



## **In the headlines:**

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## **Senior UN officials urge concrete action to end Yemen conflict, ease 'appalling' humanitarian situation**



War-torn Yemen is facing the world's worst cholera outbreak, the UN recently said. Photo: WHO (file)

**12 July** – As the war in Yemen grinds on, the increasing battles of attrition are extracting a terrible toll on the country's women, men and children, senior United Nations officials told the Security Council, calling for concrete action to end the fighting.

"The country is not suffering from a single emergency but a number of complex emergencies," said Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, noting that more than 20 million across the country are affected, including almost seven million at the risk of famine.

Of most concern is the rapid spread of cholera across the country, with at least 300,000 suspected cases and over 1,700 deaths. Tackling the disease has become even more complicated with the Yemen's health system tethering on the verge of collapse.

"Tens of thousands of healthcare workers have not been paid for many months, more than half of the country's health facilities have closed and supplies of medicine and medical equipment remain severely limited," added Mr. Cheikh Ahmed.

In his remarks, the Special Envoy also commended the efforts of Yemeni civil society for peace in spite of many security challenges there and called on the political leadership to recognize that the continuation of the conflict would lead only to more human and physical loss.

"Yemen's political leaders must listen and heed the calls of the Yemeni people demanding peace. History will not judge kindly those who have used the war to increase their influence or profit from the public finances, and Yemenis' patience will not last," he underscored.

Also at today's Security Council [briefing](#), the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, [noted the work done by UN and humanitarian agencies](#) but warned that they "cannot replace State functions."

Underscoring the need to ensure payments to the country's public servants and ensuring operations of its health services, Mr. O'Brien called for predictable and stable access for both humanitarian and commercial imports through Yemen's land and port routes.

In particular, he stressed the need to ensure that Yemeni people and critical infrastructure are protected.

"For as long as military actions continue, all parties must comply with their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law, and all States must exert their influence to ensure the parties do so. Today, they are not doing so. This must change," he said.

"As I have said before, this is a man-made crisis, and the sheer scale of humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people is a direct result of the conflict and serious violations of international law. Humanity simply cannot continue to lose out to politics," he underlined.

Also briefing the 15-member Security Council today, via video conference, José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) noted that the conflict in Yemen had disrupted agricultural livelihoods, exasperating food insecurity.

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification conducted in March this year, registered a 20 percent increase in the number of people estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 and above). Seven million are in IPC Phase 4 meaning they are a step away from being classified to be in Famine (IPC Phase 5).

Furthermore, in addition to dwindling agricultural produce, meat and livestock products have also sharply declined on the back of disease surveillance and vaccination programmes have come to a halt pushing the risk of disease outbreaks higher, noted the UN agriculture agency.

## New sites inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list



Autumn light over Rosthwaite. Rosthwaite is part of the English Lake District located in North West England. Photo: UNESCO/ Nick Bodle

**12 July** – The World Heritage Committee wrapped its 41st session today having inscribed 21 new sites on the United Nations cultural wing's World Heritage List – locations ranging from the site of iconic ancient ruins in south-western Turkey to a district of stunning mountains and mirror lakes in England.

Meeting in Krakow, Poland, from 2 to 12 July, the Committee completed the addition of 18 cultural and three natural significant sites to the List. The planet is now home to 1,073 such sites, most of them in the European region.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regards inscribed sites as having great significance to the collective interest of humanity. The Committee, which monitors implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, decides about inscriptions on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, monitors the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties, defines the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties.

The Committee approved new sites in all the world's regions.

### Europe

Various new European sites have been inscribed, including: the archaeological site of Aphrodisias (Turkey); the English Lake District (United Kingdom); Caves and ice age art in the Swabian Jura (Germany); Kujataa Greenland, a sub-arctic farming landscape (Denmark); Taputapuātea, the centre of the "Polynesian Triangle" (France); Tarnowskie Góry, lead-silver-zinc mine and its Underground Water Management System (Poland); Venetian Works of Defense (Croatia, Italy),

Montenegro); Landscapes of Dauria (Mongolia); and Assumption Cathedral and Monastery of the town-island of Sviyazhsk (Russia).

### ***Africa***

In Africa an additional three sites have been listed: Asmara, a modernist city of Africa (Eritrea) Mbanza Kongo, political and spiritual capital of the Kingdom of Kongo (Angola) and Khomani Cultural Landscape (South Africa).

### ***Americas***

In the Americas Valongo Wharf (Brazil) has been listed as an archaeological site while also Los Alerces National Park (Argentina) has been inscribed.

### ***Asia***

In the Asian region have been inscribed: Qinghai Hoh Xil, world's highest and largest plateau and Kulangsu, a historic international settlement (China), historic city of Ahmedabad (India), sacred island of Okinoshima and associated sites in the Munakata Region (Japan), Temple Zone of Sambor Prei Kuk, archaeological site of ancient Ishanapura (Cambodia) and the historic city of Yazd (Iran).

### ***Middle East***

Additionally, in the Middle East Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town (Occupied Palestinian Territories) have been listed.

### ***List of World Heritage in Danger***

In the same session, the Committee inscribed the Historic Centre of Vienna on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to high-rise projects in the middle of the Austrian capital. The UNESCO Committee regrets that the Vienna Ice-Skating Club—Intercontinental Hotel project fails to comply fully with previous Committee decisions, notably concerning the height of new constructions and argues the project will impact adversely the outstanding universal value of the site.

The Committee stressed that Vienna developed from early Celtic and Roman settlements into a Medieval and Baroque city to become the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Vienna played an essential role as a leading European music centre, from the great age of Viennese Classicism through the early part of the 20th century while the historic centre of the Austrian capital is rich in architectural ensembles, including Baroque castles and gardens, as well as the late-19th century Ringstrasse.

## **UN in South Sudan concerned about civilians fleeing Government, rebel fighting in Upper Nile**



Women and children queue at a registration site in Pagak, Upper Nile, South Sudan. (file) Photo: UNICEF/Pires

**12 July** – Thousands of South Sudanese civilians are fleeing to neighbouring Ethiopia as Government troops advance on a rebel stronghold in the Upper Nile region, a senior United Nations official today said, expressing grave concern about what is already the world's fastest growing refugee crisis.

Reports from the UN International Organization on Migration (IOM) “suggest that Government forces are now approaching the town of Maiwut, 25 kilometres north-west of Pagak. I’m gravely concerned by this ongoing situation,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in South Sudan, David Shearer, told reporters from Juba, the capital.

He added that while it is unclear which side began the fighting, the military advance by the South Sudan forces “is not in the spirit of the unilateral ceasefire” declared by the Government in May.

Mr. Shearer said there has been “active military engagement” over the past week north of Pagak, and at least 25 aid workers have relocated in the area as a result of the insecurity.

The senior UN official, who is also the head of the UN Mission in the country, or UNMISS, also voiced great concern about an orphanage near Torit, south of Juba, surrounded by Government and rebel fighters who are preparing to fight.

“It’s unacceptable that 250 innocent children, and the people who care for them, find themselves in no-man’s land between the warring parties,” Mr. Shearer stressed.

Requests by UNMISS to access the Hope for South Sudan Orphanage have been denied “locally, on the ground.”

The Government forces central command in Juba yesterday gave UNMISS “the go-ahead to send peacekeepers to the orphanage. I’m hopeful that will happen today,” he added.

Mr. Shearer urged both sides to reflect on President Salva Kiir’s Independence Day message of peace and withdraw from the facility.

In addition to accessing the orphanage, a group of Nepalese peacekeepers have been sent to protect civilians and the UN base in Torit.

“The number of patrols we can undertake in the town will increase with the additional peacekeepers. In turn, that should provide more security and boost confidence,” said Mr. Shearer.

He noted that his deputy, Moustapha Soumaré, is travelling to Torit tomorrow and will report back.

## Billions around the world lack safe water, proper sanitation facilities, reveals UN report



A woman carries jerrycans of water from a municipal water pipe off a main road at the outskirts of their illegal slum dwelling area called Chandmari Juggi in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Photo: UNICEF/Prashanth Vishwanath

**12 July** – Some three in ten people around the world lack access to safe and readily available water at home, and almost six in ten to safely managed sanitation, a new United Nations report has warned, calling on countries to do more to fulfil these basic human needs.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) joint report, Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and Sustainable Development Goal Baselines, many homes, healthcare facilities and schools also lack soap and water for handwashing, putting the health of all people – but especially young children – at risk for deadly diseases.

“Safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home should not be a privilege of only those who are rich or live in urban centres,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director-General, said in a news release, announcing the findings and noting that those living in rural

areas are the worst affected.

As a result of lack of these basic services, millions fall ill to diseases – that could, otherwise, have been easily prevented – such as diarrhoea which claims the lives of 361,000 children under the age of five die, every year, noted the UN agencies.

“Safe water, effective sanitation and hygiene are critical to the health of every child and every community – and thus are essential to building stronger, healthier, and more equitable societies,” underscored Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of UNICEF.

### *'Significant' inequalities persist*

Good hygiene is one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent the spread of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera,



dysentery, hepatitis A, and typhoid.

However, findings in the report revealed that access to water and soap for handwashing varies immensely in the 70 countries with available data, from 15 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa to 76 per cent in western Asia and northern Africa.

These significant inequalities also put the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all at risk.

Backed by the data, the two UN agencies also warned that in as many as 90 countries around the world, progress towards basic sanitation is too slow, “meaning they will not reach universal coverage by 2030”.

### ***In addition, hundreds of millions without even 'basic' drinking water***

According to the report, of the 2.1 billion people who do not have safely managed water, 844 million do not have even a basic drinking water service.

This includes 263 million people who have to spend over 30 minutes per trip collecting water from sources outside the home, and 159 million who still drink untreated water from surface water sources, such as streams or lakes.

Furthermore, of the 4.5 billion people who do not have safely managed sanitation, 2.3 billion still do not have basic sanitation services, including nearly 600 million people who share a toilet or latrine with other households, and 892 million people – mostly in rural areas – who defecate in the open.

Improvements these services, are therefore essential not only for realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and giving the most vulnerable a chance at a better future.

“As we improve these services in the most disadvantaged communities and for the most disadvantaged children today, we give them a fairer chance at a better tomorrow,” said Mr. Lake.

In the same vein, Mr. Ghebreyesus underscored: “These are some of the most basic requirements for human health, and all countries have a responsibility to ensure that everyone can access them.”

## **UN envoy on sexual violence in conflict urges protection of survivors released from ISIL-held Mosul**



A gender-based violence caseworker (right) listens to a refugee.  
Photo: UNICEF/ Khamissy

**12 July** – The United Nations official advocating against the use of sexual violence in conflict today urged all Iraqis to shun stigmatization, and called for women and girls returning from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) captivity to be embraced into their communities and supported, especially if they have children as a result of rape.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, urged “all relevant stakeholders to ensure the return of women and girls from Da’esh captivity in safety and dignity,” in a statement.

The Under-Secretary-General also called on everyone to welcome the women and girls back into their communities and to support them in healing, as well as “to address all their human rights protection needs, in particular those of children born to survivors of rape.”

Ms. Patten commended the efforts of religious leader in issuing public statements in support of the women and girls, and urged them to continue working within the communities to promote acceptance of the children.

The Special Representative's Office has been working with the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional government, to implement a joint communiqué on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence signed in September 2016.

Meanwhile, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) today said that it is working to support almost one million people displaced from Mosul during the nine months of violent conflict.

Sally Haydock, WFP Representative and Country Director in Iraq, said "while we have done our best to support those who arrived to camps weak and hungry, our hearts go out to the thousands of people who lost their lives."

## UN human rights expert calls unofficial visit to Belarus 'first step' towards cooperation



Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus  
Miklós Haraszti. Photo: OSCE/Ilgar Hasanov

**12 July** – An independent United Nations human rights expert back from an unofficial visit to Belarus today said he was hopeful for a dialogue to begin with the country's Government.

Miklós Haraszti said that although the Government still did not recognize his mandate, it was encouraging that they had allowed him to attend a human rights seminar, which took place on July 6, alongside the parliamentary assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

"I see the authorities' tolerance as a sign of progress which may be the first step toward cooperation with the mandate created by the Human Rights Council in 2012," Mr. Haraszti said.

He also noted the publication of the Government's action plan on human rights, even though none of the 100 points within the plan tackle civic or political rights.

Mr. Haraszti, who was in the country for a special event, and not at the invitation of the Government to pursue work related to his UN mandate, said the Government could quickly change the human rights situation, if it wished.

"The absolute command that the Government has established over public life also allows it to bring change at a stroke of a pen," he told the seminar on human rights.

The seminar highlighted two key areas of concern regarding human rights in Belarus, according to the expert.

"The first is a systemic refusal of individual liberties – a permission-based regime of public life, which in effect criminalizes all Belarusians who act without prior authorization," he said. "We also note a lack of independence of the judiciary, and ongoing use of the death penalty.

"The second area of concern is the cyclical recourse to mass repression, such as the crackdowns in December 2010 and March 2017, when the authorities actually criminalize citizens for using their civic and political rights."

Mr. Haraszti spoke out against Government actions earlier this year, expressing dismay at what he called "the Government's return to the policy of violent mass repression."

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

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