

Iraq: 15,000 children flee west Mosul over past week as battle intensifies by the day, says UNICEF

3 March 2017 – Some 15,000 children have over the previous week fled the western section of Iraq's Mosul city where fighting between the Government forces and terrorists is intensifying by the day, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reported.

"UNICEF is responding to the immediate needs at the Hamam Al Alil camp, 20km from Mosul, where aid is provided to children upon their arrival," UNICEF Regional Emergency Advisor Bastien Vigneau said over the phone from Iraq during the regular press briefing held in the UN Office at Geneva.

He noted that the children were very scared of the sound of the bombs, which was one of the main reasons their parents had decided to flee. They fled with very little luggage and in most cases with a bare minimum of clothes. The children and their families arrived mostly by buses organized by the military.

The main priorities, other than the first emergency response, included health, to ensure that children were immunized, primarily against measles and polio, said Mr. Vigneau.

Matthew Sarmash, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that a significant increase in displacement had been noticed in recent days and the Hamam Al Alil camp was close to reach its maximum capacity. At the moment, 150,000 places were occupied. He said construction under way to accommodate up to 250,000 people there.

UNICEF's Vigneau said that more than 100,000 children have been displaced from Mosul since the military operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) began on 17 October 2016.

He said that 874 unaccompanied or separated children have been identified since mid-October, with half of them reunified with their families or taken care of by extended families, and the others being provided dedicated assistance until they reunify with families.

'Political leadership needs to support

its own people,' urges UN mission chief in South Sudan



A WFP helicopter arrives Thonyor, Leer County, South Sudan, with supplies of nutrition items and vegetable oil, as part of an inter-agency rapid response mission to provide assistance to people threatened by famine. Photo: WFP/George Fominyen

3 March 2017 – The top United Nations official in South Sudan is calling on the country's political leadership to support its own people in the wake of a famine affecting some 100,000 people, and calling for local authorities to provide humanitarian access to those most in need.

David Shearer, the recently arrived UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the country, today voiced alarm "at how little a response to the plight of these people has been heard from their leaders."

On 20 February, famine was declared in parts of Unity state. Since then, humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations evacuated the heart of the afflicted-area, a town called Mayendit, due to the threat of resumed fighting between the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition.

"Those affected by the humanitarian crisis are still citizens of this young country, and they deserve protection," Mr. Shearer said in reference to the women and children most affected by the crisis. "But the constant fighting shows they are getting none. Instead, they are bearing the brunt."

Mr. Shearer, who is also the new head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), reiterated the UN's call for a complete cessation of hostilities between all those involved.

Yemen: UN migration agency reports displacement spike in Taiz Governorate

3 March 2017 – With nearly 274,000 people displaced, Yemen's Taiz is now among the crisis-torn country's top five hosting governorates for such populations, a United Nations report has found.

For nearly 20 months, Taiz has been the centre of intense ground clashes, military confrontations and aerial strikes between warring parties in Yemen.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has initiated a system to track displacement from the major port city of Al Mokha, as accurate data is essential to plan an effective, efficient and impactful humanitarian response.

So far, at least 25,000 individuals have been reported as displaced from Al Mokha, according to IOM.

"This much-needed data has enabled the entire humanitarian community in Yemen to increase the amount and accuracy of vital support and protection it provides to affected populations," said IOM Yemen Chief of Mission Laurent de Boeck in a press release.

Since the start of the conflict in March 2015, IOM has tracked up to 426,672 internally displaced persons and 78,258 returnees in the governorate of Taiz.

Earlier this week, Stephen O'Brien, the UN Emergency Coordinator, who is currently undertaking a mission in Yemen said that in an around Ibb and Taiz, he had met with families to hear their horrific stories of displacement.

"Running from violence, bombings and shelling, these people from Taiz and Mocha had left with nothing. It is now ordinary Yemenis, host communities and humanitarian actors providing lifesaving assistance and protection," he said in a news release, stressing that with so many people malnourished and sick, aid is not enough.

"One thing is clear, though: there are no military solutions to this terrible conflict. Only sustainable peace can bring about the solutions, hope and future of Yemenis. I call on all parties to the conflict to come together and make peace. That is the best humanitarian assistance," he said.

[On Wildlife Day, UN says young people play special role as today's change-makers, tomorrow's custodians](#)

3 March 2017 – With the fate of the world's wildlife soon to be in the hands of the next generation, the United Nations is observing this year's World Wildlife Day with a call to harness the power of young people's voices in conservation efforts.

Poaching and illegal trafficking pose a significant threat to wildlife, especially some of the world's most iconic and endangered species, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in his message for the Day, which this year is on the theme *Listen to the Young Voices*.

Strict enforcement of laws is important, but so too is awareness," Mr. Guterres added, appealing to young people to protect their inheritance by becoming informed and acting to protect wild animals and plants from the threat of extinction.

In her message, Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), stressed that young people have a special role to play as change-makers and future custodians.

"We must listen to them and nurture their engagement, to craft new forms of action to conserve and protect wildlife on the basis of solidarity," she said.

On 20 December 2013, the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim 3 March as World Wildlife Day – the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973, which plays an important role in ensuring that international trade does not threaten the species' survival.



UN World Wildlife Day 3 March

"Given the current rate of poaching and smuggling, will future generations one day speak of elephants, rhinoceros and many other endangered species as we speak of mammoths...? We must not and will not allow this to happen," said CITES Secretary-General, John E. Scanlon.

"Our generation has not yet succeeded in securing the future of many wild animals and plants. Meeting this challenge will now be shared with the next generation," he added.

Habitat loss, climate change and industrial-scale poaching are impacting species great and small, from elusive pangolins to migratory sea turtles, to apex predators like the tiger. World Wildlife Day is a very special occasion on the UN calendar as it helps to galvanize national and international action.

To succeed, it is vital to fully harness the innovation and energy of youth, and combine it with the wisdom that comes with experience, he said.

Last year, the UN launched the Wild for Life campaign, which asked people to make wildlife crime personal. Since its launch, it has engaged 35 celebrity champions, reached over 1 billion people, generated 4.5 million social media engagement and 12,000 pledges of action.

And some are taking monumental steps to combat the destruction of species. In December 2016, the future of elephants was given a huge boost by China's declaration to ban all commercial ivory trade by the end of 2017.

"China has set a great example to the world with its ivory ban. Young people should take heart from this and push for further progress globally to

ensure that wildlife and their habitats are sustainably managed in the future,” said UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Erik Solheim.

UN urges Sri Lanka not to miss opportunity to advance justice and reconciliation

3 March 2017 – The slow pace of transitional justice in Sri Lanka and the lack of a comprehensive strategy to address accountability for past crimes risk derailing the momentum towards lasting peace, reconciliation and stability, a United Nations report said today.

“Seventeen months ago, when we published a detailed report on the grave human rights violations committed during the conflict in Sri Lanka, I urged the Government and all the people of Sri Lanka to ensure that this historic opportunity for truly fundamental change should not be squandered,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a news release on the report.

He noted that in many ways, Sri Lanka appears to be turning a corner on the promotion and protection of human rights, but he stressed that hard-won gains could prove illusory if they are not tethered to a comprehensive, robust strategy.

“This critical opportunity in Sri Lankan history cannot be missed,” he said, urging the Government and people of Sri Lanka once again to prioritize justice alongside reconciliation to ensure that the horrors of the past are firmly dealt with, never to recur.

The report, issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), assesses progress made in tackling the legacy of grave violations in Sri Lanka between 2002 and 2011 and acknowledges that there have been positive advances on human rights and constitutional reform.

However, the report notes that the structures set up and measures taken until now have been inadequate, lacked coordination and a sense of urgency.

“Party politics, including the balancing of power between the different constituencies of the coalition in the run-up to constitutional reforms, have contributed to a reluctance to address difficult issues regarding accountability or to clearly articulate a unified position by all parts of Government,” the report states.

The report makes a number of concrete recommendations, including calling on

the Government to embrace the report of the Consultation Task Force, to formulate a communications campaign to inform the public about details of the reconciliation agenda, to invite the UN human rights office to establish a presence in Sri Lanka, to give the highest priority to the restitution of all private land that has been occupied by the military, and to adopt legislation establishing a hybrid court.

The report also highlights a number of serious human rights violations that are reportedly continuing to occur in Sri Lanka, including the harassment or surveillance of human rights defenders and victims of violations, police abuse and excessive use of force, and the use of torture.

The High Commissioner will present the report to the Human Rights Council on 22 March in Geneva.