

# Marking UN Day in Central African Republic, Secretary-General honours peacekeepers

24 October 2017 – Commemorating United Nations Day alongside UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Tuesday paid tribute to the sacrifices made by uniformed personnel in the service of peace.

“I want to say that we need to make sure that the world fully appreciates the [heroic contributions](#) of peacekeepers protecting civilians, sometimes in extremely difficult circumstances, like the ones we face in the Central African Republic,” said Mr. Guterres at a wreath-laying ceremony for peacekeepers in the country’s capital, Bangui.

He said these ‘blue helmets,’ as UN peacekeepers are informally known, work where sometimes the peace is elusive, which means that they die, are wounded, and sacrifice their lives to protect civilians.

Noting that women and men of the UN police and military forces are the UN brand in the world, he said “your sacrifice is something that the UN will always honour.”

The 24th of October, the day in 1945 when the [Charter of the United Nations](#) entered into force, is celebrated annually as UN Day. In 1971, the General Assembly recommended that the day be observed by UN Member States as a public holiday.



Secretary-General António Guterres arrives in Bangui for a visit of solidarity with the people of the Central African Republic and UN peacekeepers serving with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission ([MINUSCA](#)). UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Secretary-General António Guterres is greeted by residents of Bangui, Central African Republic. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Secretary-General António Guterres takes part in a wreath-laying ceremony to honour peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty while serving with MINUSCA. N Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Secretary-General António Guterres (left) takes part in a townhall meeting with staff serving with MINUSCA. To his right is Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative in the country and Head of MINUSCA. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

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At UN Headquarters in New York, the Organization's Department of Public Information will [organize](#) a concert featuring the Slovak National Folklore Ballet, Lúènica.

The theme of the concert is 'Potential in Diversity' and is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the UN.

Also, Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, on behalf of the Secretary-General, will present the [2017 Secretary-General Awards](#) in categories, including innovation and creativity; implementing efficiencies; gender equality and parity; and champion of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Mr. Guterres, in his first UN Day message, called on people around the world to overcome their differences to address global challenges that go beyond

national borders.

Our world faces many grave challenges. Widening conflicts and inequality, extreme weather and deadly intolerance, [and] security threats including nuclear weapons, said Mr. Guterres in a video message.

We have the tools and wealth to overcome these challenges. [All we need is the will.](#)

In his message, the UN chief stated that the challenges faced by the world transcend borders and, therefore, everyone needs to transcend their differences to transform our future.

When we achieve human rights and human dignity for all people they will build a peaceful, sustainable and just world, he added, urging humanity noted in the UN Charter as 'We the Peoples' to make this vision a reality.

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## [Eradication of polio 'once and for all' within reach – UN health agency](#)

24 October 2017 – Despite progress towards global eradication of polio, sustained commitment is needed to overcome the final hurdle and stamp out the disease once and for all, the United Nations health agency said today, the World Polio Day.

So far in 2017, a total of 12 cases of polio had been reported, in two countries, fewer cases than ever before [and] innovative methods have put eradication within reach, Christian Lindmeier, a spokesperson for the World Health Organization told journalists at the regular [news briefing](#) at the UN Office in Geneva.

Today, only three endemic countries remained affected by the disease Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Challenges remain, especially in these polio-endemic countries [and] sustained commitment is needed to overcome those challenges and eradicate polio once and for all, added Mr. Lindmeier.

[Polio](#) is a debilitating disease which mainly affects young children is caused by a virus that is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the faecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (such as contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis.

The disease has no cure, but can be prevented by immunization.

In the [past year](#), over 400 million children around the world received the polio vaccination, giving them vital protection against the disease.

**SEE ALSO:** [10 facts on polio eradication](#)

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## [UN migration agency delivers hygiene kits to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#)

24 October 2017 – Soap, toothbrushes, water containers and liquid antiseptic are among the items the United Nations migration agency is distributing to the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees that have settled in sprawling camps that cover the Cox's Bazar district of southern Bangladesh.

These kits ensure that Rohingya families particularly women and children can at least [meet their personal care](#) and hygiene needs as they face the harsh reality of life in the makeshift settlements, Sarat Dash, International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Bangladesh Chief of Mission said on Tuesday.

The kits, which also include hygienic cloths, menstrual hygiene products, undergarments, and other small personal items, are funded by the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

To date, IOM has distributed 6,626 hygiene kits to the most vulnerable families, reaching an estimated 33,130 people among those that have arrived in Bangladesh after fleeing violence in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine state.

The kits are part of a \$5 million CERF contribution to fund IOM shelter, health, water, sanitation and hygiene operations in Cox's Bazar.

CERF funding has been critical to saving lives in this humanitarian crisis. It has allowed us to scale up and respond to the escalating needs of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar in a very short timeframe, Mr. Dash stressed.

An estimated 603,000 refugees have arrived in the Cox's Bazar district of southern Bangladesh since August joining some 200,000 others already sheltering in the settlements. Most of the new arrivals come with nothing but the clothes on their back, often having walked for days without food or water. Many have experienced devastating physical and emotional trauma.

### ***Committing to help***

On Monday, IOM, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

([OCHA](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) organized a [pledging conference](#) in Geneva co-hosted by the European Union and the Government of Kuwait. There, 35 international donors pledged \$345 million to ramp up, over the next six months, critical humanitarian assistance for the refugees and host communities in Bangladesh.

The pledges, which include money already committed, cover nearly 80 per cent of the \$434 million appealed for in the UN Joint Response Plan [#8211](#) aimed to meet the basic needs of 1.2 million newly arrived and existing refugees and their Bangladeshi hosts in Cox's Bazar through February 2018.

[#8220](#)Without these vital funds, humanitarian agencies will not be able to continue to provide protection and life-saving aid to one of the most vulnerable groups in the world,[#8221](#) said IOM Director General William Lacy Swing, after the pledging conference.

[#8220](#)We welcome these pledges, but I hope that the end of this conference does not mean the end of new funding commitments. We have not reached our target and each percentage point we are under means thousands are left without food, healthcare and shelter,[#8221](#) he added.

IOM is appealing for \$120 million to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Rohingya and the Bangladeshi communities hosting them over the next six months.

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## [Interview: Health care is a human right, senior UN official says; urges protection for medical workers](#)

24 October 2017 – Health is a human right and health care workers are human rights defenders, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights has said, reminding Governments to provide healthcare for their citizens and to protect professionals who deliver these services.

[#8220](#)We see health not only as the absence of disease and not only a question of access to services, but in fact the right to be human is a manner that you have your physical and mental integrity upheld,[#8221](#) Kate Gilmore said in an interview with *UN News*.

Similarly, health care workers are part of the [#8220](#)machinery of human rights defence,[#8221](#) yet are increasingly being targeted for doing their jobs.

[#8220](#)In conflict settings, there has been a marked spike in the targeting of hospitals, of doctors, of ambulances and of nurses. And this is not only

quite unconscionable," the Deputy High Commissioner said, noting these attacks are also against international humanitarian law and the basic rules of war to which each Government has signed up by virtue of being a member of the United Nations.

"But in other settings, too," she continued. "In non-conflict settings, health workers who work with communities that are subjected to terrible bigotry, those working with those suffering leprosy, historically health workers providing services to those living with HIV and AIDS, workers whose priority is sexual and reproductive health."

Ms. Gilmore noted "a pattern across the globe of health workers being targeted for providing compassionate, humane care rooted in medical science."

She denounced such attacks calling them "wrong, unfair and unjust."

Ms. Gilmore, along with Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour, will participate at a dialogue today at the UN Headquarters in New York on how human rights, including the right to health, are reflected in the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

Hear more from her in this interview with UN News.

**AUDIO:** UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kate Gilmore.

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## [Widespread militia activities, political unrest drive millions from their homes in DR Congo, UN warns](#)

24 October 2017 – Some 3.9 million people across several regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been displaced from their homes, and amid growing violence and unrest, the United Nations refugee agency warned on Tuesday that the number could rise even further.

According to a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), over the last three months alone, more than 428,000 people have been displaced.

"With widespread militia activities, and unrest and violence fuelled by ethnic and political conflict affecting many areas, the risk of further displacement is high," UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards told journalists at a regular briefing in Geneva today.

"The challenges of getting aid to people in need are growing fast,"



he added.

In particular, the regions of Tanganyika, North and South Kivu, and Kasai are the worst affected due to intercommunal clashes, fighting between armed groups and increasing number of armed militia.

Complicating the matters is the onset of the rainy season, that has necessitated the need to beef up public health, sanitation and water supplies to prevent the outbreak of disease. Psychosocial support as well as care for people with specific needs is also urgently required.

In light of the worsening conditions, the UN agency and humanitarian partners have declared the situation in DRC to 'level 3' – the highest level of emergency.

### **Level 3 emergency**

In the context of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a [Level 3 emergency](#) would typically be a sudden onset complex emergency requiring the activation of a UN system-wide response, with agreed mechanisms, tools and procedures.

*Glossary, UNHCR Global Report 2014*

In addition to the people displaced within DRC, over 620,000 Congolese refugees are sheltering in more than 11 African nations – about 100,000 of them within the past one year.

And at the same time, the number of refugees from neighbouring countries seeking refuge inside the DRC has grown by a third since early 2016 and now stands at 526,000 people.

"We continue to see new arrivals from Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan," said Mr. Edwards, noting that funding is urgently needed for the response.

Bettina Luescher, for the World Food Programme (WFP), said the agency is scaling up capacities in the provinces of Kasai (proper) and Kasai Central – the hardest-hit of Greater Kasai's five provinces, with a threefold increase in the number of severely hungry people over the past 18 months. Two thirds of the severely hungry are in Kasai province alone, she added.

Of the \$236.2 million required for the needs of refugees, IDPs and other people of concern in the DRC, only \$49.7 million has been received so far – a fifth of the amount required.