

Security Council strongly condemns 'heinous' attack on Egyptian police

11 September 2017 – The members of the United Nations Security Council strongly condemned the “heinous and cowardly” terrorist attack that took place on Monday in Sinai, in which at least 18 policemen were killed and 3 were injured.

“They expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Egypt, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured,” read a statement issued to the press by the 15-member body.

Council members reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these “reprehensible acts of terrorism” to justice.

Also today, UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the world body sent its condolences to the Government and people of Egypt on the attack.

At close of 71st General Assembly, outgoing President stresses sustainability

11 September 2017 – The United Nations General Assembly today closed its 71st session with a focus on sustainable development, as outgoing president Peter Thomson handed over the gavel to his successor, Miroslav Lajčák.

In his final address, Mr. Thomson summarized the achievements of his one-year tenure, and urged the international community to raise awareness about the behavioural changes needed to create a more sustainable way of life and to combat climate change, as agreed to in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

“We must embrace the power of innovation and technology to leverage SDG implementation and combat climate change at the speed and scale required,” he said. “We are witnessing exponential change in multiple areas of technology and we must manage the risks and seize the opportunities for the common good of humanity and the planet.”

Mr. Thomson also underlined the importance of partnerships and a change in how development is financed, as requirements for achieving the [SDGs](#) by the 2030 deadline.

“We have not come this far as a species only to be defeated by greed,” Mr. Thomson said, echoing what he told the press in his final press conference on Friday.

In that [press briefing](#), Mr. Thomson said that he had written to all heads of government and to some 4,000 universities asking them to teach SDGs in school.

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Peter Thomson

“We are stealing from our grandchildren’s future if we continue to take more from the planetary ecosystem than it can sustainably grant,” Mr. Thomson said in today’s statement.

Ahead of his address, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres lauded the outgoing official for overseeing a “productive” session that included the adoption of a landmark declaration on [refugees and migrants](#), the establishment of a technology bank for the least developed countries, and a momentum to save the oceans, among others.

“Thank you for helping to steer the Member States to a solid record of achievement over the past year. Day in and day out, you brought us together,” said the Secretary-General.

Paying homage to the 16th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and other targets in Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., Mr. Guterres noted that this “[spirit of unity has particular meaning today](#).”

“This was an assault on the United States. But so many of our Member States saw their citizens murdered that day,” he said. “I know you join me in expressing our sorrow and solidarity on this day.”

Following the remarks, the General Assembly stood for one minute of silent prayer or meditation, as is the custom, after which the incoming president, Mr. Lajčák, took the oath of office and received the symbolic gavel from Mr. Thomson.

Mr. Lajčák will open the 72nd session of the General Assembly tomorrow afternoon.

Top UN official commends Niger for tackling complex humanitarian crisis

11 September 2017 – Top UN official commends Niger for tackling complex humanitarian crisis A top United Nations official today commended the Government of Niger for tackling the country's complex humanitarian crisis, including leading the provision of life-saving aid to hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable, and highlighted the need to address its root causes.

"I was impressed to see how brave aid workers are working with the Government to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable people in Niger under difficult and dangerous circumstances," said the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, concluding a three-day visit.

During the visit, the first for Mr. Lowcock since assuming his post earlier this month, he travelled to the Diffa region – where aid has been provided to 400,000 people; one out of two individuals requires humanitarian assistance; and Boko Haram attacks remain a grave threat.

Mr. Lowcock pointed to the success of scaled-up humanitarian support in Niger in recent years, saying: "We have reached millions of people, unquestionably saving lives and averting the worst. But humanitarian needs remain high and sustained international help behind Niger's efforts is critical."

N'Gagam, a village in the Diffa region near the Nigerian border, had a pre-crisis population of 1,000 but now hosts 13,500 people from both Niger and Nigeria whose homes were destroyed or villages are considered too dangerous to return to, according to a [news release](#) issued by OCHA.

A 30-year-old woman named Achaitou, who fled Nigeria to N'Gagam with her four young children, told Mr. Lowcock how she survives with help from the UN and partners. "Despite daily struggles, she maintains her dignity and retains hope for a better future for her children. But she remains terrified of violence by armed groups and often takes her children into the bush at night, risking disease and snake bites."

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, pays visit to the Diffa region of Niger. Credit: OCHA/Ivo Brandau

The UN humanitarian chief said the Government and people of Niger have shown "enormous generosity and humanity" in hosting refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing violence, not only in the Lake Chad Basin but also in the west, where people have fled insecurity in Mali.

Niger has been an active international partner in efforts to address the crises in both the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, according to OCHA.

In Niger, Mr. Lowcock also held meetings with UN officials, international non-governmental organizations and the diplomatic community, in addition to Government officials.

“Niger has done so much right, but faces enormous challenges,” he pointed out, noting that, like other countries across the Sahel, it grapples with insecurity, climatic shocks, extreme poverty and the lack of basic services and infrastructure.

“Together with our humanitarian efforts, Niger needs increased support from development partners, especially to educate its young population and enable them to get jobs. We must tackle the root causes of the crisis alongside the immediate priority of saving lives and protecting people,” he added.

UN human rights chief points to ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’ in Myanmar

11 September 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today lashed out at the treatment of the Rohingya in Myanmar which has led to more than 300,000 people fleeing to Bangladesh in the past three weeks, as security forces and local militia reportedly burn villages and shoot civilians.

“The situation seems a [textbook example of ethnic cleansing](#),” Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, noting that the current situation cannot yet be fully assessed since Myanmar has refused access to human rights investigators.

He cited reports of Myanmar authorities laying landmines along the border with Bangladesh and requiring returnees to provide “proof of nationality,” an impossibility given that successive Myanmar governments have since 1962 progressively stripped the Rohingya population of their political and civil rights, including citizenship rights.

The latest security operation in Rakhine state follows attacks by militants on 25 August against 30 police posts.

The High Commissioner called the response “clearly disproportionate” and “without regard for basic principles of international law,” and said the Government should “stop claiming that the Rohingyas are setting fire to their own homes and laying waste to their own villages.”

“This complete denial of reality is doing great damage to the international standing of a Government which, until recently, benefited from immense good will,” he said.

"I call on the Government to end its current cruel military operation, with accountability for all violations that have occurred and to reverse the pattern of severe and widespread discrimination against the Rohingya population," he added, calling for his Office ([OHCHR](#)) to obtain unfettered access to the country.



Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights addresses the 36th session of the Human Rights Council. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Last year, Mr. Zeid issued a report warning that the pattern of gross violations of the human rights of the Rohingya suggested a widespread or systematic attack against the community, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity.

In today's statement, he also addressed Bangladeshi authorities, encouraging them to maintain open borders for the refugees, and the international community to help support the refugees. Humanitarian agencies in Bangladesh today [appealed](#) for \$77 million to aid an estimated 300,000 refugees through the end of the year.

At the same time, he deplored measures taken by India, which has said it is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention and can deport Rohingyas.

Warnings of escalating violence in Venezuela

Among other issues raised in his address today was the situation in Venezuela, where Mr. Zeid said that crimes against humanity may have been committed, and where tensions have the potential to escalate further.

He noted a report issued by OHCHR last month highlighting excessive use of force by security officers and multiple other human rights violations, and urged authorities in Venezuela – which is a member of the Geneva-based forum – "to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights."

Given the very real dangers to human rights in the country, he urged the Human Rights Council to establish an international investigation and called for the involvement of the international community.

Call for international probe into abuses in Yemen

Mr. Zeid also called for the establishment of an international and independent investigative body to probe the human rights situation in Yemen, which he called "extremely alarming."

He noted that 62 international and Yemeni non-governmental organizations had submitted a letter to the Council requesting such an inquiry.

"The devastation of Yemen and the horrific suffering of its people will have immense and enduring repercussions across the region," Mr. Zeid said. "I

appeal to the parties to the conflict to reach a negotiated and durable solution, and to adhere to their obligations under international law, including by facilitating the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian relief.”

[New mission in Colombia ready to boost confidence for stable peace, says UN envoy](#)

11 September 2017 – As the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia prepares to begin its activities, its chief expressed the hope today that, with the support of the Security Council, the new operation should be able to strengthen the country’s confidence for a stable peace.

“Over the past months, the peace process between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) has slowly but steadily tipped the scales in favour of hope,” said the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Colombia, Jean Arnault, in his briefing to the Security Council.

He also told the 15-member Security Council that the formal transformation of the FARC-EP into a political party highlighted the momentous developments that have taken place over the past year in Colombia.

In his briefing, the UN envoy also informed the Council of the establishment at all levels – local, regional and national – of transitional teams with civilian personnel and observers, who began verification related to the new mission’s mandate.

“Reconnaissance visits are taking place to all prospective team sites and sub-offices, in particular with a view to identifying possible areas of co-location with the UN Country Team,” he added, noting also the other logistical and administrative tasks underway.

Recalling the recent visit by Pope Francis to the country and his strong message in favour of reconciliation, forgiveness and confidence in the future, Mr. Arnault said:

“We trust that the presence of the UN Mission, the work of the UN system, and the support of the Security Council can and should shore up further the confidence of the Colombian society in the stable peace to which its citizens so ardently aspire.”

Mr. Arnault reported that the temporary ceasefire agreed between the Government and the National Liberation Army (ENL) should be accompanied by a series of measures to improve the humanitarian situation of the communities

in conflict-affected areas. The agreement also provides that the UN would assist with the verification of the commitments made.

SEE ALSO: [Colombia: UN welcomes ceasefire pact between Government and ELN rebels](#)

“I met with both heads of delegations who have confirmed their interest in the UN involvement, and members of the Mission have engaged with the Technical Commission on the Ceasefire,” he said.

In July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2366 to establish, at the request of the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, the UN mission to verify the former combatants’ political, economic and social reintegration. The new mission will begin its activities on 26 September.