

**In the headlines:**

- Recovery in Iraq's war-battered Mosul is a 'tale of two cities,' UN country coordinator says
- Quick response critical to stem year-long cholera outbreak in South Sudan – UN agency
- Venezuela: UN urges Government and opposition to relaunch political talks
- South Sudan: Deployment of UN-mandated regional protection force begins
- UN refugee agency voices 'grave concern' as crisis escalates at Manus Island processing centre
- Mauritania: UN chief says 'disagreements' over referendum results must be addressed peacefully
- Search and rescue missions in Sahara Desert help 1,000 migrants, says UN migration agency

Recovery in Iraq's war-battered Mosul is a 'tale of two cities,' UN country coordinator says

A market in east Mosul, Iraq. OCHA/Kate Pond

8 August – Even as schools and markets begin to re-open in war-torn eastern Mosul, whole neighbourhoods of the western part of the Iraqi city have been destroyed and nearly a quarter of a million people have nowhere to return “anytime soon,” a senior United Nations relief official said today.

Speaking to the press in Geneva, Lise Grande, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, said the contrast between the east and the west of the city could not be clearer. Indeed: “Everyone's gone home to eastern Mosul except for 20,000 people.”

“Mosul's really a tale of two cities. Eastern Mosul is a city that's recovering, people are home, schools are open, businesses are open, markets are open. Conditions aren't great but it's a city on the mend,”

she said.

Yet, the situation is very different in western Mosul, explained Ms. Grande, who is also the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). “In the 15 completely destroyed neighbourhoods, there are 230,000 civilians who come from those districts who are not coming home anytime soon.”

Overall, she said that Mosul, which had been the site of the single largest urban battle since World War II, had also witnessed the largest managed evacuation in modern history, with nearly one million civilians assisted out of the city. “Very exceptionally, humanitarian agencies were not near the front line, they were on the front line,” she stated.

In all, some 3.3 million people across Iraq remain outside their homes, including those recently displaced from Mosul. In the wake of the Iraqi campaign to oust the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) from Mosul, she said that there are



three more military operations that are expected: in Tal Afar; in Hawija; and in the Euphrates Valley, western Anbar Province.

We think that by the end of those military operations several hundred thousand more civilians are likely to be displaced. [As such] when the military campaign in Iraq is over, we are possibly looking at 3.5 million civilians who will need to go home.”

Quick response critical to stem year-long cholera outbreak in South Sudan – UN agency

8 August – Rapid responses are critical to stemming a cholera outbreak that has afflicted South Sudan for more than a year, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation that has left approximately four million people displaced by conflict, according to the UN migration agency.

“In a country with mass displacement and severe levels of food insecurity, the effect of the continued cholera outbreak on the health of vulnerable populations is acute,” explained Dr. Beldina Gikundi, Migration Health Emergency Officer of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in South Sudan.

Since 18 June 2016, over 18,000 cholera cases – including 328 deaths – have been reported in South Sudan. IOM health and water, sanitation and hygiene teams continue to respond to the outbreak through case management and preventive measures across the country.

Disease outbreaks are particularly dangerous for displaced and vulnerable populations, such as children under five years of age, who account for more than one-in-five cholera cases reported in 2017.

IOM pointed out that many locations experiencing outbreaks are in proximity to the Nile River, increasing the rainy season's impact on the cholera outbreak and threat of spreading further.

“As we saw the outbreak continue, even during the dry season in 2017, we expect to see the trend persist throughout the rainy season, which leaves as much as 60 per cent of the country inaccessible by road,” continued Dr. Gikundi, underscoring that “sustained and flexible responses are crucial to stemming the continued transmission of the disease in this extremely challenging context.”

Saving lives on the ground

Since the outbreak began, IOM teams have been deployed to cholera-affected areas across the country. Teams continue to conduct hygiene promotion, core relief item distribution and borehole repairs in Bentiu and Rubkona towns, and Wau town and surrounding areas, as well as in UN protection of civilian sites across the country.

In collaboration with the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health, IOM health teams are conducting oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaigns across the country.

In an effort to reduce cholera cases in outbreak areas, IOM has recently reached more than 39,900 people in parts of Jonglei and Unity and is currently on the ground in Warrap, preparing to lead an upcoming OCV campaign targeting more than 189,000 people in Tonj East County.

Since the beginning of the 2016 outbreak, IOM has managed the USAID Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance Rapid Response Fund (RRF) in deploying 14 missions to respond to and promote the prevention of cholera cases. Seven RRF



IOM health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) team conducts activities in Kapoeta, South Sudan. File photo: UN Migration Agency 2017

partners are currently on the ground in three states, providing health and water and sanitation assistance to cholera-affected communities.

Venezuela: UN urges Government and opposition to relaunch political talks



Protesters in La Castellana, a neighborhood in eastern Caracas, Venezuela. Photo: Helena Carpio/IRIN

8 August – Concerned that recent developments in Venezuela could lead to further escalation of tensions and hamper a peaceful solution to the crisis, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres again today urged the Government and the opposition to relaunch negotiations for the benefit of the Venezuelan people.

A statement from Mr. Guterres' spokesman said the UN chief is closely following events in the country and is convinced the crisis cannot be solved through the imposition of unilateral measures, but requires a political solution based on dialogue and compromise.

“At this critical time,” the Secretary-General urged the Venezuelan Government and the opposition to relaunch negotiations for the benefit of the country's people, said the statement, adding that Mr. Guterres is strongly supporting the ongoing efforts of the international

facilitators and regional actors who are seeking to contribute to this end.

The Secretary-General and other top UN officials have been calling for calm amid the escalating political and economic crisis in Venezuela when mass street demonstrations began in the country in April.

In the months that followed, clashes erupted between security forces and protestors opposing elections for the so-called Constituent Assembly. According to media reports, President Nicolás Maduro has since declared victory in elections for a Constituent Assembly convened by him. The new body could replace the current legislative body, the National Assembly.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, today warned that since the wave of demonstrations began in April, there has been a clear pattern of excessive force used against protestors.

“Several thousand people have been arbitrarily detained, many reportedly subjected to ill-treatment and even torture, while several hundred have been brought before military rather than civilian courts. And these patterns show no signs of abating,” said the High Commissioner in a statement from his spokesperson.

Responsibility for violations lies at 'highest levels of Government' – UN human rights chief

In the absence of responses from the Venezuelan authorities to requests for access, the High Commissioner deployed a team of human rights officers to conduct remote monitoring of the situation in the country from 6 June to 31 July, including from Panama.

The team conducted some 135 interviews, including with victims and their families, witnesses, first responders and the Attorney-General's Office – and also received written information from the Ombudsperson's Office.

Witnesses told of security forces firing tear gas canisters at short range; buckshot marbles and nuts and bolts were also discharged as ammunition at anti-Government protestors without warning; and deadly force was used against demonstrators as well.

“These violations have occurred amid the breakdown of the rule of law in Venezuela, with constant attacks by the Government against the National Assembly and the Attorney-General's Office,” Mr. Zeid continued. “The responsibility for the human rights violations we are recording lies at the highest levels of Government.”

The team's findings also indicate patterns of other rights violations, including violent house raids, torture and ill-treatment of detainees in connection with protests.

Witness accounts suggest that the National Guard, National Police and local police forces have systematically used disproportionate force to instil fear, crush dissent and prevent demonstrators from assembling with rare condemnation from Government authorities.

Without official data, estimates suggest that more than 5,051 people have been arbitrarily detained between 1 April and 31 July, when mass demonstrations, began with some 1,000 reportedly still detained.

Several cases reviewed by the UN rights office revealed credible reports of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by security forces of detainees, some amounting to torture. Tactics included electric shocks, long periods of suspending detainees by their wrists, suffocation with gas and threats of killings. There were also sexual violence threats against detainees or their families.

"I call on all parties to work towards a solution to the rapidly worsening tensions in the country, to renounce the use of violence and to take steps towards meaningful political dialogue," concluded Mr. Zeid.

South Sudan: Deployment of UN-mandated regional protection force begins

8 August – The phased deployment in South Sudan of the United Nations-authorized regional protection force has begun, freeing existing peacekeepers to extend their presence to conflict-affected areas beyond the capital, Juba.

"Having additional troops means we can carry out more tasks related to our mandate, to protect civilians and build durable peace," the Secretary General's Special Representative and the head of UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), David Shearer, told a news conference today in Juba.

Despite the August 2015 peace agreement, South Sudan slipped back into conflict due to renewed clashes between rival forces – the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA in Opposition backing former First Vice-President Riek Machar.



David Shearer Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Juba at the arrival of the UN-mandated regional force in the country. UN Photo: Isaac Billy

The deployment of the 4,000-strong regional protection force was authorized by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 2304 (2016). UNMISS says the force will provide protection to key facilities in the nation's capital, Juba, and the main routes into and out of the city. It will also strengthen the security of UN protection of civilians' sites and other UN premises.

Mr. Shearer said the arrival of the first company of Rwandan soldiers, in addition to a Nepalese High Readiness company and more than 100 Bangladeshi engineers already in the mission area, marks the beginning of the phased deployment of the regional protection force.

This will allow the existing UNMISS troops based in Juba, to be reassigned to different locations across the world's youngest country to protect civilians, support humanitarian assistance, and monitor and report on human rights abuses.

"For example, it would enable us to put more patrols along insecure roads where there have been attacks on civilian convoys – such as the Juba-Nimule and Juba-Bor roads," Mr. Shearer said.

He went on to explain that the Juba-based regional protection force comes under the command of UNMISS.

“While it is separate in a sense of its mandate and its delivery here, it remains under one command which is the UNMISS Command, so it will be commanded by a brigadier general, but ultimately it comes under the force commander who ultimately comes under me, so it is part of UNMISS, it is not a separate stand alone,” he said.

UN refugee agency voices 'grave concern' as crisis escalates at Manus Island processing centre



Photo: UNHCR/V. Tan

8 August – The United Nations refugee agency today expressed a grave concern over the deteriorating conditions for refugees and asylum seekers at Australia's offshore immigration processing facility on the Manus Island of Papua New Guinea.

The Government of Australia has announced the closure of the Manus Regional Processing Centre, seeking to relocate people in detention to Lorengau or elsewhere in Papua New Guinea.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a press release that the planned closure of the Centre, along with the announced withdrawal of current medical care, torture and trauma support and security services by October 2017, is exacerbating a highly stressful situation for the 773 people who remain on Manus

Island.

Many fear for their safety outside the Centre, particularly in the wake of several violent incidents in recent years, UNCHR added.

UNHCR also said it is deeply saddened by the tragic death of a young refugee yesterday, which also highlights the precarious situation for vulnerable people there.

To prevent further tragedies and an escalation of the crisis, the planned closure of the centre must take place only in the context of continued critical services, and in line with Australia's ongoing responsibility for the refugees and asylum-seekers it has transferred to Papua New Guinea and Nauru, UNHCR stressed.

Expressing concern that any further reduction of fundamental support would add to the serious health and security risks of people who have been in detention over the last four years, UNHCR renewed its call for Australia to urgently find viable, humane solutions outside of Papua New Guinea and Nauru for those remaining under offshore processing arrangements.

Mauritania: UN chief says 'disagreements' over referendum results must be addressed peacefully

8 August – Following Mauritania's 5 August constitutional referendum, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has encouraged all stakeholders to ensure that disagreements are addressed peacefully within the confines of the law and respect for the rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

Mauritanians went to the polls this past Saturday, with the electoral commission announcing on Sunday that the results were in favour of a constitutional amendment that abolishes the Senate and alters the national flag.

According to media reports, opposition parties leading a boycott movement declared that they would not recognize the results of the vote.

“The Secretary-General calls on all Mauritanians to work together to deepen the rule of law and promote social cohesion and national unity,” Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said in a statement.



Municipal sanitation workers carry trash aboard boat in Guidimaka, Mauritania. Photo: World Bank/Scott Wallace

Search and rescue missions in Sahara Desert help 1,000 migrants, says UN migration agency



IOM together with the Nigerien Civil Protection rescue 23 Gambian and Senegalese migrants who had been abandoned by their drivers. Photo: UN Migration Agency (IOM) 2017

8 August – Search and rescue operations conducted by the United Nations migration agency have saved a total of 1,000 migrants in northern Niger since April, the agency reveals.

“I was shocked when, not far from the border between Niger and Libya in Toummo, we came across a large group of women mainly from Nigeria and Ghana sleeping in a dark hangar quite close to the border post, waiting for their next passage north,” said Alberto Preato, Programme Manager of the Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM) at the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Niger on one mission.

From 19 to 25 July, IOM conducted an assessment mission of migratory routes in the Ténéré desert and the area surrounding Niger's border with Libya. The aim of the mission was to improve migrant rescues, by understanding better how to assist migrants in distress on

that route and strengthen the Government's management migration capacity.

With Niger's Department of Civil Protection, IOM covered more than 1,400 kilometres in the country's north – identifying challenges and changes in flows and migratory routes, while also rescuing more than 150 migrants in distress.

The search and rescue operations are an integral part of the Migrants Rescue and Assistance in Agadez Region project, funded by the Netherlands – and which is complementary to the larger Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM) initiative, developed by IOM Niger and financed by the European Union.

Since January, IOM pointed out that more than 60,000 individuals have been observed entering Niger, while, at the two flow monitoring points in Séguédine and Arlit, only half that number was counted as leaving. Compared to the previous year, much fewer migrants have been reported both coming in and going out.

Following its latest assessment mission and seeing that smugglers are using more dangerous routes, IOM is looking at implementing new flow monitoring points in the country.

“We need to better understand how trafficking and smuggling networks intersect, and to further increase our presence in these remote areas in order to provide information, assistance and alternatives to migrants in need,” Mr. Preato said.

During one of the latest search and rescue missions, conducted in cooperation with the Nigerien Civil Protection, IOM staff rescued 23 Gambian and Senegalese migrants, including a 7-year-old girl, who had been abandoned by their drivers.

On the mission, staff encountered some migrants they had previously met in ghettos around Agadez. Despite being informed about the dangers and risks of irregular migration, these migrants had decided to try their luck and headed for Libya.

“I feel that I have failed them in some way, but I am happy to see they are alive,” said one IOM community mobilizer.

Calling his rescue “a miracle,” one of the survivors said, “I should have listened to them; I should have never embarked on this route.”

The rescued migrants are now recovering at IOM's transit centre in Agadez as they wait for assistance to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.