



## In the headlines:

- Heading to Uganda for 'solidarity summit,' UN chief marks World Refugee Day with calls for action
- Aid workers race to contain Yemen cholera outbreak, UN agencies report
- 'Now is not the time to give up' on two-state solution, UN Middle East envoy tells Security Council
- Record high temperatures grip much of the globe, more hot weather to come – UN agency
- On World Refugee Day, UN urges support, solidarity for record number of displaced people
- UN chief appoints new envoys on youth; accessibility; and for Haiti
- UN rights chief calls for investigation into 'landscape of horror' in DR Congo's Kasai provinces
- Bees, hens and greenhouses help restore livelihoods in Iraq – UN agriculture agency
- Africa's largest refugee crisis now a 'children's crisis' – UNICEF
- Mali: UN condemns terrorist attack at hotel on the outskirts of Bamako
- With armed groups spreading in Central African Republic, UN expert urges action
- Addressing economic inequalities key to countering terrorism without fueling racism – UN expert

## Heading to Uganda for 'solidarity summit,' UN chief marks World Refugee Day with calls for action

**20 June** – Refugee protection is not a matter of solidarity or generosity, but an obligation under international law, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today said, detailing five strong appeals to the international community for respecting refugees' rights.

“We are still witnessing many remarkable examples of solidarity in today's world. But at the same time, we are seeing more and more borders being closed, we are seeing more and more refugees being rejected and, namely in countries of the developed world,” Mr. Guterres said in his first press conference in New York since becoming Secretary-General.

Among his calls on Member States, Mr. Guterres urged Governments to manage their borders but to increase their resettlement quotas and protect asylum seekers and people who deserve protection; to seek political solutions to world's conflicts which are spurring the record 65.6 million refugees; and to fund humanitarian aid work.

In line with World Refugee Day, marked annually on 20 June, Mr. Guterres, who was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for a decade prior, announced that he would be leaving later today for Uganda, which this week hosts a UN-



Secretary-General António Guterres (right) addresses journalists at a press conference at UN Headquarters. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

backed summit to support the more than 1.3 million refugees within its borders for the next four years.

Some 950,000 refugees from South Sudan have crossed into Uganda since the start of the conflict in the world's newest country in December 2013. The figure is three times higher than the number of refugees who crossed the Mediterranean Sea into Europe last year, Mr. Guterres said, adding that Uganda not only provides protection but land for the refugees.

In contrast, the UN chief had sharp words for developed countries not doing enough to provide support for refugees or take them in despite heart breaking pleas for food, water and other basics.

Some 80 per cent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries with “a dramatic impact” on their economy, society and security, he noted.

“This is particularly worrying, especially when associated to forms of political populism, xenophobia, racism, in which refugees become a target,” Mr. Guterres said, “many times being accused of being part of the terror threat when refugees are not terrorists – they are the first victims of terror, they are fleeing terror; that is why they are refugees.”

Speaking alongside Ninette Kelley, the Director of the NY Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Guterres lashed out at the “irrational debate” surrounding migration, calling it a “necessary element of establishing different forms of equilibrium in the global society and the global economy.”

Stressing that Governments need to apply their own migration policies in their countries, he urged world leaders to respect human rights and to create opportunities within their borders so that people migrate “out of choice and not out of necessity.”

Addressing the difference between refugees and migrants, Mr. Guterres said that the UN General Assembly will next year hold two key debates with the aim of agreeing on two compacts – one on refugees and one on migration.

“We are talking about two different situations: refugees crossing borders, fleeing conflict or prosecution, [and] economic migrants who aspire legitimately to have a better life and move from one country to another, aiming at a better future for them and their children,” the Secretary-General said.

He added that migration is necessary: “If something is necessary, it's better to control it and to do it regularly than to let smugglers and traffickers be in charge of these movements.”

## Aid workers race to contain Yemen cholera outbreak, UN agencies report



At the Al Sab'een Hospital in Sana'a, Yemen, a doctor checks on a girl suffering from cholera. UNICEF/Fuad

**20 June** – A “race” is under way to contain the cholera epidemic in Yemen where 20 out of 22 governorates are affected, United Nations agencies said today.

The disease is endemic in Yemen and is characterized by severe watery diarrhoea and fever.

Nearly 1,200 people have died in the latest outbreak and there are more than 172,000 suspected cases in the crisis-torn country, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Together with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO says it is attempting to stop cholera being “exported” from the worst-affected areas.

In Raymah in western Yemen, mortality rates are almost twice the national average.

“We see that the numbers are going up, it's really trying to race against the spread and try to get treatment and water and sanitation measures to every corner, especially to those corners that are basically exporting the bacteria to other places” Tarik Jasarevic a spokesperson for WHO told reporters at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva.

The more than two-year conflict in the country has devastated the country's health facilities; less than half are fully functional and many public health professionals have not been paid in months.

And although cholera can be treated quickly if caught early, WHO said in a statement that getting help in a middle of a conflict “is not so easy.”

The agency added that its health, water, sanitation and hygiene partners need \$66.7 million to scale up the cholera response.

To date, WHO has helped to set up 144 diarrhoea treatment centres and 206 oral rehydration points, along with more than 1,900 beds for cholera patients in 20 governorates.

## 'Now is not the time to give up' on two-state solution, UN Middle East envoy tells Security Council

**20 June** – Achieving a negotiated two-state outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that is based on Israeli security needs and the Palestinian right to sovereignty and statehood, the United Nations envoy on Middle East peace told the Security Council today.

“Now is not the time to give up on this goal. Now is the time to create the conditions for a return to negotiations to resolve all final status issues on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, mutual agreements and international law,” Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Council via videoconference from Jerusalem.

Noting that today's meeting coincided with the 50-year anniversary of the Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan, Mr. Mladenov said he would devote the bulk of his briefing to the implementation of Council resolution 2334 (2016), which called on Israel to “cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.”

Yet, despite the resolution's call, there has been “substantial” increase, “with plans for nearly 4,000 housing units moving forward and 2,000 tenders issued.”

“The policy of continued illegal settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory contravenes resolution 2334. The large number of settlement-related activities documented during this period undermines the chances for the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution,” he stressed.

Continuing terror attacks, violence and incitement remain a very serious concern. While, the security situation had remained free of rocket fire and airstrikes, Mr. Mladenov updated the Council with a list of killings on both sides.

Calling the problem of violence “a hallmark of the conflict,” he reminded the Council that “leaders have a responsibility to implement measures demonstrating their commitment to combatting violence and any acts of provocation and inflammatory rhetoric.”

The Special Coordinator reiterated the call by the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East peace process for both parties to



Wide view of the Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Nickolay Mladenov (shown on screen), UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, briefs the Council via video conference. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

take steps “to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-state solution.”

le Mr. Mladenov called Israel-approved measures to advance the Palestinian economy “positive steps forward,” he noted that “it remains to be seen whether this will significantly increase Palestinian civil authority, in line with Quartet recommendations and prior commitments between the parties.”

### *As electricity supplies wane, Gaza Strip remains a 'tinderbox'*

On another pressing issue, the UN envoy stressed the urgency of addressing the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza, calling it a “tinderbox,” which “if and when it explodes,” will have “devastating consequences for the population and derail all efforts at advancing peace.”

“Two million Palestinians in Gaza can no longer be held hostage by divisions,” underscored the UN envoy. “Perpetuating this situation breeds radicalism and extremism,” he said, adding: “We have a collective responsibility to prevent this. We have a duty to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.”

While acknowledging the significant budget constraints the Palestinian Authority and the need to support the Government in addressing them, he noted that all decisions must be taken with due consideration of their humanitarian impact, calling “on Palestinian leaders to urgently reach the necessary compromises that will return Gaza to the control of the legitimate authorities.”

“The crisis is leading toward another conflict. A conflict that no one wants. I urge all parties to act before it is too late,” he emphasized.

## **Record high temperatures grip much of the globe, more hot weather to come – UN agency**



The sun sets behind a series of overhead power lines. Photo: World Bank/ Curt Carnemark

**20 June** – Extremely high May and June temperatures have broken records in parts of Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the United States, the United Nations weather agency reported today, warning of more heatwaves to come.

The heatwaves have arrived unusually early, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said, noting at the same time that average global surface temperatures over land and sea are the second highest on record for the first five months of 2017, according to analyses by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

### ***Raging wildfires in Portugal***

In Portugal, extremely high temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius contributed to the severity of the devastating, fast-moving weekend wildfires that ripped through the forested Pedrógão Grande central region of the country, some 150 kilometres (95 miles) northeast of Lisbon, leaving dozens dead and more injured.

WMO reported that Portugal is not the only European country experiencing the effects of the extreme weather, as neighbouring Spain – which had its warmest spring in over 50 years – and France, have seen record-breaking temperatures. France is expected to continue see afternoon temperatures more than 10 degrees above the average for this time of year.

### ***Plane traffic halted in southwestern US***

On the other side of the Atlantic, the US is also experiencing record or near-record heat. In parts of the desert southwest and

into California, temperatures have hovered near a blistering near 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 degrees Celsius). Media reports suggested today that some plane traffic was halted in and out of Phoenix Sky Harbour International Airport in Arizona because it was too hot to fly.

The flight cancellations came amidst of one of the hottest days in the past 30 years of record keeping in the US state.

Death Valley National Park in California issued warnings to visitors to expect high temperatures ranging from 100 to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit (38 to over 49 degrees Celsius), WMO added.

WMO will set up an international committee of experts to verify the temperature and assess whether it equals a reported 54 degrees Celsius recorded in Kuwait last July, what was then the highest temperature for Asia, as well as for the entire Eastern hemisphere.

## On World Refugee Day, UN urges support, solidarity for record number of displaced people



After three days on the road, South Sudanese refugees arrive at the newly constructed Gure Shembola Camp in Ethiopia. Photo: UNHCR/Diana Diaz

**20 June** – With a record 65.6 million people last year forcibly uprooted from their homes by violence and persecution, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called on the international community to provide support and solidarity.

“We reflect on the courage of those who fled and the compassion of those who welcome them,” the Secretary-General said in his video message for World Refugee Day, marked annually on 20 June.

He noted that more people than ever in our lifetimes are fleeing war, disasters and persecution.

“Hardship, separation, death,” Mr. Guterres said, recalling nightmare stories heard from refugees and displaced persons, whose number rose 300,000 since the end of 2015.

Conflicts have displaced 12 million Syrians, 7.7 million Colombians, 4.7 million Afghans and 4.2 million Iraqis, according to a report released yesterday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Despite the hardships of fleeing with nothing, “they never lose their dreams for their children or their desire to better our world,” Mr. Guterres said. “They ask for little – only our support in their time of greatest need and our solidarity.”

The UN chief said it is “so inspiring to see countries with the least doing the most for refugees.”

According to the report, about 84 per cent of the people were in low- or middle-income countries as of end 2016. Of that figure, one in every three people, roughly 4.9 million people, were hosted by the least developed countries.

To mark the Day, Mr. Guterr will hold a press conference in New York later today.

### *When we stand #WithRefugees, we also stand for respect and diversity for all*

In his remarks, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said the Day is also a moment to recognize those communities and people around the world who receive refugees and the internally displaced in their midst, offering them a safe place, and welcoming them in their societies.

In a world in which uncertainty often abounds; economic instability, political upheaval and violence close to home “can make us want to shut our eyes or close our doors. But fear and exclusion will not lead us to a better place – they can only

lead to barriers, alienation and despair,” he stressed.

“It's time to change this trajectory. And for the better,” he stated, noting that in countless communities, including in the poorest countries that host the vast majority of the world's refugees, business people, faith communities, teachers, journalists and many more are joining together to provide refuge to the displaced and foster their inclusion in their societies.

“Inclusion requires opening our minds, hearts and communities to refugees. It requires a whole of society approach,” Mr. Grandi underscored.

World Refugee Day is a moment to ask what each of us can do to overcome indifference or fear and embrace the idea of inclusion, “to welcome refugees to our own communities, and to counter narratives that would seek to exclude and marginalize refugees and other uprooted people,” he emphasized.

## UN chief appoints new envoys on youth; accessibility; and for Haiti



Josette Sheeran, former Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), briefs journalists at UN Headquarters in January 2010. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

**20 June** – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of senior officials as his envoys, respectively, for promoting universal accessibility, on the rights of young people, and to guide the implementation of the Organization's new approach to tackle cholera in Haiti.

The senior appointments include Josette Sheeran of the United States, who shall serve as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Haiti and will guide full implementation of the Organization's new approach to reduce the impact of cholera in the country and support national efforts on sustainable development.

term issues of water, sanitation and health systems.

The new UN approach on cholera involves two tracks: the first to intensify efforts to reduce and ultimately end the transmission of the disease, improve access to care and treatment, and address the longer-

Track 2 involves developing a package of material assistance and support for those Haitians most directly affected by cholera.

Ms. Sheeran, currently the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Asia Society, previously served as the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) from 2007 to 2012, where she also led the agency's response in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck the island nation in 2010.

She has also held senior positions at the World Economic Forum as well as in the US Government, including the Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs and Deputy US Trade Representative.

Similarly, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes of Chile has been appointed the UN chief's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, a role in which she will promote the rights of persons with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on accessibility for all.

Ms. Cisternas most recently served as the President of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She is also the recipient of the National Prize of Human Rights (2014) and Director of the Legal Programme on Disability, Faculty of Law, Diego Portales University.

She previously served as an expert on the Ad-hoc Committee that developed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), for which she was also the Rapporteur for individual complaints. She has also authored various

publications.

Also today, the UN chief appointed 27-year-old Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka – who played a key role in transforming the youth development sector at the national level – as his **Envoy on Youth**.

Ms. Wickramanayake is also credited with having established the 'Hashtag Generation,' a large civic and political engagement movement of young people. She has also represented and motivated global youth development at the international level since the age of 21, including at the UN, such as in the declaration of World Youth Skills Day.

Presently working as an officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, Ms. Wickramanayake previously served as Secretary to the Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka (2016-2017) as well as a Senator at the Sri Lankan Youth Parliament (2013-2015).

In the statements, Mr. Guterres expressed that he was grateful to the outgoing senior leaders.

## UN rights chief calls for investigation into 'landscape of horror' in DR Congo's Kasai provinces



An aerial view of the town of Kananga in DRC's Kasai-Central province outside which the remains of the two experts were found. (File) Photo: MONUSCO/Myriam Asmani

**20 June** – Detailing “harrowing reports” of killings, mutilation and entire villages destroyed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's restive Kasai provinces, the top United Nations human rights official today called on the UN Human Rights Council to establish an independent international investigation into the widespread rights violations and abuses there.

“The humanitarian and human rights situation has deteriorated dramatically [over the last three months] and various actors are fuelling ethnic hatred, resulting in extremely grave, widespread and apparently planned attacks against the civilian population in the Kasais,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein told the Council – the highest UN intergovernmental forum on human rights issues.

Most concerning, the High Commissioner said, was the arming of a militia – the Bana Mura – allegedly to support authorities in fighting the Kamuina Nsapu, and which has carried out horrific attacks against civilians from the Luba and Lulua ethnic groups.

“Refugees from multiple villages [...] indicated that the Bana Mura have in the past two months shot dead, hacked or burned to death, and mutilated, hundreds of villagers, as well as destroying entire villages,” said Mr. Zeid.

He added that teams deployed by his Office (OHCHR) witnessed children as young as two, whose limbs had been chopped off, and babies with machete wounds and severe wounds.

“One two-month-old baby seen by my team had been hit by two bullets four hours after birth; the mother was also wounded. At least two pregnant women were sliced open and their fetuses mutilated.”

### *Allegations of widespread human rights violations and abuses*

Mr. Zeid also spoke of allegations of rights violations by members of the security forces, including summary executions and rape during operations against villages allegedly controlled by the Kamuina Nsapu militia. He also recounted reports of human rights abuses by the militia, including targeted killings of the armed forces, police, public officials and civilians perceived to cooperate with them, as well as individuals whom they accused of practicing “sorcery.”

Violence flared up in the DRC's Kasai regions in August 2016, when a customary chief was killed by Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), as DRC's armed forces are known. The Kamuina Nsapu militia (named after the chief) then set about avenging the killing, committing widespread atrocities as well as recruiting children into its ranks.

The gravity of the situation was further underscored by the discovery (in April, this year) of forty-two mass graves by OHCHR and the UN mission in the country (known by its French acronym, MONUSCO).

More than 1.3 million people have since been displaced within the country as well as thousands forced to flee across its borders.

In his remarks, Mr. Zeid recalled the killing of two UN experts who were found dead after being abducted while investigating the situation in the country. "Their killings must also be fully investigated, and I remain in close touch with their families," he stressed.

*'By bringing justice to the Kasais, we may be able to prevent further crimes elsewhere in the DRC'*

Also in his remarks, Mr. Zeid noted that while there has been some progress in ensuring accountability in other parts of the DRC, the severity of the allegations in the Kasais and lack of action on part of the Government to investigate and bring perpetrators to justice has necessitated the need to establish an independent investigation mechanism that can establish the facts and determine individual responsibilities.

"This will also send a strong signal about the need to uphold human rights in the rest of the country, where lack of progress in implementing the 31 December Agreement, and continued restrictions on political rights and freedoms, are generating frustration and deepening grievances," said the High Commissioner, noting that he would also remain in touch with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"By bringing justice to the Kasais we may be able to prevent further crimes elsewhere in the DRC," he added.

## Bees, hens and greenhouses help restore livelihoods in Iraq – UN agriculture agency



Supporting Iraqi families with hens for egg production and meat.  
Photo: FAO/Karina Coates

**20 June** – Thousands of vulnerable Iraqi and Syrian refugee families affected by conflict in northern Iraq aim to profit from new livelihood ventures of the United Nations agriculture agency.

Funded by Germany, a project supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will train Syrian refugees in the Erbil and Dohuk governorates in greenhouse vegetable cultivation, and assist Iraqi families with hens to produce eggs and meat along with training and tools for bee-keeping and food processing.

"Families are struggling, some resorting to reducing their meal sizes or the number of meals each day, selling productive assets, or buying food on credit," said Fadel El-Zubi, FAO Representative in Iraq.

"Through restoring and providing alternative livelihoods, this project will support Government efforts to reduce long-term dependence on

emergency food assistance and enable people to recover as quickly as possible."

Years of conflict in Iraq has left 3.2 million people food insecure, including those who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. As more than three million remain displaced, stretched resources of host communities are increasingly under pressure.

Another 240,000 Syrian refugees are living in Iraq, 97 per cent of whom are staying in communities or camps in northern Iraq.

During the first week of June, 2,400 people from 150 villages – either displaced by conflict or residents of areas where displaced people or refugees were living – received 9,600 hens, poultry feeding and drinking equipment, and 80 tons of feed.

Over the course of a year, the hens will produce approximately 1.38 million eggs and 1,200 kilograms of meat. Each family received 23 hens, which will yield some 3,450 eggs and 30 kilograms of meat – enough to provide both food and income.

Another 2,400 people will receive training, tools and equipment for bee-keeping for honey production, and dairy and fruit processing, to produce a variety of dairy products, fruit jams and dried fruit for sale.

Some 3,000 Syrian refugees in Qushtapa camp in Erbil governorate and Domiz 1 camp in Dohuk governorate will receive training in greenhouse vegetable production. Due to high market demand, 10 greenhouses at each camp will initially focus on growing tomatoes and cucumbers. Income from vegetable sales will then enable families to buy extra food and other necessities. Camp residents and those from surrounding communities will be able to purchase greenhouse produce during two vegetable seasons each year.

## Africa's largest refugee crisis now a 'children's crisis' – UNICEF



South Sudanese refugees wait at a reception centre in Uganda for further processing before relocation to a settlement. More than one million children have been forced from their homes since violence erupted in South Sudan in December 2013. Photo: UNICEF/Oatway

**20 June** – Raising alarm over the plight of refugees, in particular the situation of women and children, arriving in Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya having fled violence and instability in South Sudan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called on governments to do more to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected.

Since violence erupted in South Sudan in December 2013, more than 1.8 million people, including more than one million children have arrived in neighbouring countries.

Many of them have fled “horrific violence,” according to the UN agency's Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Leila Pakkala.

“Day after day, week after week, they are being received by countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya,” she added.

In just one year the refugee population in Uganda has more than doubled from 500,000 to more over 1.25 million, making the country host to the fastest growing refugee emergency in the world.

According to estimates, nearly 86 per cent of all refugees in the country are women and children and Uganda is now the third largest refugee-hosting country in the world, after Turkey and Pakistan.

“Uganda has a progressive and generous open door policy to refugees [...] providing better prospects for refugee children than in many contexts globally,” said Ms. Pakkala, expressing hope that such a model is supported widely across countries.

However, the sheer scale of the crisis has put both the Government as well as host-communities under tremendous stress. UN agencies and humanitarian partners too are in urgent need of resources.

In order sustain relief programmes, the Government of Uganda and UN are calling for \$8 billion in funding for both emergency response and resilience interventions for the country's refugees and refugee-hosting population over the next four years.

Within this appeal, UNICEF operations require nearly \$50 million in 2017 as well as \$30 million each year from 2018-2020 to provide critical health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, early childhood development, adolescent development, and child protection interventions, for both refugee and host community children.

Resources are also needed in Ethiopia and Kenya – together hosting about 800,000 South Sudanese refugees.

UNICEF requires \$13.6 million for its programmes to respond to the new influx of refugees in Ethiopia's Gambella Region, and \$7.3 million for its response in Kenya.

In addition to funds, the UN agency has also reiterated its call on governments to adopt its six-point agenda for action to protect refugee and migrant children and ensure their well-being, which was launched ahead of the G7 Summit in Italy in late May.

At the same time, UNICEF also called for efforts ensure that families are kept together and uprooted children stay in school and stay healthy but above all causes that force children to flee in the first place are addressed.

## Mali: UN condemns terrorist attack at hotel on the outskirts of Bamako

**20 June** – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has condemned the terrorist attack carried out at a hotel on the outskirts of Bamako on 18 June and offered his full support to the Government of Mali to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In a statement issued today by his Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, the UN chief expressed his condolences to the bereaved and the families of the victims, as well as to the people and Government of Mali. He also wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

Mr. Guterres also commended the rapid response by the Malian defence and security forces and the French forces, which the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) supported.



Photo: MINUSMA

According to statement, the Secretary-General has offered his full support to the Government in its efforts to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

“This act strengthens the United Nations' determination to support the people of Mali, the Government and the signatory armed groups in their efforts to uphold the peace agreement, to counter terrorism and violent extremism and their quest for lasting peace and stability,” the statement concluded.

News reports suggest that at least five people were killed in the attack against *Le Campement Kangaba*, a popular resort east of the Malian capital Bamako.

Yesterday, MINUSMA also strongly condemned the revolting terrorist attack and expressed its deepest condolences to the Governments and families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded.

The Mission reported that all United Nations personnel are safe, though four MINUSMA personnel were slightly injured and evacuated on the evening of the attack.

“MINUSMA congratulates the Malian security forces for their diligent efforts and underlines the importance of full cooperation with the relevant Malian authorities to ensure that those responsible for this heinous crime are identified and brought to justice,” said the mission.

## With armed groups spreading in Central African Republic, UN expert urges action

**20 June** – The situation in the Central African Republic is “unsustainable,” an independent United Nations expert today warned, urging the Government to stop the spread of armed groups and increasing human rights violations.

“This situation is unsustainable and the country must regain the integrity and sovereignty of its territory without further delay, to ensure security and the rule of law,” said the independent expert on human rights in the country, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum.

Armed groups are spreading at a “worrying” rate in central and southern areas, particularly in the regions of Ouaka, Mbomou and Basse-Kotto, the expert added.

She noted that the violence and a lack of a Government response had sparked outrage in the population.

“The State has an obligation to protect the population,” said Ms. Keita Bocoum. “The international community, especially the UN stabilization force MINUSCA, must work alongside the State to implement this responsibility effectively.”

Recent human rights abuses in the country include killings rapes and targeting of UN peacekeepers, according to a recent mapping report of the violations.

The independent UN expert called for human rights violations to be investigated “without further delay” and invited the Minister of Justice to strengthen the resources of national courts.

The comments come one day after a reported deal between the Government and 13 of the 14 armed groups active in the country that has been ravaged by three years of conflict.

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. According to the UN, more than half the population is in dire need of assistance. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

Fresh violence surfaced earlier this year. As of May 2017, there were more than 500,000 internally displaced persons nationwide, a figure that had not been reached since August 2014.

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.



A UN peacekeeper on patrol in Bria, Central African Republic. (file) UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis

## Addressing economic inequalities key to countering terrorism without fueling racism – UN expert



Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism Mutuma Ruteere. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**20 June** – A spate of recent terrorist attacks has driven an increase in security measures and exacerbated hate speech, a United Nations human rights expert warned today, calling for States to do more to meet the challenge of countering terrorism without fuelling racism and xenophobia.

“After recent terrorist attacks, I have witnessed the proliferation of anti-Muslim rhetoric and the rise of right-wing extremist parties,” Mutuma Ruteere, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism told the Geneva-based Human Rights Council.

Introducing his latest report, he said: “This has led to an atmosphere of fear towards Muslims in countries where they are seen as a separate ethnic group or viewed as foreign.”

“Meanwhile,” the UN expert continued, “counter-terrorism policies have disproportionately affected people from Middle Eastern countries, considerably restricting their freedom of movement. Several countries have amended legislation to make it easier to strip citizens of their nationalities if they are suspected of terrorist-related activities.”

Mr. Ruteere called addressing economic inequalities “key” to meeting the challenge of countering terrorism without fuelling racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

“With the onset of economic crises worldwide, populist parties have gained support by capitalizing on constituents' concerns over the financial burdens of migration and their belief that migrants engage in crime, take jobs away from nationals, pose a threat to national identity or have religious practices that are incompatible with modern societies,” he explained.

He also noted the particular challenges being posed to human rights and democracy by neo-Nazis, skinhead groups and other extremist movements.

“Consistent vigilance against racist and xenophobic crimes is required,” underscored Mr. Ruteere. “States must do more to combat the rise in extremist groups, and highlight good practices developed by each other and by other stakeholders.”

“Extremists continue to blame vulnerable groups for society's problems and incite intolerance and violence against them. States and other relevant groups must ensure better protection for victims and prevent future crimes,” he stressed.

Mr. Ruteere's report also looked at racism in sport, the Internet and social media, the role of education in the prevention of racism, and the use of racial profiling in law enforcement.

While pointing out that new technologies, including the Internet, are key tools in preventing racism and discrimination, he noted: “The intersection of poverty and racism means that excluded minority groups might have less access to the internet. States should, therefore, adopt measures to make the Internet widely available, increasing opportunities for meaningful interaction and participation.”

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