

**In the headlines:**

- Amid rising tensions in Jerusalem, UN envoy warns of 'grave risk' of escalation in Middle East
- Peace is the 'bedrock' for women's development and human rights UN deputy chief says in DR Congo
- Majority of children fleeing to Europe just want to get away, UNICEF reports
- UN chief condemns suicide attacks on camps in northeastern Nigeria

**Amid rising tensions in Jerusalem, UN envoy warns of 'grave risk' of escalation in Middle East**

**25 July** – The United Nations envoy on Middle East peace has warned that developments over the past 11 days at holy sites in the Old City in Jerusalem have demonstrated the “grave risk” that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could become a religious conflict that could ultimately engulf the rest of the region.

While recognizing that Israelis and Palestinians fortunately “have not succumbed to the torrent of violent upheaval that has engulfed the region in recent years,” Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, nevertheless told an open debate in the UN Security Council that: “For nearly a century, despite myriad peace efforts, one conflict has evaded solution.”

His briefing highlighted the latest clashes and rising tensions over the past two weeks in the Old City in Jerusalem. Violence has resulted in deaths on both sides.

These developments “demonstrated the grave risk of dangerous escalation that exists, a risk of turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one and dragging both sides into the vortex of violence with the rest of the region,” Mr. Mladenov said, stressing the need for all parties to show restraint and promptly end this crisis.

Noting that the final status issue concerning Jerusalem needs to be negotiated and decided by the two sides, he urged Israel to fulfill the responsibility to uphold its obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law. He also urged Palestinian leaders to avoid provocative statements that further aggravate an already tense environment.

The latest incidents have taken place against a backdrop of other developments, the envoy stressed.

Throughout the month, Israel continued to advance its plans to construct settlements in East Jerusalem. “I must once again emphasize that settlement activity in occupied territory is illegal under international law, and undermines the chances for the



Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Manuel Elias

establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution,” he warned.

On a positive note, an interim power purchasing agreement between the two sides was signed on 10 July, which set the stage to negotiate a more comprehensive power purchasing agreement towards Palestinian energy independence. In addition, an agreement was reached to increase water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he reiterated that the political standoff between two Palestinian factions – Fatah and Hamas – has taken the two million people living in the tiny enclave “hostage.”

Since violently seizing control of Gaza, Hamas has tightened its grip on power and suppressed dissent, he explained.

The “punishing measures” taken against Hamas, including electricity cuts, have worsened the humanitarian situation in Gaza. “Whatever the political differences between the Palestinian factions, it is not the people of Gaza who should pay the price,” Mr. Mladenov underscored, calling on Palestinian leaders to address the destructive consequences of the split.

Finally, he said recent events are a reminder of how easy it could be to reach a dangerous escalation, and he, expressed hope that Israel's agreement with Jordan and positive engagement with religious authorities would result in actions that would circumvent violence in the future.

“We must not lose focus on the need to restore a political perspective, on the need to bring Palestinians and Israelis back into an environment that is conducive to negotiations on a final status arrangement and avoids turning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious one,” he emphasized.

## Peace is the 'bedrock' for women's development and human rights UN deputy chief says in DR Congo

**25 July** – The importance of reversing the tragedies of violence, particularly against women and children, and ensuring that women's and girl's voices are heard in all aspects of society are at the core of the second leg of a high-level United Nations-African Union (AU) mission to Africa, which today visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“Peace is the bedrock – the foundation – to allow us to develop our full potentials, but also to ensure that human rights are respected. Here we see that women's rights, which are human rights, are not respected and we have a long way to go,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed during a press encounter following her meeting with Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister of the DRC, emphasizing that “so much more can be done.”



Deputy-Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed and Maman S. Sidikou, Head of MONUSCO, at the UN Mission. Photo: MONUSCO/John Bompengo

Ms. Mohammed commended the Government's efforts to combat gender-based sexual violence, noting that having a woman in charge was probably the reason for the progress, “but what we really want to see is zero.”

“We hear what the DRC cannot do. We are here to discuss what [the country] can do with its women and young people,” she stressed, adding that while the rights and aspirations of women “are far from” being attained, it was the job of the UN and AU to support closing the gap.

Ms. Mohammed explained the aim of bringing women leaders into the conversation and engaging with women to find the opportunities to overcome the challenges, “to change the narrative of victims to survivors and aspirations achieved within the 2030 Agenda.”

This call came as Ms. Mohammed leads a first-ever joint AU-UN high-level mission to Africa, seeking to highlight the

role of women in achieving sustainable peace and development. She has been accompanied by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the Special Envoy of the AU on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop.

Over the past two days, the delegation met with key members of the Congolese Government, the donor community, as well as female leaders from the civil society. Briefing reporters in the country's capital of Kinshasa, the Deputy Secretary-General said their discussions revolved around “a focus on women, and how we can see women's empowerment, address women's human rights, and women with their rights to the electoral process.”

More broadly, while stressing the need to respect everyone's abilities, she said “there is no one size that fits all,” and added that women's every day rights must be addressed contextually. Indeed: “There is no aircraft that flies anywhere, or bird that flies anywhere, on half a wing,” she underscored, echoing her refrain from other stops on the trip that a critical step towards sustainable development for all is to ensure that women and girls – half the world's population – receive the investments, opportunities access and protection they require.

Ms. Mohammed went on to say that the UN and the African Union (AU) have each begun another era with new leadership, reforms and frameworks – respectively the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) and the 2063 Agenda, both of which have placed women at the core.

## Majority of children fleeing to Europe just want to get away, UNICEF reports



A group of Gambian boys survey the ocean from the beach during an outing from a Government reception centre that doubles as a lodging station for unaccompanied minors in Pozzallo, Sicily, on May 17, 2016. Photo: UNICEF/UN020035/Gilbertson VII Photo

**25 July** – Facing violence and trauma in Libya and other countries, thousands of children decided to flee by themselves, seeking to get away but not necessarily aiming for Europe, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today reported.

A new study of push-pull factors on child marriage showed that 75 per cent of children on the move decided to leave unaccompanied and that initially, they had no intention to come to Europe, UNICEF spokesperson Sarah Crowe told journalists in Geneva.

“What was striking in the new findings was that there were far more push factors, pushing children away from home – conflicts or violence at home – than there were pull factors [that lure them to Europe], and this went against the current narrative,” Ms. Crowe said.

She noted that of the children who arrived in Libya, 63 per cent of young people left the country because of the generalized violence and trauma they suffered or witnessed, making them more willing to take terrifying sea journeys.

“As one young Gambian boy said, ‘if you have a lion behind your back and a sea in front of you, you take the sea,’” said Ms. Crowe.

Among girls interviewed, one in five left because of forced child marriage at home.

For the first six months of the year, a total of 12,239 children had arrived to Italy, and 93 per cent were travelling alone – the majority of them teenage boys, according to UNICEF figures.

In Greece, however, the majority of children were actually being sent on the voyage by their parents, or were accompanied by their parents.

UNICEF said the study is important for policymakers to understand why the children are making the voyage and how best to help them once they arrive in Europe.

### *Deadly voyages increasingly expensive*

Voyages through the so-called Eastern Mediterranean route and into the European Union now cost \$5,000 or more, according to the UN Migration Agency (IOM).

“With increased border controls, it has become harder to reach Europe,” noted Livia Styp-Rekowska, IOM’s Border Management Specialist in Vienna. “One constant, however, is the increase in sums demanded.”

She noted new data released today that shows “the cost of getting into Europe has increased significantly when compared to 2016, the routes have changed, and different countries of destination are being prioritized.”

People arriving from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan are charged the most, according to IOM.

The most popular destination up to June 2016 was overwhelmingly Germany, but migrants now seek to get to France, Sweden, Italy, Norway, Austria and Denmark as well, with Greece used as a popular transit country.

## **UN chief condemns suicide attacks on camps in northeastern Nigeria**



A young girl collects water for use at their home in Bakassi IDP camp, in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in north-east Nigeria.  
Photo:UNICEF/Abubakar

**25 July** – Strongly condemning yesterday’s suicide attacks on the two camps for internally displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for the perpetrators of this “heinous” act to be swiftly brought to justice.

According to a statement issued by his spokesman, the Secretary-General reiterated the UN support to the Government of Nigeria in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

“These terrorist acts are targeting people who had already fled their homes as a result of Boko Haram violence,” said Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General, in the statement.

Preliminary media reports said that at least eight people have been killed in the attacks that took place near the Borno state capital of

Maiduguri.

Mr. Haq said the Secretary-General offered his condolences to the people and Government of Nigeria for the loss of life, while also wishing a quick recovery to those injured.

Borno state has been plagued by violent attacks carried out by the Boko Haram insurgents, and Maiduguri has been targeted many times.