

[South Sudan: Following recent government offensive, UN urges all sides to cease hostilities](#)

29 April 2017 – Disturbed by the escalation of violence and subsequent suffering of civilians in South Sudan as a result of the recent government offensive, the United Nations today urged the Government and other warring parties to cease hostilities, uphold their responsibility to protect civilians.

“The renewed upsurge in fighting represents a callous and blatant disregard of the pledges made during the 25 March 2017 IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] summit to implement a ceasefire and to facilitate humanitarian access,” said a [statement](#) issued overnight by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General.

The statement also urged all sides to cooperate with the UN and other humanitarian actors to ensure safe access to all civilians in imminent danger along the West Bank of the River Nile.

“There can be no military solution to the crisis in South Sudan,” the statement emphasized, expressing hope that regional and international partners will join in encouraging the parties to return urgently to the negotiating table.

The United Nations remains committed to working with the African Union and IGAD to secure a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the statement added.

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.

At a [Security Council meeting](#) earlier this week, David Shearer, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and the head of UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), noted that the opposition has since splintered, making it necessary for UN peacebuilding efforts to be more widely cast than previously. He reiterated the need for a political solution.

[FEATURE: Highlighting ‘positive](#)

impact' of migration key to changing policies, public opinion – UN envoy

28 April 2017 – Recognizing that the issue of [large movements of refugees and migrants](#) is too vast for any one country to handle on its own, the United Nations convened a meeting of world leaders in September 2016 with the aim of finding durable solutions. At the summit, all 193 Member States came together around one plan, the [New York Declaration](#), expressing their political will to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale.

Migration is a very big issue. It is very much part of public opinion these days. It is discussed in governments, around kitchen tables. It involves everybody. And it is not new. UN envoy Louise Arbour

As a follow-up to the meeting, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres last month appointed Canadian lawyer, prosecutor and jurist Louise Arbour as his Special Representative for International Migration.

Ms. Arbour – who has served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda – is tasked with working with Member States as they develop a first-ever global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is due to be adopted in 2018.

She also leads UN advocacy efforts on international migration, including providing support to the '[Together](#)' campaign, a new dialogue about refugees and migrants to foster social cohesion while countering negative stereotyping and falsehoods about them. In addition, she provides policy advice and coordinates the engagement of UN entities on migration issues.

Ms. Arbour recently spoke to UN News about the need to enrich the narrative on migration which, she believes, focuses overwhelmingly on the negative aspects of migration and obscures the positive impact it has on the prosperity of many countries.

UN News: You were appointed as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration last month. Could you tell us more about the scope of the issue and the challenges ahead?

Louise Arbour: Migration is a very big issue. It is very much part of public opinion these days. It is discussed in governments, around kitchen tables. It involves everybody. And it is not new. People have been on the move for as long as there have been people on this Earth. But with modern communication technology, transportation, we have seen an increase in human mobility.

Migration comprises everything from refugees fleeing persecution and conflict zones to what we sometimes call economic migrants – people who sometimes voluntarily, sometimes not by choice, or are forced, decide to leave their

country of birth or their country of origin often in search of employment or to be reunited with their families.

The best estimate is that there are today about 245 million migrants in the world. And I am not sure we are well equipped to facilitate safe, orderly, regular migration, which is the mandate that the General Assembly gave itself last September to bring some order to this.

VIDEO: UN envoy for international migration, Louise Arbour, flags the need to highlight the benefits migrants and refugees bring to societies.

UN News: As Special Representative you will lead the follow-up to the 2016 High-level Summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. How do you see your role in the forthcoming global compact negotiations?

Louise Arbour: The General Assembly last September in the New York Declaration has decided to launch a process with respect to migration that is owned by Member States. And my role is to support that process, to coordinate all the knowledge, expertise, ideas that exist inside the United Nations and with the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), which has come in last September as a related organization. So it is to try to coordinate, to capitalize on all this knowledge to assist Member States in their negotiations.

My role is also to develop a policy, to develop ideas, initiatives; and I have an advocacy role. I will also be the Secretary-General of a big conference at the end of 2018 which has the mandate of delivering a global compact of Member States on migration. There is a parallel process that deals specifically with the question of refugees. Refugees are in essence a subset of migrants but they are governed by the refugee conventions. So there is already a better definition on the refugee side. A lot of work remains to be done to deal with migrants more generally.

UN News: What are the key milestones over the next 18 months in the lead up to delivering two global compacts – on migration and on refugees – at the conference in 2018?

Louise Arbour: The Member States have agreed on a process. The formal process consists of six thematic sessions on different topics related to migration. The first one will take place in Geneva at the beginning of May, specifically on the question of the human rights of migrants and issues related to racism, xenophobia and intolerance generally.

The second one, towards the end of May, will deal with the drivers of migration – what are sometimes called the pushes and pulls that induce people to move or force them to leave their countries of origin. So it is the spectrum of origin, transit and destination. And we will have sessions on labour issues, migration governance, human trafficking, smuggling, and lots of issues.

This will bring us to the fall at which point there will be, towards the end

of this year, a stocktaking meeting so Member States can have a sense of where they are. And then the drafting of the document which will serve the basis of their negotiations is scheduled to take place between January and July of 2018. So this is the formal process.

In parallel to all that... I intend to try to energize the conversation and in particular try to mobilize not just policymakers but general public opinion. I think we have a lot of educating to do, so people could understand better what we are talking about when we talk about the mobility of people, what it is and how we can manage it better.



She pulled refugees to safety across the Mediterranean Sea, and after finding refuge in Germany, Yusra Mardini pursued her love of swimming and eventually swam in the Rio Olympics. For her next challenge, the Syrian teenager says she wants to change people's preconceptions about refugees. The 19-year-old was recently appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN refugee agency (UNCHR) – the youngest in the agency's history. Due to its vast reach, unparalleled popularity and foundation of positive values, sport is ideally positioned to contribute towards the UN's objectives for development and peace. Photo: UN Photo/ Daniel Johnson



Mustafa used to work in Aleppo, Syria's war-torn ancient city, as a pharmacist. Today he lives in Groningen, the Netherlands, and is back in school. He is appreciative of his re-found freedoms and is currently studying to obtain a Dutch equivalent pharmacy degree. Mustafa participates in a weekly support meeting that is set up and run by medical professionals associated with University Medical Center Groningen in order to stay up-to-date on the latest medical trends. With the assistance of the same support group, the Syrian national also managed to transfer his educational degrees and receives guidance for his study. Photo: www.homeswiethome.nl/Elbert Fliek



Seventeen-year-old Jackie from Honduras dreams about migrating to the United States, in spite of what happened to her brother. At the age of 16, Alexis, while en route to the US, fell off a freight train and lost his right leg – not an uncommon injury on the notorious route. In spite of the many benefits of migration, migrants themselves remain among the most vulnerable members of society. They are often the first to lose their job in the event of an economic downturn, often working for less pay, for longer hours, and in worse conditions than national workers. While for many migration is an empowering experience for many, others endure human rights violations, abuse and discrimination. Photo: UNICEF/Zehbrauskas



Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan (center left) and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada (center right) co-chair a discussion at the UN high-level summit on large movements of refugees and migrants. While addressed in

various meetings, international migration was never mainstreamed until it was included in the [2030 Agenda](#) and its corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which recognise the positive contributions of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Photo: UN Photo/Loey Felipe



People wait in line in Port-au-Prince to pick up money sent to them from family living abroad after the earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010. Remittances play a vital role in the economies of developing countries. In 2015, remittances to developing countries amounted to \$432 billion, more than three times the official development assistance of that year. Photo: UN Photo/Sophia Paris



In 2014, migrants from developing countries sent home an estimated US \$436 billion in remittances; a 4.4 per cent increase over the 2013 level (World Bank 2015), far exceeding official development assistance. Pictured here is a shopkeeper who serves a customer in the Somali capital, Mogadishu. Millions of people in the Horn of Africa nation rely on money sent from their relatives and friends abroad in the form of remittances in order to survive. According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), an estimated \$1.6 billion is sent back annually by Somalis living in Europe and North America. Photo: UN Photo/Stuart Price



Louise Arbour, the newly appointed Special Representative for International Migration, is a veteran international civil servant. Pictured here with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Ms. Arbour served previously as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and as Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

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UN News: Discrimination and violence against refugees and migrants are rising. The United Nations launched the 'Together' campaign to promote respect, safety and dignity for all. Could you tell us why we need this campaign and how it ties in with the intergovernmental process you have just described?

Louise Arbour: I think the 'Together' campaign is really very much tailored, in large part, to support this Member States' initiative on migration. It is one thing to develop sometimes pretty complex policy arguments for policymakers. We could talk about the remittances that migrants who work in one country send to their home country. It's a huge amount of money, much larger than international aid to development. A lot of people are not aware of this, which is one of the many positive impacts of migration.

I think the focus is overwhelmingly on the negative sides of migration, and completely obscures the immensely positive impact that it has made to date on the prosperity of many, many countries, both of origin and of destination
UN envoy Louise Arbour

It's one thing to talk to policymakers, decision-makers, but for them to have the insight and the courage, sometimes, to make the right decision, they have to feel that they have their public opinion behind them. And as we develop our policies, it's really critical that we engage more and more in conversations – to some extent, we talk about changing the narrative, to enrich the narrative about migration, and to highlight its many very positive aspects, both for the migrants themselves, but also for countries of destination, where they will eventually settle, be productive members of the work force, pay rent, pay sales taxes, live in the country.

So I think that the 'Together' campaign is going to be an extremely important vehicle to attack some of the stereotypes of migrants as either suspicious, as being a burden or a threat, which in reality, we have to concede that, as in any other field of human endeavour, there may be some negative aspects, some who don't behave according to the rules. Currently, I think the focus is overwhelmingly on the negative sides of migration, and completely obscures the immensely positive impact that it has made to date on the prosperity of many, many countries, both of origin and of destination, and to the prospect it has in the future to be extremely transformative of the way we live collectively.

UN News: UN human rights experts said that accessible social and health services should be made available for persons with disabilities in the new global framework on refugees and migrants. What's your answer to their concerns?

Louise Arbour: One of the things we need to highlight is the need for migrants, like everybody else, to have their fundamental human rights respected and protected without discrimination on the basis of their status. It is the same argument we have been making for years with respect to various groups or persons who may present with certain vulnerabilities. In some cases, it's children. In some cases, it could be persons with disabilities who sometimes need treatment that is appropriate for their needs; not to give them an advantage, just to bring them on par with everybody else. Accessibility in transportation is an obvious example.

In the case of migrants, and it may sound a bit strange, particularly migrants who are in a position of irregularity, who are not properly documented, their irregular situation makes them even more vulnerable. In lots of cases, they cannot have access to the very basic healthcare for instance that they need for themselves or their children. So irregularity sometimes increases vulnerability. So again the argument is not to give preferential or privileged treatment to any segment; it is to ensure that all human beings, regardless of their situation, are protected in their fundamental human dignity, human rights, without discrimination.

But I need to stress here that... we should keep in mind that very often when migrants arrive in a new country, they are received or they find themselves in the most impoverished part of that community. And I think it is going to be critical that, as we pay attention to the needs of these newcomers, the migrants, that we also bring concrete benefits to the host communities that are receiving them.

It is true of countries that receive sometimes unexpected large flows of populations who are moving not only because of war, in which case they are refugees for the most part, but because of famine, bad governance, deprivations of all kind; so then we need to assist, have humanitarian gestures vis-à-vis migrants but also very much so vis-à-vis people they have left behind and people who will be hosting them, sharing with them the little they themselves have.

FEATURE: International Jazz Day – a global celebration of creativity and diversity

28 April 2017 – Blues, boogie, bebop or ragtime, no matter what it is called, jazz is a language that translates across cultures and continents, bridging gaps and bringing unity.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), for more than a century jazz has helped soothe and uplift the souls of millions of people in all corners of the world. And so, it is no wonder that the UN's cultural arm has organized [International Jazz Day](#) to harness “the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, and a force for peace, unity, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people.”

Since 2012, International Jazz Day, celebrated annually on 30 April, has highlighted the power of this musical art form as a force for freedom and creativity, promoting intercultural dialogue through respect and understanding and uniting people from all corners of the globe.

“Today, we celebrate the international art form of jazz and its power to promote dialogue among cultures, to make the most of diversity, to deepen respect for human rights and all forms of expression,” UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in her [message](#) for the Day.

“The story of jazz is written into the quest for human dignity, democracy and civil rights. Its rhythms and variety have given strength to the struggle against all forms of discrimination and racism – this is the message we must

take across the world today.”

VIDEO: Jazz is dialogue, a conversation that, crosses boundaries and helps build bridges of communication

2017 Global Host City: Havana, Cuba

Each year a different city hosts the global concert marking International Jazz Day, and this year that honour goes to the musically vibrant and culturally rich city of Havana, Cuba.

“UNESCO is proud to be associated once again with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, as well as with the Instituto Cubano de la Música, to raise the flag for jazz, for freedom, for creativity, for diversity and for unity,” said Ms. Bokova.

“This year’s focus on Cuba is testament to the power of jazz to build bridges and join women and men together around shared values and aspirations,” she added.

Herbie Hancock, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue, thanked the citizens of Cuba for their enormous support of jazz, saying “Afro-Cuban jazz and its rich history have played a pivotal role in the evolution and enrichment of the entire jazz genre.”

VIDEO: When Africans were brought to Cuba, they also brought their traditions. They embraced the tempo and music of the indigenous population and mixed it with their own. Now young people keep the music alive.

The celebration in Havana also marks the seventieth anniversary of Cuba’s accession to UNESCO.

In anticipation of the Day, schools, art venues, community centres, jazz clubs and parks across Havana and throughout Cuba have already begun engaging its citizens.

Jazz history and education classes are being provided for tens of thousands of students in more than 11,000 schools across the country. This is among the thousands of International Jazz Day live performances, educational activities and community service programmes taking place in more than 190 countries on all continents.

Jazz for peace

UNESCO points out that jazz breaks down barriers and creates opportunities for mutual understanding and tolerance. International Jazz Day carries the unique mandate of utilizing and promoting the values of jazz for peace.

According to the agency, jazz reduces tensions between individuals, groups and communities and reinforces the role youth play for social change,

including stimulating intercultural dialogue and empowering young people from marginalized societies.

On International Jazz Day, education programmes worldwide promote and emphasize the importance of sharing the history of jazz, and of reflecting on the kind of mutual respect and democratic principles necessary for the music to thrive.



World-famous musicians perform at the inaugural International Jazz Day Concert at UN Headquarters in New York, including UN Messenger of Peace Stevie Wonder. Credit: Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Institute/p>



The 2013 concert was held in Istanbul's Hagia Irene where Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Esperanza Spalding and Milton Nascimento performed. Credit: Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Institute



In 2014, Steve Turre performed his own composition at Osaka Castle Park, Japan. Credit: Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Institute



Paris hosted the Day in 2015, where (L-R) Femi Kuti, James Genus, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Till Bronner, Marcus Miller, Dianne Reeves, Al Jarreau, Guillaume Perret and Dhafer Youssef performed together for the finale in France. Credit: Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Institute



In 2016, President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama hosted International Jazz Day in Washington D.C. at the White House. Credit: Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Institute

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[Korean Peninsula: Conflict prevention 'our collective priority' but onus also on DPRK, says UN chief](#)

28 April 2017 – Preventing armed conflict in north-east Asia is the international community's collective priority while the onus is also on the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to refrain from further nuclear testing and explore the path of dialogue, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council today.

Armed conflict in north-east Asia, which is home to one fifth of the world's people and gross domestic product, would have global implications, [warned](#) Mr. Guterres at a ministerial-level meeting to discuss the DPRK's accelerated nuclear and ballistic missile activities. The meeting was chaired by Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State of the United States, which holds the Council's presidency for the month.

Mr. Guterres noted that since January 2016, the DPRK conducted two nuclear tests, more than 30 launches using ballistic missile technology, and various other activities relating to the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in clear violations of Security Council resolutions.

Its launches using ballistic missile technology have included tests of short-, medium-, intermediate-range and submarine-launched ballistic missiles, as well as the placement of a satellite in orbit, he added.

We must assume that, with each test or launch, the DPRK continues to make technological advances in its pursuit of a military nuclear capability

The DPRK is the only country to have conducted nuclear tests this century. We must assume that, with each test or launch, the DPRK continues to make technological advances in its pursuit of a military nuclear capability, [he said](#), citing DPRK leader Kim Jong Un's description of his country as a [responsible nuclear-weapon State](#) and a recent statement by a delegate that [going nuclear armed is the policy of our State](#).

Mr. Guterres said he is alarmed by the risk of a military escalation in the region, including by miscalculation or misunderstanding, and is particularly concerned by the possibility that efforts to offset the destabilizing activities of the DPRK could also result in increased arms competition and tensions, further impeding the ability of the international community to maintain unity and achieve a peaceful solution.

The onus is on the DPRK to comply with its international obligations. At the same time, the international community must also step up its efforts to manage and reduce tensions, [the UN chief stressed](#).

That means the DPRK refraining from further testing, complying with the relevant Council resolutions, and exploring the resumption of dialogue.

That also means reopening and strengthening communication channels, particularly military to military, to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding, and all Member States implementing relevant Council resolutions.

The Council has important tools at its disposal, from targeted sanctions to communication channels, he added.

Turning to the humanitarian situation in the DPRK, the Secretary-General noted that 13 UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the DPRK are calling for \$114 million to meet the urgent needs of 13 million especially vulnerable people – half the country's population.

He also called on the DPRK authorities to engage with UN human rights mechanisms and with the international community to address the grave human rights situation and improve the living conditions of its people.

[UN rights office troubled by accelerated executions in US with expiring drug a factor](#)

28 April 2017 – The United Nations human rights office today expressed deep concern about the executions of four men in the United States state of Arkansas, which were reportedly done within the span of eight days to make use of an expiring lethal injection drug.

“Rushing executions can deny prisoners the opportunity to fully exercise their rights to appeal against their conviction and/or sentence, and can also lead to States' shortening their clemency processes, thereby affecting prisoners' rights,” a spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Elizabeth Throssell told reporters in Geneva.

OHCHR noted that the executions had been stayed, but Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson decided to proceed with the executions because the State's supply of one of the drugs used in lethal injections – midazolam – was due to expire on 30 April and it was unclear whether further supplies could be obtained.

The use of midazolam has been criticized for failing to prevent suffering of pain, with reports of botched executions related to its use in the US states of Alabama, Ohio and Oklahoma.

The latest prisoner to be executed was Kenneth Williams, who was pronounced dead before midnight last night local time. Ledell Lee was executed on 20 April, and Marcel Williams and Jack Jones on 24 April.

The executions in Arkansas took place after a “12 year de facto moratorium” on the use of the death penalty in the state, Ms. Throssell said.

The number of death executions overall had declined steadily over the past few years, from 52 in 2009 to 20 last year. Since the start of 2017, 10 executions had been carried out.

The OHCHR spokesperson noted that the UN opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and we call on all Governments that retain it to establish an official moratorium on all executions with the aim of abolishing the death penalty.

On 1 March, the Human Rights Council held a biennial high-level panel discussion on the human rights violations related to the use of the death penalty, in particular with respect to the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.