

## Central African Republic: Senior UN official condemns armed, forceful entry into hospital

9 February 2017 – Denouncing forceful entry by armed individuals into a hospital in the Central African Republic's restive PK5 neighbourhood with the intention to kill some of the patients, a senior United Nations humanitarian official has emphasized that such incidents are in violation of the international humanitarian law.

This is the second such incident at the health facility, situated in the capital, Bangui, in the last five days.

It is unacceptable that armed elements come to a hospital, with arms to kill patients, stressed Michel Yao, the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator and the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) office in the Central African Republic (CAR), in a news release.

The UN official also underlined that that respect for health facilities and their civilian character must be ensured, and that free and unhindered access to patients and medical staff must be safeguarded.

International humanitarian law expressly forbids attacks on or targeting of medical facilities and personnel.

I call on all parties including national authorities to enhance the protection of civilians and peaceful cohabitation of communities, the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator added.

### ***At least three killed in the restive neighbourhood***

According to the news release, at least 26 individuals – both civilians and combatants – were injured and at least three killed in the violence in Bangui's PK5 neighbourhood that has witnessed violent flare-ups in the past.

Several houses, a school and a church were also destroyed.

Protection of civilians continues to be a major concern in CAR where, according to estimates, 400,000 people remain displaced due to conflict and 2.2 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance.

In January, the UN together with the Government and relief organizations launched a \$400 million appeal for humanitarian response until 2019. Funding, however, remains a major challenge.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. Despite significant progress and

successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

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## Somalia: UN mission pledges support as new President will face 'daunting challenges'

8 February 2017 – Congratulating former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' on his election as Somalia's new President, the United Nations Assistance Mission in the country (UNSOM) said the UN and the wider international community are ready to assist him in addressing the myriad challenges that await his Government.

"We [...] look forward to working with him and his Government in tackling the many economic, political, security and humanitarian challenges facing Somalia," UNSOM Spokesperson Joseph Contreras told *UN News* after the presidential polling, which followed a nearly 18 month exercise that included an extended parliamentary electoral process.

"It's an historic milestone in the country's emergence from years of chaos and civil war. We feel the process, though flawed in some respects by allegations of corruption and manipulation of some of the parliamentary voting, overall, produced some very positive results," he said, noting that the new Federal Parliament that was elected is the most representative and legitimate national legislature in the history of the country.

The new president, known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner after two rounds of voting by the Somali Parliament in the capital, Mogadishu. The runner-up, the incumbent, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, chose to withdraw from a third and final round of voting and congratulated the former Prime Minister on his victory.

Mr. Contreras said that the voting today, held under "very, very tight security," was conducted in a peaceful, orderly and transparent manner according to the rules stipulated by Somalia's provisional Federal Constitution. "Voting was held at the airport and there had been some questions raised about security, but I take it everything went smoothly," he said, stressing that had been no attempted attacks on the venue whatsoever.

He went on to say that the Mission also thanked the outgoing President and his government for the achievements they registered over the past four years "and for the very good working relationship that we enjoyed as the United Nations with President Hassan Sheikh and his team."

Looking ahead, Mr. Contreras said that what is next for Somalia first of all

is for the new Federal President to name a prime minister. The prime minister then in turn will appoint a cabinet.

“And then they will get down to business. The new President [...] faces a daunting list of challenges in the coming months and years. There is of course the ongoing drought crisis in many parts of the country where over six million people are facing varying degrees of food insecurity,” he explained.

Furthermore, Mr. Contreras continued, there is a presumption of the constitutional review process that needs to take place, and that process needs to be completed this year. “Also, the new Federal President will need to promote reconciliation among various communities across Somalia who have disputes over resources, land and other matters.”

In all this, the international community, led by the UN, stands ready to work closely with the new Government and help it promote the State-building process and consolidate the peace and promote the development of the country, he stated.

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## [Colombia: UN chief Guterres welcomes start of peace talks with ELN](#)



The city of Quito, Ecuador, which was declared a World Heritage Site by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the late 1970s. Photo: © UNESCO/Francesco Bandarin

8 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed yesterday’s launch of formal peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Ecuador’s capital, Quito, his spokesperson said today in a statement.

In the talks with the second-largest opposition group, the Government seeks an agreement similar to the one reached last year with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), to end a five decade-long conflict.

“Resolving this conflict is essential to achieving a comprehensive peace in Colombia, to saving lives and to advancing sustainable development across the whole country,” said the statement.

“The Secretary-General takes note of the commitment of the parties to listen to the voices of the communities affected by the conflict,” it stated, adding that the UN chief commended Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Norway and Venezuela for their commitment as guarantors, as well as the other accompanying and supporting countries.

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## Côte d'Ivoire could be 'success story' if peacekeeping gains fully backed, Security Council told

8 February 2017 – Côte d'Ivoire is on the path to durable stability, the United Nations envoy for the country today told the Security Council, but warned that authorities need to invest more in national reconciliation and transitional justice, and to improve the economic, social and cultural rights of Ivoirians.

"With a new Constitution and an inclusive legislature, Côte d'Ivoire is presented with the opportunity and momentum to fully consolidate the country's achievements towards long-term stability," Aïchatou Mindaoudou, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire said presenting the latest Secretary-General's report on developments in the country.

She noted that the people of Côte d'Ivoire must more fully enjoy "the dividends of the thriving economy that has remarkably recovered since the post-election crisis of 2010/2011."

The country is on track to becoming Africa's fastest-growing economy, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This is a remarkable change from 2010, when the Security Council, at the request of the Government, agreed to keep the UN peacekeeping mission that Ms. Mindaoudou heads, known by the French acronym ONUCI, on the ground to protect civilians, protect good offices and support the Ivorian Government in disarmament, among other responsibilities.

All peacekeepers are now due to leave the country in four months, as agreed by the Council and the Government in resolution 2284 (2016), with the majority of the Mission's uniformed personnel to depart by 15 February.



Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire Aïchatou Mindaoudou addresses the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Addressing the Security Council for one of the last times before the Mission winds down in April, said the work of the UN in Côte d'Ivoire could be "a real success story" if the authorities finance activities to consolidate the peacekeeping gains ONUCI made over the past 14 years.

"In all of these, our combined support – the Security Council, Member States, international and regional partners, and the UN system in Côte d'Ivoire –

remains essential to ensure that Côte d'Ivoire is definitely heading towards sustainable peace and stability," she stressed.

She also highlighted the need to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the post-2010 election crisis, particularly those related to sexual and gender-based crimes.

"The timely and expeditious adjudication of such cases is critical to ensuring the safety and security of the most vulnerable of societies – women and children," said Ms. Mindaoudou.

The Special Representative also called for greater efforts to enhance the standard of living of soldiers and to organize a professional army. She said it was "essential" that authorities prioritize the institutional reforms of the military, gendarmerie and police, as well as reinstate ex-combatants.

The comments come as ONUCI peacekeepers reported that they were monitoring sporadic arms fire by disgruntled soldiers of the Ivorian Special Forces who say they were not paid the bonuses that the Government promised them.

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## [UN commemorates 20 years of protecting children in armed conflicts](#)

8 February 2017 – Top officials from the United Nations and the international community today applauded two decades of efforts to protect children from the scourge of war by marking the 20th anniversary of General Assembly resolution 51/77 (1997) on promotion and protection of the rights of children.

In an informal meeting of the 193-member Assembly in New York, the UN body's President, Peter Thomson, called the resolution "a landmark development in our global efforts to improve the protection of children in conflict situations."

"Among the incomprehensible horrors that take place in the chaos of warzones, unconscionable crimes, violations, exploitation and abuse are perpetrated against the most vulnerable members of our societies – namely our children," Mr. Thomson said.

He called for a concerted effort to protect children in armed conflict as part of the international community's commitments to peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

Mr. Thomson spoke alongside Leila Zerrougui, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. As an outcome of the historic resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to name a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. In addition to Ms. Zerrougui,

today's event recognized past mandate-holders – Graça Machel, Olara Otunnu and Radhika Coomaraswamy.

It was Ms. Machel's landmark report back in 1996 that led to the creation of the mandate and the appointment of a Special Representative.



A view of the Trusteeship Council Chamber during the General Assembly informal meeting to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

She urged Member States to consider children as “zones of peace” and said that by focusing on them, “politicians, Governments, the military and non-State entities will begin to recognize how much they destroy through armed conflict, and therefore, how little they gain.”

The best way to protect children from armed conflict is to prevent armed conflict in the first place, Ms. Machel wrote. That idea was echoed in the message of Secretary-General António Guterres, delivered by his Chef de Cabinet, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti.

The Secretary-General identified good quality education and productive, decent work for young people as prerequisites for both peace and development.

When prevention fails, however, he called on the Special Representative's Office to continue monitoring and reporting violations to promote informed and timely action.

“We also need to continue to and strengthen engagement with local and national authorities, regional partners, and civil society to prevent and protect children from grave violations,” Mr. Guterres said.

#### **Grave violations against children**

- Recruitment and use of children
- Killing and maiming
- Rape and sexual violence in conflict
- Attacks on schools and hospitals
- Abduction of children
- Denial of humanitarian access

The Office of the Special Representative has over the years worked with other UN agencies, notably the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to protect children in conflict areas.

Among the joint projects is the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which aims to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers by Government armies. Since 2000, the work of the Office and partners has led to the release of more than 115,000 child soldiers.

“Children don’t belong on the battlefield, they belong in school where they can build a future,” said UNICEF Executive Director Tony Lake, who participated in the event.

Assistant-Secretary-General Miroslav Jenca, who represented the UN Department of Political Affairs, a key partner of Ms. Zerrougui’s Office, reiterated the importance of integration to protect children.

For example, he highlighted the utility of a checklist for drafting children and armed conflict provisions developed with UN and partners, as a useful tool for mediators.