

In Central African Republic, UN chief warns of religious divide, seeks global solidarity to rebuild country

25 October 2017 – On the second day of his visit to the Central African Republic (CAR), United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday called on the international community to show solidarity in helping the crisis-torn country chart a new future while warning against religious divide.

“This visit is a visit of solidarity but of active solidarity,” said Mr. Guterres during a press briefing after meeting with President Faustin Archange Touadéra and members of his Government in the nation’s capital, Bangui.

He called for the active engagement of the international community in the country because “there is an opportunity to build a new Central African Republic that is peaceful, secure and prosperous.”

Mr. Guterres also reiterated the need to strengthen the UN peacekeeping mission, known for its French acronym MINUSCA, so it can better protect the population.

He said a political will of openness is well translated in the recent enlargement of the Government, warning, however, that religious divisions that had not existed before are now seen.

“They are only the result of political manipulation that must be condemned and avoided at all costs,” he told reporters.

According to his Spokesman, the Secretary-General and his party then travelled to Bangassou in the southeast of the country. At the local UN force camp, he laid a wreath to honour Moroccan and Cambodian soldiers killed earlier this year in the line of duty as UN forces tried to protect the population.

In addressing representatives of the contingents, he told them how proud he was to be one of their colleagues and that their efforts were courageous as they attempted to keep the peace in areas where all too often there is no peace to keep.

From there, the Secretary-General went on to the compound of the Catholic church in Bangassou, which is now home to more than 1,200 Muslim residents of the area. They had sought shelter from communal violence earlier this year. Mr. Guterres also listened as a 14-year old Muslim girl explained her community’s concerns and wish for reconciliation.

The Secretary-General excoriated politicians who use religion to divide communities that often worship the same God, and urged religious leaders to

live up to their responsibilities by being apostles for peace.

He also met with local authorities and civil society leaders, encouraging them as well with a message of reconciliation.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General returned to Bangui, where he is scheduled to meet with the UN humanitarian and development team, as well as with non-governmental organizations later on Wednesday.

Plausible that 'attack or threat' led to crash that killed former UN chief Hammarskjöld – new report

25 October 2017 – A new United Nations-mandated report has found it “appears plausible” that an external attack or threat may have led to the fatal plane crash that killed former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

António Guterres on Tuesday called on UN Member States to make available information concerning the 56-year-old incident. A [statement](#) issued his Spokesman said Mr. Guterres is of the view that the information made available to the UN to date has been insufficient and that it seems likely that important additional information exists.

The chartered DC6 plane registered as SE-BDY crashed just after midnight on 17-18 September 1961, near Ndola (then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia), killing Mr. Hammarskjöld and 14 of the 15 members of the party accompanying him, with the sole survivor succumbing to injuries a few days later.

“There is a significant amount of evidence from eyewitnesses that they observed more than one aircraft in the air, that the other aircraft may have been a jet, that SE-BDY was on fire before it crashed, and/or that SE-BDY was fired upon or otherwise actively engaged by another aircraft,” noted Eminent Person Mohamed Chande Othman in his report, [transmitted](#) to the General Assembly Tuesday.

“It appears plausible that an external attack or threat may have been a cause of the crash, whether by way of a direct attack causing SE-BDY to crash or by causing a momentary distraction of the pilots. Such a distraction need only have taken away the pilots’ attention for a matter of seconds at the critical point at which they were in their descent to have been potentially fatal.”

Over the year, a series of inquiries have explored various hypotheses for the crash, including aerial or ground attack or other external threat (“external attack or threat”), sabotage, hijacking, and human error.

Conclusions of investigation

In the [report](#), the Eminent Person concluded that it is almost certain that Mr. Hammarskjöld and the members of his party were not assassinated after landing and that all passengers died from injuries sustained during the plane crash, either instantaneously or soon after.

Exploring whether a sabotage – possibly a bomb planted on the plane and activated before landing – led to the crash, “as part of a plot to ‘remove’ Hammarskjöld,” Mr. Othman reported that he attempted to obtain access from South Africa to the ‘Operation Celeste’ documents, which concern this claim, but at the time of writing his report, access to the documents had not been granted.

Noting that in the time available, and in view of the emergence of new matters requiring further analysis of facts, he was not able to conclude all aspects of the work, the Eminent Person noted that it appears to him “reasonable to conclude that the burden of proof has now shifted to Member States” to show that they have conducted a full review of records and archives in their custody or possession, including those that remain classified, for potentially relevant information.

He also recommended that Member States appoint an independent and high-ranking official to conduct a dedicated and internal review of their archives, in particular, their intelligence, security and defence archives, with a view to ensuring comprehensive access to relevant information and establishing what happened on that fateful night.

“An incident such as this where one or more of the hypotheses of the air crash may have involved an adverse or hostile act or acts on the Secretary-General of the United Nations is a matter of highest public interest,” he noted, urging for meaningful participation of key Member States in identifying material relevant to the tragic incident.

“This is a step that must be taken before this matter, and the memories of those who perished on flight SE-BDY in the service of the Organization, may rest,” he concluded.

Migrants helped to return from Greece, reintegrate, start businesses back home – UN agency

25 October 2017 – Over the past 15 months, more than 2,000 migrants who have voluntarily returned home from Greece have successfully reintegrated back into their countries of origin, according to the United Nations migration

agency.

“Building on the collaboration between Greece and the countries of origin, this [reintegration support enhances opportunities](#) for social and economic sustainability, both for returnees and local communities,” said Gianluca Rocco, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission in Greece, in a press statement on Thursday.

Between June 2016 and September 2017, IOM supported 2,084 returnees, assisting their reintegration through a grant of 1,500 euros in in-kind support, provided exclusively or in combination to set up small businesses or receive medical assistance, education, temporary accommodation, vocational assistance, material assistance, and job placement.

Mr. Rocco explained the importance of reintegration support as an essential component of IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) [projects](#), saying that it further strengthens a cooperative, humanitarian approach for people who have decided to return home from Greece.

For migrants who need to return home but lack the means to do so, assisted voluntary return and reintegration is often the only approach to address their immediate plight. AVRR allows the migrants concerned to prepare for their return, encouraging them to identify potential opportunities for socioeconomic reinsertion into communities of origin, thereby facilitating the sustainability of their return.

The vast majority of approved personalized reintegration plans – 1,953 – were for setting up small businesses, while IOM’s social workers and psychologists worked with cultural mediators to conduct 3,671 individual counselling sessions with voluntary returnees, 2,084 of whom were eligible for reintegration assistance.

According to IOM, the main considerations for selecting candidates to be approved for reintegration support are a person’s vulnerability, work experience and skills that can guarantee the sustainability of the reintegration plan.

Breaking down the origins of voluntarily returning migrants, Pakistan had 1,184 – the most by far. Some 342 returned to Georgia and 173 to Iraq while about 1,750 beneficiaries were male and 334 female.

IOM’s global presence makes reintegration assistance available worldwide, and the assistance is based on collaboration between the countries where the plans are being implemented.

The UN migration agency in Greece currently works closely with over 25 IOM offices and third countries to enhance tailored reintegration assistance, link it with the needs of the local labour market, and ensure long-term, sustainable reintegration assistance.

IOM’s reintegration assistance is provided under the framework of the European Union (EU) and Greek government-supported programme, Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns, which includes AVRR and is funded by the EU’s

Asylum Migration and Integration Fund as well as the Greek Ministry of Interior.

[Syria: UN health agency steps up health services for thousands of people in Raqqa](#)

25 October 2017 – The United Nations health agency is stepping up the delivery of medicines and medical supplies to thousands of people in newly accessible areas of Raqqa.

“The immediate objective of WHO [World Health Organization], together with local health authorities and NGO [non-governmental organization] partners, is to scale up life-saving health services for thousands of people who had been deprived of essential health care,” said Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria. “We are also ensuring the availability of quality vaccines for children.”

In a news release issued Tuesday, the agency said that [five tons of shipment](#), including medicines and medical supplies for 500 trauma cases and 37,000 medical treatments, have been provided to Al-Tabqa National Hospital, the closest hospital to Raqqa.

This was the second shipment of health supplies provided by WHO to the hospital since its reopening in September 2017. The hospital was partially damaged in February 2017 due to intensive fighting in the area, but the emergency department, internal medicine and pediatric sections have been rehabilitated.

More than 13,500 people currently live in Raqqa city, where access to health services remains limited.

Since its rehabilitation, the hospital has treated more than 3400 patients, including more than 800 women and 1,300 children.

[Meet Gladys Nkeh, a UN police officer in the Central African Republic](#)

24 October 2017 – Gladys Ngwepekeum Nkeh is a United Nations police officer

([UNPOL](#)) from Cameroon, one of some 12,870 uniformed personnel working with the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic.

Earlier this year, the officer and her team went to a school – Ecole des 136 villas – in Bangui looking for Ashley, a young girl who she found out from community leaders had been raped and became pregnant.

“She was so very sad,” Gladys told *UN News*. That day would be a turning point for Ashley, for Gladys, and for hundreds of girls who attend the school.

Gladys was deployed to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) eight months ago as a gender officer.

Every day, Gladys collaborates with the national police in the capital, Bangui, at the police station for the First District. She monitors the work of the national police, ensuring that the basic human rights of detainees are respected, and that international professional standards are met.

She also meets regularly with community members in central Bangui, talking to local leaders and traditional chiefs to promote gender rights.

By meeting with community members, Gladys learned about Ashley Bongo Passi, a 13-year-old girl who was raped and became pregnant as a result. Gladys supported Ashley, and her 25-year-old mother, by sending Ashley to the non-governmental organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders, for medical aid.

Gladys also worked to identify the rapist and arrest him, while also providing Ashley with support for clothes and baby formula for her six-week-old baby. Ashley was able to go back to school, and she named her baby Gladys, in tribute to the UN police officer who supported her. Gladys continues to help with Ashley’s school fees.

In addition to her regular duties, Gladys and her UNPOL colleagues provide classes at Ashley’s school, Ecole des 136 villas, on sexual education and preventing gender-based violence. The students are from the last elementary class (CM2) at the school, which has over 2,700 students.
