it is extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation facing more than 750,000 people living in dire conditions in the western sections of Iraq's Mosul city, where fighting is taking place between the Government forces and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorists.

"We are hearing from some families that food has drastically risen in price and is unaffordable. In extreme cases, people cannot access food at all," said the World Food Programme's (WFP) Iraq Representative and Country Director, Sally Haydock, in a news release.

"We appeal to all parties to the conflict to facilitate immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access to all Iraqis in need of assistance," Ms. Haydock added, noting that WFP is monitoring the frontlines and remains ready to provide immediate food assistance as soon as families can be reached safely.

Through telephone interviews, many distressed families said that food was unaffordable, while others said they could not access food at all.

"The situation is unbelievable," reported a 46-year-old man from inside the city. "There is no food, no clean water, no gas for heating, no medicine and no services."

So far, WFP has provided ready-to-eat food for over 6,000 people who have fled villages to the south of western Mosul. Most have made their way to Hamam Al Alil, Qayyarah Jeda'a and Haj Ali camps. WFP has enough food in stock to cover the immediate needs of 770,000 people who reside in western Mosul.

The military offensive to oust ISIL from Mosul began on 17 October 2016. The Government has since retaken eastern Mosul.

In related news, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that alongside its partners, it has provided legal assistance to help more than two and a half thousand Iraqis displaced as a result of the Mosul offensive receive new civil identity cards and other documents that were lost, damaged or destroyed as they fled their homes seeking safety.

As many as 49 per cent of displaced Iraqis interviewed by UNHCR protection partners were found to need help in getting new civil documentation, as many families lost documents or had their papers damaged as they fled conflict zones. Other families were told that birth and marriage documents, which had been issued when their areas were under the control of armed groups, were not

legally recognized by the Iraqi Government and needed replacement.

It took considerable time and effort to help displaced families with new documentation,” said Bruno Geddo, UNHCR's Representative in Iraq. Our teams and partners have had to adopt some innovative methods and advocate tirelessly in order to get around some of the difficulties and lengthy bureaucratic requirements”, he said, citing the agency's ongoing efforts to assist thousands of people who have been in “legal limbo.”

[UN health agency announces list of bacteria for which new antibiotics are urgently needed](#)

27 February 2017 – The United Nations health agency today published its first-ever catalogue of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that pose the greatest threat to human health.

The list of priority pathogens consisting of 12 families of bacteria was drawn up to guide and promote research and development (R&D) of new antibiotics, as part of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s efforts to address growing global resistance to antimicrobial medicines.

This list is a new tool to ensure R&D responds to urgent public health needs,” said Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Health Systems and Innovation in a news release.

Antibiotic resistance is growing, and we are fast running out of treatment options. If we leave it to market forces alone, the new antibiotics we most urgently need are not going to be developed in time,” she warned.

The list highlights in particular the threat of 'gram-negative' bacteria that are resistant to multiple antibiotics. These bacteria have built-in abilities to find new ways to resist treatment and can pass along genetic material that allows other bacteria to become drug-resistant as well.

The WHO list is divided into three categories according to the urgency of need for new antibiotics: critical, high and medium priority.

Priority 1: CRITICAL

- *Acinetobacter baumannii*, carbapenem-resistant
- *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, carbapenem-resistant

- *Enterobacteriaceae*, carbapenem-resistant, ESBL-producing

The most critical group of all includes multidrug resistant bacteria that pose a particular threat in hospitals, nursing homes, and among patients whose care requires devices such as ventilators and blood catheters. They include *Acinetobacter*, *Pseudomonas* and various *Enterobacteriaceae*, including *Klebsiella*, *E. coli*, *Serratia*, and *Proteus*. They can cause severe and often deadly infections such as bloodstream infections and pneumonia.

These bacteria have become resistant to a large number of antibiotics, including carbapenems and third generation cephalosporins – the best available antibiotics for treating multi-drug resistant bacteria.

G20 health experts will meet this week in Berlin. The list is intended to spur governments to put in place policies that incentivize basic science and advanced R&D by both publicly funded agencies and the private sector investing in new antibiotic discovery.

While more R&D is vital, alone, it cannot solve the problem. To address resistance, there must also be better prevention of infections and appropriate use of existing antibiotics in humans and animals, as well as rational use of any new antibiotics that are developed in future.

[Refugees and migrants taking ‘enormous risks’ to reach Europe – UN agency](#)

27 February 2017 – Increased border restrictions and lack of accessible legal ways to reach Europe have caused refugees and migrants to take more diversified and dangerous journeys, such as relying on people-smugglers or using flimsy boats to cross rough seas, a new report by the United Nations refugee agency has revealed.

This report clearly shows that the lack of accessible and safe pathways leads refugees and migrants to take enormous risks while attempting to reach Europe, including those simply trying to join family members. said Vincent Cochetel, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Director of Europe Bureau, in a news release announcing the report.

According to *Desperate Journeys*, issued today by UNHCR, the closure of the Western Balkan route and the European Union (EU)-Turkey Statement in March 2016, caused a drastic decrease in the number of people reaching Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route.

However since then, the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy become the primary entry point to Europe and arrival trends in Italy

show that the primary nationalities who crossed to Greece had not switched in significant numbers to the Central Mediterranean route.

In addition to drowning, migrants and refugees also risk of being kidnapped, held against their will for several days, physical and sexual abuse, torture and extortion by smugglers and criminal gangs at several points along key routes.

The Central Mediterranean route

The UN agency pointed out that in 2016, some 181,436 arrived in Italy by sea in need of international protection, and also victims of trafficking and migrants seeking better lives. About 90 per cent of them travelled by boat from Libya, and the top two nationalities of those arriving were Nigerians (21 per cent) and Eritreans (11 per cent).

This route is particularly dangerous and, in 2016, recorded more deaths at sea than ever before.

RELATED: UN reports more than 300 migrant deaths on Mediterranean crossing in first two months of 2017

Furthermore, children making this journey are especially vulnerable, and the number of unaccompanied and separated children arriving is increasing. Last year more than 25,000 came, representing 14 per cent of all new arrivals in Italy.

Their number more than doubled compared to the previous year, UNHCR said.

The Western and Eastern Mediterranean routes

The report also showed that in the last part of 2016, more people reached the continent through the Western Mediterranean route, either by crossing the sea to Spain from Morocco and Algeria, or by entering the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta.

Similarly, people continued to leave Turkey along the Eastern Mediterranean route from April onwards, but in much smaller numbers. Most crossed the sea to Greece or Cyprus, others also crossed via land into the country or into Bulgaria.

Most who arrived by sea to Greece (87 per cent) came from the top ten refugee producing countries.

This was also the case for those who continued to move along the Western Balkans route: in Serbia, for instance, 82 per cent of those who arrived came from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and almost half are children 20 per cent of those unaccompanied.

These numbers, however, numbers have reduced since April 2016, noted UNHCR.

Additionally, according to the study, tens of thousands of people also have

been reportedly pushed back by border authorities in Europe, including in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Spain, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with many cases of alleged violence and abuses in an apparent attempt to deter further entry attempts.

[Germany: UN rights panel highlights racial profiling against people of African descent](#)

27 February 2017 – People of African descent in Germany suffer racial discrimination, Afrophobia and racial profiling in their daily lives, but their situation remains largely invisible to the wider society, a United Nations expert panel said today at the end of its first official visit to the country.

“The repeated denial that racial profiling does not exist in Germany by police authorities and the lack of an independent complaint mechanism at federal and state level fosters impunity,” said Ricardo Sunga, who currently heads the expert panel, in a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Established on 25 April 2002 by the then Commission on Human Rights, following the World Conference against Racism held in Durban in 2001, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent is composed of five independent experts: Mr. Sunga (the Philippines), current Chair-Rapporteur; Michal Balcerzak (Poland); Mireille Fanon Mendes-France (France), Sabelo Gumedze (South Africa) and Ahmed Reid (Jamaica).

A Working Group delegation visited Berlin, Dessau, Dresden, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Hamburg from 20 to 27 February, to gain first-hand knowledge on discriminatory practices affecting people of African descent in Germany.

“There is a serious lack of ethnicity-based disaggregated data, and an incomplete understanding of history, which obscure the magnitude of structural and institutional racism people of African descent face,” Mr. Sunga said, explaining that the Working Group believes that institutional racism and racist stereotyping by the criminal justice system has led to a failure to effectively investigate and prosecute perpetrators of racist violence, racial profiling and hate crimes against people of African descent.

During the eight-day mission, the human rights experts engaged with representatives of the German Federal and State authorities, representatives of national and provincial human rights institutions and civil society. The delegation welcomed ongoing efforts by the administration to address racial

discrimination faced by people of African descent.

The Working group will present a report containing its findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2017.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN 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.

[Western Sahara: UN chief Guterres urges Morocco and Polisario Front to de-escalate tensions in buffer strip](#)

25 February 2017 – Deeply concerned about increased tensions in the vicinity of Guerguerat in the buffer strip in southern Western Sahara between the Moroccan berm and the Mauritanian border, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called on Morocco and Frente Polisario to take all necessary steps to avoid escalation.

According to a statement issued by UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, armed elements of both Morocco and Frente Polisario (Polisario Front) remain in close proximity to each other, a position they have been in since August 2016, monitored during daylight hours by the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

The Secretary-General calls on both of the parties to exercise maximum restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid escalating tensions, be that through the actions of military or civilian actors, the statement said, adding that Mr. Guterres also underlined that regular commercial traffic should not be obstructed and that no action should be taken, which may constitute a change to the status quo of the buffer strip.

Strongly urging the parties to unconditionally withdraw all armed elements from the buffer strip as soon as possible, to create an environment conducive to a resumption of the dialogue in the context of the political process led by the UN, the Spokesman said Mr. Guterres further called on the parties to adhere to their obligations under the ceasefire agreement and to respect both the letter and the spirit of it.

Western Sahara is located on the north-west coast of Africa bordered by Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. The colonial administration of Western Sahara by Spain ended in 1976. Fighting later broke out between Morocco and the Polisario Front. A ceasefire was signed in September 1991. MINURSO was deployed that year to monitor the ceasefire between the Government of Morocco

and the Polisario Front and organizing, if the parties agree, a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara.

A revised settlement plan was proposed by the United Nations after seven years of diplomatic consultations was rejected by one of the parties in 2004. In approving the current phase of direct negotiations in 2007, the UN Security Council called for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political settlement which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.