

# Peru: Pardon of former President Fujimori a 'slap in the face' for victims, say UN rights experts

28 December 2017 – Condemning the pardoning of former President of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, a group of United Nations independent human rights experts have said that the move undermines the work of the judiciary and the international community to achieve justice.

["It is a major setback for the rule of law in Peru:](#) a humanitarian pardon has been granted to someone convicted of serious crimes after a fair trial, whose guilt is not in question and who does not meet the legal requirements for a pardon," said the experts in a news release issued by the UN human rights office.

"We are appalled by this decision. It is a slap in the face for the victims and witnesses whose tireless commitment brought him to justice."

The experts voicing their concern include Agnès Callamard, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Pablo de Greiff, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

In the news release, the experts stressed that the Peruvian President's constitutional right to pardon people could not be seen in isolation from the international conventions ratified by the country.

"International human rights law restricts the granting of amnesties, pardons or other exclusions of responsibility in cases of serious human rights violations including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances," they said, noting that a request of habeas corpus on Mr. Fujimori's health condition was already rejected by the judiciary.

Mr. Fujimori was serving a 25-year jail term for serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and kidnapping. His conviction had been hailed as a major achievement in the fight against impunity.

The announcement of his pardon by current President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, on December 24, has sparked protests in the capital, Lima, and elsewhere in the country.

***Government should not give in to political pressure – rights experts***

Also in the release, the experts said that the Government should not give in to political pressure and must honour its domestic and international obligations.

“Mr. Fujimori must be treated like any other person convicted of serious human rights crimes. His treatment should be compatible with his state of health and in accordance with the established standards and procedures,” added the experts.

The Government should respect the victims and witnesses who fought for justice and should adopt a comprehensive transitional justice strategy as a matter of priority, the experts added.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

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## Legacy of UN Mission in Liberia tied to former President Johnson Sirleaf, says senior UN official

28 December 2017 – The legacy of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the outgoing President of Liberia, is connected to the legacy of the United Nations Mission in the country ([UNMIL](#)), which will wind down in March after 15 years of operations, a senior UN official said.

In an interview with *UN News*, Farid Zarif, the head of UNMIL, said that UN peacekeepers, working with national authorities, managed to bring peace and stability to the country, to help it rebuild and to pave the way for renewed economic growth.

“We are very confident that with the departure of UNMIL Liberia will be in a far better situation to meet the challenges of the future,” Under-Secretary-General Zarif said, despite continued vulnerabilities and fragilities.

Liberia is a very rich country endowed with many natural resources, he added. With improved management of those resources, along with a diversification of the macroeconomy and support from the international community, the country has the potential.

“[Ms.] Sirleaf should be credited for providing a vision for the future of Liberia. And if elements of that vision are implemented, Liberia will soon become a self-sustaining society,” Mr. Zarif said.

“Her legacy is very much connected to the legacy of the UN mission in Liberia.”

Ms. Sirleaf will step down in January after two terms in office. Liberians

are still waiting for the official announcement of her successor following Tuesday's second round of vote.

Former Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo, who is a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, is due to arrive in the capital, Monrovia, today.

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres requested Mr. Obasanjo to travel to Liberia as part of the UN's continued good offices engagement – a term for third-party assistance in mediating a conflict – and to help support an orderly and peaceful transition of power. This would be the first time one democratically elected leader in Liberia hands over power to another in more than 70 years.

Ahead of the 26 December election, as well as the first round of vote on 10 October, UNMIL supported national election officials, even delivering voting materials by plane. Other branches of the UN provided technical assistance. All security duties were transferred over to Liberian officials in June of last year.

UNMIL also carried out its good offices engagement with community members, bringing together local leaders, faith-based organizations, the media, women and youth, among others.

"We thought that based on past experiences of violence, we need to really invest in preventive diplomacy," Mr. Zarif said.

"Together we have been very successful in avoiding all forms of violence. Even demonstrations did not happen, let alone mortalities or casualties. So we are very happy with the success of the good offices."

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## [Yemen: Amid spike in casualties, UN relief official says civilians bearing brunt of 'absurd war'](#)

28 December 2017 – After separate airstrikes on a crowded market and a rural farm left nearly 70 people dead earlier this week in Yemen, the top United Nations humanitarian official in the country denounced the incidents and reminded the warring parties of their international legal obligations to spare civilian lives and infrastructure.

"These incidents prove the [complete disregard for human life](#) that all parties, including the Saudi-led Coalition, continue to show," Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, stated Thursday.

Denouncing “this absurd war,” he said the conflict has only resulted in the destruction of the country and” the incommensurate suffering of its people, who are being punished as part of a futile military campaign by both sides.”

Initial reports from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) indicate that on 26 December, airstrikes on a crowded popular market in Al Hayma sub-district in Attazziah district, in Yemen’s war-ravaged central Taiz Governorate, resulted in at least 54 civilians killed, including eight children, and 32 others injured including six children.

During the past days, residential areas in Al Hayma villages, including a health unit occupied by internally displaced persons, have been subject to a full blockade by the *de facto* authorities and indiscriminate shelling that resulted in casualties among the residents and displacement of many families to safer areas.

Also on 26 December, an airstrike on a farm in Attohayta District, Al Hudaydah Governorate resulted in the killing of 14 people from the same family. These new victims are in addition to 84 civilian casualties reported in the last 10 days, including 41 people killed, and 43 people injured by airstrikes in several governorates throughout Yemen.

“I remind all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi-led Coalition, of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure and to always distinguish between civilian and military objects,” said Mr. McGoldrick.

He noted that the Yemen conflict has hit the grim 1,000-day mark. Civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting, and “I once again remind all parties that it has no military solution. There can only be a political solution.”

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## **Brutality against children ‘cannot be the new normal’ stresses UNICEF**

28 December 2017 – The scale of attack on children in conflict zones throughout 2017 is “shocking” said the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), calling on all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations under international law and immediately end violations and attacks against children.

“Children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds,” said Manuel Fontaine, the Director of Emergency Programmes at UNICEF, in a news release Thursday.

“As these attacks continue year after year, we cannot become numb. Such brutality cannot be the new normal.”

According to UNICEF, children have become frontline targets, used as human shields, killed, maimed and recruited to fight in conflicts around the world.

Sexual violence, forced marriage, abduction and enslavement have become standard tactics in conflicts from Iraq, Syria and Yemen, to Nigeria, South Sudan and Myanmar, said the UN agency.

In addition to the physical trauma children have had to suffer, far too many children have been subjected to the psychosocial trauma in having to witness shocking and widespread violence.

Hundreds of thousands have been displaced and many children have died as a result of lack of health care, medicines or access to food and water, because these services and were damaged or destroyed in fighting.

In some contexts, children abducted by extremist groups experience abuse yet again upon release when they are detained by security forces, added UNICEF.

In the news release, the UN agency underscored the need of all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations under international law to immediately end violations against children and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals.

UNICEF also called on all States with influence over parties to conflict to use that influence to protect children.

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## **Sustained cooperation vital to address Somalia's challenges, says UN envoy**

27 December 2017 – In a year which saw millions of Somali civilians displaced by armed conflict and thousands more killed and wounded in violence, the United Nations envoy to the country has called for sustained cooperation to tackle a number of pressing challenges.

“No one should underestimate the many challenges ahead, and the serious issues that continue to retard and even threaten further progress,” said Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

“These include pervasive corruption, most obviously in politics, and powerbrokers’ willingness to use violence, or the threat of violence, against opponents,” he added.

Noting that the militants have retained the capacity to mount such devastating attacks, Mr. Keating also emphasized that the terrorist group thrives, among other things, on the absence of functional local government

and on the many conflicts around the country.

#### ***Severe and growing humanitarian needs***

At the same time, there is “severe and growing” humanitarian needs across the Horn of Africa nation.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), food security needs are nearly double the five-year average due to limited rain, increased displacement, lack of access to basic services, and continuing insecurity and conflict.

“The number of people in [humanitarian] emergency [phase] have increased tenfold from 83,000 in January to 866,000 people in November 2017,” OCHA said in a humanitarian bulletin.

“Humanitarian Emergency” is a state in which the acute malnutrition rate has surpassed the “emergency threshold” of 15 per cent. In Somalia, the rate stands at 17.4 per cent.

Across the country, some 6.2 million are in need of humanitarian and protection assistance and more than half that number require urgent life-saving assistance. This year witnessed the displacement of a further one million Somalis, taking the total across the country to more than two million.

#### ***Prospects of humanitarian recovery in 2018 ‘grim’***

However, with forecasts for poor rains during the two main crop seasons and as well as a heightened risk of the La Niña weather phenomenon in early-mid 2018, the prospects for recovery next year look “grim,” said the UN relief wing.

Life-saving assistance will, therefore, remain an urgent priority, it said, noting the need to also address the underlying causes of recurring humanitarian crises.

“In line with the [New Way of Working](#) and building on efforts since 2012 to create household resilience, humanitarian and development partners are pursuing more sustainable mid- to longer-term investment in reducing risk and vulnerability,” said OCHA.

In the same vein, Mr. Keating, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia ([UNSOM](#)), underscored the need the need for greater cooperation to overcome the obstacles.

“Lessons can be drawn from 2017, both good and bad. A central one may be that when the most powerful actors cooperate, whether the Federal Government, Federal Member States, parliamentarians, clan elders, business or the international community, great progress can be made,” he said.

“When they do not cooperate, the risks are enormous.”