

Media Update

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United Nations

Press Releases

UN experts call on G20 leaders to protect human rights in global supply chains

GENEVA (28 March 2017) - As G20 members meet in Geneva to prepare a ministerial declaration for more inclusive global economic growth, an open letter* from a group of UN experts stresses that sustainable supply chains can be achieved only if human rights are protected and respected.

Global supply chains have contributed positively to economic and social development, but are also linked to significant negative human rights impacts, the letter from the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights underlined.

“All too often, global supply chains are associated with human rights violations and abuses such as unsafe working conditions, child and forced labour, livelihoods destroyed by toxic industrial wastes, land seizures without compensation, and persecution of those who speak up against such abuse,” said Michael Addo, who currently heads the UN Working Group.

“This reality starkly highlights that for supply chains to become socially sustainable, human rights must be respected and protected,” Mr Addo stressed.

Noting how the activities of companies in global supply chains directly affect the lives of millions of people, both in the workplace and in communities, the Working Group underline the enormous potential of global supply chains to realize sustainable development if governments and companies acted together to uphold human rights.

“The G20 represents 85 percent of global economic output, 75 percent of world trade, and two-thirds of the world’s population, and includes both major ‘developed’ and ‘emerging’ economies. G20 leaders are therefore uniquely

placed to address the human rights risks and impacts associated with global supply chains. They also have a unique responsibility to demonstrate leadership on this critical issue for our time,” Mr. Addo emphasized.

The UN experts clarified that G20 commitments and action to promote sustainable supply chains must be founded on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,** the world’s agreed standard for preventing and addressing the adverse impact of business on human rights. **(ENDS)**

You can access this news release [online](#)

(*) Read the letter and the full list of recommendations [here](#):

(**) Read the UN Guiding Principles on [Business and Human Rights](#):

The Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises was established by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011. Its current members are: Mr. Michael Addo (current Chairperson), Mr. Surya Deva, Mr. Dante Pesce, Ms. Anita Ramasastry and Mr. Pavel Sulyandziga. Learn [more](#).

The Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent human rights monitoring mechanisms. The Working Groups report to the Human Rights Council and to the UN General Assembly. Special Procedures mandate-holders are independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The experts are not UN staff and are independent from any government or organization. They serve in their individual capacity and do not receive a salary for their work.

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Mosul: Protection of civilians paramount as ISIL intensifies use of human shields

GENEVA (28 March 2017) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on Tuesday deplored the massive loss of civilian lives in west Mosul in recent days, victims of actions by ISIL and of airstrikes.

Bodies continue to be found in buildings where civilians were reportedly held by ISIL as human shields, and were subsequently killed by airstrikes conducted by Iraqi Security Forces and International Coalition forces, as well as by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) allegedly planted in the same buildings by ISIL. Numerous other civilians have been killed by shelling and have been gunned down by ISIL snipers as they tried to flee.

Zeid welcomed the announcement by Iraqi Security Forces and the International Coalition that they are conducting investigations into some of the most serious incidents resulting in loss of civilian lives, and stressed that “the investigations into all such incidents must be thorough and transparent, to establish the facts and the number of civilian casualties in each case, and the findings must be made public.”

The UN Human Rights Chief also called on them “to undertake an urgent review of tactics to ensure that the impact on civilians is reduced to an absolute minimum, in full accordance with international humanitarian law.” He urged the Iraqi Government and its partners to ensure the rights of surviving victims are respected and that they receive appropriate reparations and other medical and psycho social support as required.

According to information verified by the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, at least 307 people were killed and another 273 wounded between 17 February and 22 March. The most deadly incident occurred on 17 March, when an airstrike -- reportedly targeting ISIL snipers and equipment -- hit a house in al-Jadida neighbourhood in western Mosul city. Witnesses reported that ISIL had previously forced at least 140 civilians into the house to be used as human shields. They also said that ISIL had booby-trapped the house with IEDs. So far, official figures indicate at least 61 people were killed in this single incident, but the actual figure may be much higher.

In another serious incident, on 22 March, an airstrike hit a residential building in Rajm Hadid neighbourhood in western Mosul city. ISIL reportedly filled the

house with people from the surrounding neighbourhood, including children, and then used the house to launch rocket-propelled grenades against the Iraqi Security Forces. The airstrike killed a seven-year-old girl and trapped eight other children under the rubble, seven of whom were later found and taken to hospital.

In addition, between 23 and 26 March, reports were received that at least 95 civilians were killed in Risalah, Nabils, Uruba and Sainaah al-Qadimah neighbourhoods in western Mosul city as a result of shelling, vehicle-based and other explosive devices planted by ISIL, as well as by ISIL snipers.

There are also reports that ISIL has forcibly transferred civilians within western Mosul. On 20 March, ISIL militants allegedly forced 38 families to leave their homes in the Bab al-Beth neighbourhood, as Government forces began operations in the area, and moved them to a west Mosul neighbourhood known as 17 Tamouze, using them to shield their fighters as they relocated, as well as in strategic locations. ISIL has also reportedly forced families to stay in some 15 houses on the frontlines in the Nablis and Risala neighbourhoods and are using those houses to launch attacks on Government forces. There have been numerous reports that ISIL snipers have shot at, and in some cases killed or wounded, civilians attempting to flee towards the Iraqi Security Forces, and that ISIS has also shelled civilians in areas of the city retaken by Government forces.

“ISIL’s strategy of using children, men and women to shield themselves from attack is cowardly and disgraceful. It breaches the most basic standards of human dignity and morality. Under international humanitarian law, the use of human shields amounts to a war crime,” High Commissioner Zeid said. “And shooting civilians in the back as they flee for their lives is an act of monstrous depravity.”

Zeid stressed that the conduct of military operations in densely populated areas continues to pose a significant and serious risk to civilians who remain in those areas. “The conduct of airstrikes on ISIL locations in such an environment, particularly given the clear indications that ISIL is using large numbers of civilians as human shields at such locations, may potentially have a lethal and disproportionate impact on civilians,” he said.

“I do not underestimate the enormity of the challenges facing the Iraqi Security Forces and their Coalition partners as they try to dislodge ISIL from their last strongholds in Mosul, and the immense difficulties they face in trying to save civilians from their nightmare existence under ISIL control,” Zeid said.

“This is an enemy that ruthlessly exploits civilians to serve its own ends, and clearly has not even the faintest qualm about deliberately placing them in danger. It is vital that the Iraqi Security Forces and their Coalition partners avoid this trap, review how their procedures comply with their obligations under the international humanitarian law principle of precautions, and consider all tactical options available with a view to avoiding civilian loss of life and, in any event, reducing the impact of operations on the civilian population to an absolute minimum.”

(ENDS)

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UNICEF

Press Release

Time is running out for children as famine, drought and war threaten millions

UNICEF says children can't wait, with urgent request for nearly \$255 million to respond to immediate needs in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen

NEW YORK/DAKAR/NAIROBI/AMMAN, 28 March 2017 – More than a month after famine was declared in South Sudan, time is running out for more than a million children as drought and armed conflict devastate lives in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, UNICEF said today.

“Children can't wait for yet another famine declaration before we take action,” said Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes. “We learned from Somalia in 2011 that by the time famine was announced, untold numbers of children had already died. That can't happen again.”

Some 22 million children have been left hungry, sick, displaced and out of school in the four countries, UNICEF said. Nearly 1.4 million are at imminent risk of death this year from severe malnutrition.

UNICEF will require close to \$255 million to provide these children with food, water, health, education and protection services for just the next few months, according to a new funding update.

Most of the funds – over \$81 million – will go towards nutrition programmes to screen children for malnutrition and provide them with therapeutic food.

An additional \$53 million will be allocated to health services including vaccinations, while over \$47 million will go to water, sanitation and hygiene programmes to prevent potentially deadly diarrhoeal diseases.

The remaining funds will help protect children affected by conflict and displacement and provide them with education services. Cash assistance will also be offered to the most vulnerable families.

The resources needed over the next few months are part of a broader appeal for all of 2017, totaling \$712 million – a 50 per cent increase over funding requirements in the four countries at the same time last year.

UNICEF has been working with partners in the four countries to respond to the famine threat and prevent it from spreading:

- In northeast Nigeria, UNICEF will reach 3.9 million people with emergency primary healthcare services this year, treat 220,000 severely malnourished children under the age of five, and provide more than a million people with access to safe water.
- In Somalia, UNICEF is supporting 1.7 million children under-five years of age, including the treatment of up to 277,000 severe acute malnutrition cases through facility-based and mobile health and nutrition services.
- In South Sudan, UNICEF, together with partners, has delivered life-saving assistance to 128,000 people in areas affected or threatened by famine, including almost 30,000 children under the age of five.
- In Yemen, UNICEF has scaled up activities to respond to malnutrition through health facilities, mobile teams, community health workers and volunteers reaching hard-to-access communities and displaced families.

UNICEF is also supporting severely acutely malnourished children and their families with cash assistance and water and sanitation services, including the provision of safe water, supplies and hygiene promotion.

Armed conflict is a major driver of this crisis, UNICEF said, calling for unconditional, unimpeded and sustainable access to the children in need and an end to the violations of children's rights in the affected countries.

UNICEF also sounded the alarm about a worsening nutrition situation in neighbouring countries.

“As violence, hunger and thirst force people to move within and across borders, malnutrition rates will continue to soar not just in these four countries, but also in the Lake Chad basin and the Greater Horn of Africa,” Fontaine said. “If humanitarian agencies do not get the access and resources they need to reach the most vulnerable, lives will be lost.”

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org.

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