

UN Envoy 'confident' deal can be reached to avert further violence around key Yemeni port city

The United Nations envoy for Yemen expressed confidence on Thursday that a solution can be found to prevent further violence in and around the port city of Hodeida.

Fighting between Houthi rebels who control the city, and government forces backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, has put hundreds of thousands of civilian lives there at risk.

Martin Griffiths, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, was in the capital, Sana'a at the weekend, for talks to try and resolve the crisis.

"My priority now is to avoid a military confrontation in (Hodeida) and to swiftly return to political negotiations," he said, according to a [statement](#) issued in Amman to correspondents.

I am confident that we can reach an agreement to avert any escalation of violence – *Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy*

The envoy said he was encouraged by the "constructive engagement of the Ansar Allah leadership", referring to the official name of the Houthis.

He also looked forward to upcoming meetings with the country's President and Government of Yemen, based in the south of country.

"I am confident that we can reach an agreement to avert any escalation of violence," the statement continued.

Meanwhile, aid workers continue to mobilize to support residents of the city. [Lise Grande](#), UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, said they have been off-loading food at the port and rushing in emergency stocks.

Partners have also been distributing food boxes and emergency kits to displaced families, among other measures. Conditions in Hodeida were already among the worst in the country, even before the fighting began, according to Ms. Grande.

She reported that one quarter of children there are suffering from acute malnutrition, while the city was an epicenter of last year's deadly cholera outbreak: among the worst in recent history. "Of all the things we are worried about, cholera is top of the list," she added.

"It wouldn't take much to start an unstoppable outbreak. If the water system

in just one neighbourhood breaks down, and if nothing can be done to immediately address the situation, cholera could spread with lightning speed.”

Strong multilateral institutions key to tackling world's dramatic challenges, UN chief says In Moscow

In Moscow on Thursday, Secretary-General António Guterres said multilateralism was vital to tackling climate change, terrorism and other dramatic challenges, and that the United Nations and Russia would continue working together to make global institutions stronger and better able to serve the public good.

“Facing [dramatic global challenges](#), we need a global capacity to address them that reaffirms the importance of multilateralism and the importance of a rules-based set of international relations, based on the rule of law and in accordance with the [UN Charter](#),” said Mr. Guterres, wrapping up a two-day trip to Russia during a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

“We had very constructive discussions about all the situations that are of course worrying us – from the Middle East, to several African locations, to North Korea, to Ukraine – to different other crises around the world,” said the Secretary-General.

He stressed that the UN and Russia would also work together towards conflict resolution in Syria, where he said the objective is to achieve a Syria in which territorial integrity is preserved, which can control its own destiny and where all groups can feel included.

In the afternoon, the Secretary-General met with the heads of UN agencies in Russia to commemorate 70 years of UN presence in the country. He also met with hockey legend Vyacheslav Fetisov, who was recently designated as UN Environment Patron for Polar Regions and who presented the Secretary-General with a pair of skates and his own hockey stick.

And yesterday, the Secretary-General and President Vladimir Putin met and discussed the state of international relations and multilateral institutions, as well as the situation in the Middle East, including Syria.



The Kremlin

Secretary-General António Guterres (right) shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow.

Myanmar: New UN envoy offers to serve 'as a bridge', recognizes 'positive steps' over Rakhine state

Focussing on “listening to all sides” the new United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar praised “recent positive steps” taken by the government and United Nations to try and ensure the eventual voluntary, safe and dignified return of Rohingya refugees, to their homes in Rakhine state.

In a [press statement to journalists](#) released by the UN [Spokesperson's office](#) on Thursday, as she concluded her first visit to the country, [Christine Schraner Burgener](#) said that in all her discussions with national leaders, she had “underlined the importance of accountability” which was “essential for genuine reconciliation.”

She called for “credible fact-finding measures and highlighted the readiness on the part of the United Nations and the international community to cooperate in this regard,” said the statement.

More than 700,000 Rohingya refugees are sheltering in camps across the border in Bangladesh, after being driven from their homes in northern Myanmar since last August.

In early June, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the government and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Myanmar. The Special Envoy noted this was a particularly positive step, and expressed hope that the root causes of the refugee crisis could be tackled soon, “in particular ending restrictions on freedom of movement and granting citizenship to those eligible”, allowing safe return.

She also expressed her support for the agreement reached between Bangladesh and Myanmar last November, saying she would visit Bangladesh and the refugee camps soon.

During her visit between 12 and 21 June, Ms. Burgener met State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Commander-in-Chief of the army, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, as well as conflict-affected communities and families in Rakhine state, together with some IDPs along the border.

She focused on listening to all sides to better understand their diverse perspectives with a view to building trust and confidence, and establishing positive relations – while promoting key UN principles, said the statement to journalists.

In all meetings, she highlighted the need for inclusive solutions that integrated the views and important voices of women.

She expressed “her sincere appreciation to the Government of Myanmar and other interlocutors for their warm welcome and excellent organization of her visit”, said the statement, which added that: “All interlocutors expressed their wish for peace and development in Myanmar, and shared their frank assessment of the challenges that they were facing. They conveyed their willingness to work closely with the Special Envoy and the United Nations.”

First-ever global conference of national counter-terrorism chiefs will strengthen cooperation, build ‘resilient’ States, says top UN official

Heads of counter-terrorism agencies from across the world will be meeting at UN Headquarters in New York next week for the first time, to pool expertise, resources and ideas to fight back against the growing scourge of international terrorism.

In an interview with UN News ahead of the landmark forum, the official who heads up the world body's [Office of Counter-Terrorism](#) – which came into being just a year ago – said that it would give those leading the fight from a local to international level, the chance to “show our unity” and speak with “one professional voice”.

Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, [Vladimir Voronkov](#), said that defeating terror groups such as ISIL, otherwise known as Dae'sh, which has been mostly driven out of Iraq in the past year, must involve “the family level – the level of local communities, the level of State, and the level of international cooperation. Only this kind of approach can be comprehensive.”

The High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism, takes place next Thursday and Friday, and will focus on strengthening cooperation “to combat the evolving threat of terrorism.”

Civil society representatives and experts in the field will be joining “the majority of heads of agencies from all around the world” said Mr. Voronkov; which was vital to ensure a united front on how best to move forward, and build resilience.

... the building up of this resilient society, the resilient State;
this is the main task for counter-terrorism activities – *Vladimir Voronkov, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism*

“It's important to have capacity-building projects,” said the UN counter-terrorism chief, adding that it would be a major help to countries which need help to expel terrorist groups, and shut down terror cells, “to build this resilient environment.”

“So I think after the defeat of ISIL, the building up of this resilient society, the resilient State; this is the main task for counter-terrorism activities,” he said.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office, addresses the Security Council meeting on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts and foreign terrorist fighters.

Asked about the importance of taking the fight to terrorists in cyberspace, and to view online recruitment and propaganda, as the new frontline, the Under-Secretary-General said that cooperation with the private sector – and especially global internet-based companies such as Facebook and Google – was essential.

They are doing a “very important job in this regard” he said, adding that expanding the number of countries which are actively involved in championing specific areas of the counter-terror effort, was also important.

Next week, different Member States are organizing sessions on countering terrorism financing; preventing violent extremism and incitement; standing up for the rights of those who have survived terror attacks; and combating terrorists’ use of the internet, among other meetings on the margins.

In his interview with UN News, Mr. Voronkov also highlighted the importance of reaching young people who are vulnerable to the lure of extremism, saying that young people in areas of high militant activity such as northern Mali, need to be reached on the grassroots level, to counter terrorist propaganda.

“I think it’s very important from this human rights angle, and from the angle which could show that these human beings are not in a very easy situation, because their lives were put in danger” by terrorists and recruiters from militant armed groups, he said.

Restoring government control across Central African Republic is ‘key’ to lasting peace, stability – UN envoy

While many positive steps have been taken in the Central African Republic (CAR), progress has been too slow and is continually under threat from “those who seek private gains through violence,” the United Nations envoy on the ground told the Security Council on Thursday, underscoring that restoring government authority is “key”, both now and in the long-term.

“The country cannot afford more clashes among armed groups seeking opportunity to pillage and exploit natural resources,” said Special Representative Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who also heads the UN Stabilization Mission in the CAR, known as [MINUSCA](#).

“It is important and essential that the State administration be increasingly visible and effective in the interior of the country,” he added, declaring that “MINUSCA will continue to stand in support of these Government efforts.”

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga was encouraged, he said, by the “progressive deployment of magistrates” in new areas of the country and tribunals opening outside of Bangui. He pointed out that while traveling around the country he constantly heard demands “for justice to help communities address criminality and to counter the country’s long, sad history of impunity.”

“Despite the slow but steady progress to rebuild national courts, Central Africans have new hopes that the perpetrators of the gravest crimes will finally face justice,” he said.

The MINUSCA chief also flagged up encouraging steps initiated by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, to advance transitional justice, arguing that “justice and reconciliation must indeed progress simultaneously.”

Turning to the persistently dire humanitarian situation, he painted a picture in which one-in-four Central Africans has had to abandon their homes.

“More than 688,000 people remain internally displaced, and another 568,000 are refugees in neighbouring countries,” he stated, spotlighting that attacks against humanitarians make the country “the deadliest” place in the world to be an aid worker.

He cited the latest outbreak of violence around the city of Bambari, some 380 kilometers from the capital, Bangui, in which armed groups looted humanitarian agencies, forcing them to suspend aid operations and harshly impacting the local population.

Moreover, a gaping humanitarian funding shortfall needs to be addressed: “Only four per cent of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded, leaving many priority regions without assistance,” he asserted.

The mission head stressed that Central Africans remain desperate to see a functioning State and an end to the criminal activities of armed groups – affirming that MINUSCA and other partners would continue to support the Government in trying to meet its citizens’ needs, and bolster hopes for the future.

“Our resolve remains strong, heeding the Secretary-General’s call to all of us to remain engaged with a considerable dose of patience, dedication and in a spirit of sacrifice,” he said.

“With the support of a united Security Council and region, we will ensure that the vision and hopes of Central Africans for lasting peace, stability and shared prosperity become a reality,” concluded Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.