

Clashes in north-eastern South Sudan halt UN migration agency's humanitarian work

31 January 2017 – Thousands of people in need of aid in South Sudan's Upper Nile area will have to wait indefinitely, after fighting forced the United Nations migration agency to suspend humanitarian activities in the area.

“Violence in Upper Nile has once again hindered the ability of IOM and other relief agencies to provide assistance to populations seriously in need,” said the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) South Sudan Chief of Mission, William Barriga. “Civilians will undoubtedly suffer as sporadic fighting makes it more difficult for aid workers to deliver services.”

In addition to aid, the agency was in the process of registering people to receive supplies, when clashes between the Government and opposition forces forced everyone to evacuate. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people remained in line when the team was forced to flee.

According to IOM, clashes reached Wau Shilluk on 27 January, just as a 14-person team from the UN agency was about to resume registration. A partner organization, which provides aid, was with UN agency at the time.

Wau Shilluk is located north-eastern South Sudan, across the White Nile River from Malakal town. Malakal was one of South Sudan's largest urban areas before the current crisis and home to more than 33,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are sheltering at the protection of civilians (PoC) site, said IOM.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) yesterday condemned the latest fighting and urged all parties to protect civilians.

Yemen: UN envoy condemns attack on building used to monitor cessation of hostilities

30 January 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Yemen strongly condemned today the attack on the De-escalation and Coordination Committee building, which regularly houses UN Staff, in Dhahran Al-Janoub, which is in Saudi Arabia near the Yemeni border.

“It is especially tragic that this attack took place at a point in time where we are calling for a restoration of the cessation of hostilities,” UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said.

Noting that the building attacked was supposed to host the committee that will oversee the cessation of hostilities and report on violations, the Special Envoy said: “The United Nations maintains a regular presence in this building and this incident is not a sign of good faith.”

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed urged Ansar Allah and the General People’s Congress to commit to participate in the De-escalation and Coordination Committee’s preparatory workshop. He underscored the importance of the support to the work of the committee which is critical for the success of a renewed truce.

“It is of the interest of both parties in the conflict to commit to the rapid resumption of a long-lasting cessation of hostilities in the coming days and weeks. The improvement in the security situation will open space for renewed dialogue,” he added.

In a briefing to the UN Security Council late last week, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said those seeking a military solution will only prolong the suffering caused by the war, allow the terrorist threat to grow and deepen the challenges that will face the eventual recovery. “With political courage and will, the war can be stopped,” he said, pressing both sides to demonstrate the political courage needed to stop the nearly two-year-long war.

[World must implement pledges on women’s empowerment and rights – UN Women deputy chief](#)

30 January 2017 – Speaking at a consultation in preparation for the Commission on Status of Women, a body exclusively dedicated to promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment, a senior United Nations official today called for sustained commitment and leadership to ensure a successful outcome of the Commission.

“We are at an important [juncture] in the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment and women’s human rights,” said Lakshmi Puri, the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

Recalling recent adoption of a number of far-reaching global commitments, such as Beijing+20 (the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on climate change, the New Urban Agenda, and the

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, she added: “Now it is about the normative of implementation – how do we implement different parts of the compact and how do we follow up and monitor the implementation.”

Ms. Puri was speaking at a multi-stakeholder forum, which has been organized to contribute to the preparations for the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women – a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council – that will meet in March this year.

In particular, today’s forum sought to raise awareness on existing commitments as well as to identify key areas and issues that should be considered by the Commission in the context of its priority theme, and to strengthen dialogue and galvanize partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the outcomes of the Commission.

It also provided a platform to share result-oriented approaches and strategies and to highlight areas that require enhanced consensus.

Further in her remarks the UN-Women deputy chief said the upcoming session, held under the theme of ‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work,’ will provide concrete, practical and action-oriented recommendations that will cover significant new ground, on overcoming structural barriers to gender equality, gender-based discrimination and violence against women at work.

VIDEO: Speaking at the forum, UN Women’s deputy chief Lakshmi Puri said that “enhanced interventions” are required in order to tackle “persistent gender inequalities and gaps” in the workplace.

“There is a dynamic new element of assessing how the world of work is changing due to technology, migration, and other factors and whether women can be enabled to leapfrog beneficially into this new context and not adversely affected and left behind,” she added.

Also in her statement, Ms. Puri underlined important commitments such as those under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on gender equality and women’s empowerment and spoke of processes underway in different regions of the world to prepare for the session.

[UN agency ‘alarmed’ by uncertainty facing refugees in the process of](#)

being resettled in US

30 January 2017 – The head of the United Nations refugee agency today said he is “deeply worried” by the uncertainty facing thousands of refugees around the world who are in the process of being resettled to the United States after the country suspended its refugee programme last week.

According to a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 800 refugees were set to make America their new home this week alone, but instead find themselves barred from travelling to the US.

The statement follows President Donald Trump’s signing last Friday of an Executive Order that, among things, suspends the US refugee programme for 120 days and, according to the media, bars entry of refugees from several mostly Muslim countries, including Syria, until further notice.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi underlined once again UNHCR’s position that refugees should receive equal treatment for protection and assistance, and opportunities for resettlement, regardless of their religion, nationality or race.

UNHCR estimates, based on average monthly figures for the last 15 years, that 20,000 refugees in precarious circumstances might have been resettled to the US during the 120 days covered by the Order.

“Refugees are anxious, confused and heartbroken at this suspension in what is already a lengthy process,” the release said.

“Those accepted for resettlement by the United States are, after a rigorous US security screening process, coming to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. UNHCR hopes that they will be able to do so as soon as possible,” the release added.

Noting that for decades, the US has been a global leader in refugee protection, a tradition rooted in the tolerance and generosity of the American people, UNHCR expressed the hope that the country will continue its strong leadership role and its long history of protecting those who are fleeing conflict and persecution.

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement on child refugees that might be affected by the new US policy.

“The needs of refugees have never been greater. Worldwide 28 million children have been uprooted by conflict, driven from their homes by violence and terror. They need our help,” the statement said.

“The United States has a long and proud tradition of protecting children fleeing war and persecution. We trust that this support will continue and that the recent measures will prove to be temporary. All refugee children need our support.”

UNICEF said it is committed to continuing its work with governments and other partners around the world to help some of the most vulnerable children everywhere, from Syria to Yemen to South Sudan.

UN mission in South Sudan 'deeply concerned' by clashes between Government and opposition forces

30 January 2017 – Amid an outbreak of violence in the South Sudanese city of Malakal, the United Nations mission in the country today called on the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition to silence the guns.

"The Mission reiterates its call on all parties to immediately cease hostilities and fully implement the peace agreement," according to a statement from the Office of the Spokesperson at the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

UNMISS said that as of Sunday, the situation in the town remained "tense." UN peacekeepers are continuing to regularly patrol the northern town, and report that it is "largely deserted."

The UN Mission "will continue to act within its capacity to protect South Sudanese civilians in imminent danger," the spokesperson said, calling for humanitarian aid and access to the affected areas.

South Sudan has faced ongoing challenges since a political face-off between President Salva Kiir and his then former Vice-President Riek Machar erupted into full blown conflict between forces loyal to each in December 2013. The crisis has produced one of the world's worst displacement situations with immense suffering for civilians.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement that formally ended the war, conflict and instability have also spread to previously unaffected areas in the Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr-El-Ghazal regions of the country.