

[Afghanistan: UN assesses border management to cope with spike in returns from Pakistan](#)

2 May 2017 – With an unprecedented 600,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan last year, the United Nations migration agency has completed an assessment of border management capacity at Afghanistan's two main border crossings with Pakistan.

“With returns in 2017 on track to meet or even surpass the levels of last year, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the current procedures at the border, and to look at how they can be improved,” [said](#) Laurence Hart, Afghanistan Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), in a press release.

In 2016, 600,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar province and the Spin Boldak border crossing in Kandahar province.

Over several visits to Torkham and Spin Boldak in April, the assessment team met with officials from the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Border Police, customs officials, humanitarian actors and migrants.

Based on interviews and observations at the borders, IOM will produce an assessment report addressing key areas of administrative and operational capacity including infrastructure and available equipment; human resources and competencies; the regulatory framework guiding relevant government agencies; procedures and workflow; capacity gaps and issues.

“The report resulting from the assessment will include short-term recommendations for streamlining registration, document security and other border procedures, as well as technical assistance needs that could be addressed by IOM over the longer term,” said IOM border management expert Erik Slavenas.

As a first step toward improving efficiency at the border, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, with the support of IOM, rolled out the Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) in late 2016.

ARIS, a digital registration process for both undocumented and refugee returnees, replaced a paper-based registration system. It allows for better data collection and data sharing.

Somalia: 1.4M children to suffer acute malnutrition this year – UN agency

2 May 2017 – Some 1.4 million children in Somalia are projected to be acutely malnourished this year, an increase of 50 per cent over last year, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today announced.

The figure includes more than 275,000 children who have or will suffer life-threatening severe acute malnutrition.

"The combination of [drought, disease and displacement](#) are deadly for children, and we need to do far more, and faster, to save lives," Steven Lauwerier, UNICEF Somalia Representative.

Somalia is in the midst of a drought after rains failed in November 2016, for a third year in the row. About 615,000 people looking for food and water have been displaced since then.

The women and children who make the trek, generally on foot, to places where they hope to find assistance, are often robbed or worse, both on the way to, and in camps. While there have been some reports of sexual abuse, including rape, according to the UN agency. Some children have been conscripted into armed groups.

Since April, it has rained in parts of Somalia, but there are concerns that if they come in full, they could spread disease among children living in makeshift shelters made out of twigs and cloth, or tarps.

"If assistance doesn't reach families, more people will be forced off their land into displacement camps. Outbreaks of malaria are already imminent, as is an upsurge of cholera," UNICEF said.

Speaking in Geneva, UNICEF spokesperson Marixie Mercado said that a severely malnourished and dehydrated child could die in a matter of hours if they did not get treatment for diarrhoea and cholera

Ms. Mercado just returned from Baidoa, in the Bay region, which has more than half of the 28,400 cholera cases so far this year. She visited an inoculation campaign targeting every displaced child under five years of age with an emergency measles vaccination.

"Every mother I had spoken to had said that her children were sick, either with diarrhoea or vomiting, or feverish. Most had never been vaccinated before because of the insecurity across the country," she said.

Humanitarians in Somalia are seeking an overall \$825 million to reach the most vulnerable with life-saving assistance until June 2017.

Donors have been responding, hoping to avoid the 2011 famine in the country.

But whereas the 2011 drought was concentrated in South Central Somalia, this year, it is affecting more parts of the country, including the north-eastern and the Somaliland regions, with a higher total number of people at risk.

FEATURE: Mission Accomplished – UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire

1 May 2017 – After 13 years, the United Nations is completing the peacekeeping phase of its engagement with Côte d’Ivoire, after successfully assisting the country in restoring peace and stability following the post-2010 election crisis.

When the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire ([UNOCI](#)) closes its doors on 30 June of this year, it will mark the most recent successful completion of a peacekeeping operation in West Africa since the UN mission in Sierra Leone in 2005.

This milestone was made possible thanks to a significantly improved security situation in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as the extension of State authority and the deployment of public services, the strengthening of democratic institutions, progress in security sector reform and steady economic development.

Headed most recently by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Aïchatou Mindaoudou, the civilian and military personnel of UNOCI played a critical role in the country, including with regard to protecting civilians, monitoring the ceasefire, assisting the Government with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and countering hate messages on the airwaves with UNOCI FM.

UNOCI is in the process of delegating to the UN country team critical tasks necessary to ensure the sustainability of the gains achieved so far.

UN Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou and local residents highlight the vital contributions UNOCI made in restoring peace and security in the nation.

Boots on the ground

In 2004 the country was divided in half by a civil war. Due to the lack of State authority, the Security Council adopted resolution [1528](#), establishing UNOCI for an initial 12-month period. One of the mission’s initial tasks was to monitor and support the peace agreement signed by the Ivorian parties the previous year.



The dismantling of the Zone of Confidence in Tiebissou, Côte d'Ivoire, in April 2007. Credit: UN Photo/ Ky Chung

Zone of Confidence

Another primary duty was to monitor the Zone of Confidence – a swathe of land that separated the Government-ruled south and opposition-controlled north – while restoring trust between the parties to reunite the country.

In 2007, under the [Ouagadougou Political Agreement](#), UNOCI set up 17 observation posts called the “Green Line” – replacing the Zone of Confidence – that remained in place until July 2008, when the last post had been eliminated.



People injured in the 2010 marches supporting opposition leader Alassane Ouattara arrive at UNOCI Headquarters, where they received free medical treatment. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma

Locked in battle

Throughout the years, UNOCI was called on to respond to numerous challenges. In January 2006, pro-government youth protesters took to the streets after a UN-authorized team supported terminating the Parliament, whose mandate had expired.

After four days of violent protests in which UN humanitarian and peacekeeping facilities were targeted, hundreds of UN personnel were evacuated.

The Security Council then decided to boost UNOCI's strength with the temporary deployment of an additional battalion from the UN mission in Liberia.

Then in 2010, the country was thrust back into civil war when incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down after losing the UN-certified election to Alassane Ouattara. Throughout a period of increased fighting, UNOCI continued to protect civilians, even as it was itself being targeted.



UN personnel seek refuge, in April 2011, in the basement of UNOCI Headquarters in Abidjan, after being shelled by forces loyal to former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma

Mr. Gbagbo eventually surrendered and Mr. Ouattara was inaugurated as president in May of 2011, but not before some 3,000 people were killed in the post-election violence and another 300,000 became refugees.

UNOCI facilitated an inclusive political dialogue, which culminated in two presidential and legislative elections in 2011 and 2016, and a referendum. Among its other achievements, the mission strengthened the National Commission on Human Rights, which helped decrease human rights violations, and helped to disarm 70,000 combatants and re-integrate them into society.



During the “UNOCI Days” held in 2010, mission staff offered free medical consultations to residents of Bocanda. The event also included workshops, forums, sports games, and traditional Ivorian performances and concerts. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoman



Schoolgirls in Adjame enjoy UNOCI’s schools caravan programme, which provided a series of information and sensitization sessions that raised awareness about the mission’s mandate among school children (March 2012). Credit: UN Photo/ Hien Macline



UNOCI human rights and civil affairs officers conduct a training session for local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on conflict management, respect for human rights, child protection and the fight against HIV/AIDS, at UNOCI’s headquarters in Abidjan in October 2013. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma



An officer with UNOCI is shown on patrol in the district of Abobo, Abidjan, in April 2011, in the days following the surrender of former president Laurent Gbagbo, which ended a months-long stand-off in which UNOCI staff had also been targeted. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma



UNOCI peacekeepers from Jordan provide a hot meal to school children in Abidjan (October 2013). Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma



In July 2012, UN peacekeepers guard the building in Para where the former head of UNOCI, Bert Koenders, was meeting with village chiefs and other local leaders. One month earlier, seven UN peacekeepers serving with UNOCI were attacked and killed here. Credit: UN Photo/ Patricia Estev



Members of the Moroccan battalion of UNOCI distribute water to villagers during a joint patrol with the members of the Licorne Forces – a French military operation in support of UNOCI – in January 2007. Credit: UN Photo/ Basile Zoma



In 2012, a memorial ceremony was held for seven Nigerian UNOCI peacekeepers that were killed when unidentified armed elements assaulted their patrol.
Credit: UN Photo/ Patricia Esteve

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Syria: UN concerned over worsening security, humanitarian situation in Damascus suburbs

1 May 2017 – The United Nations today said that it remains deeply concerned by the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern part of Syria's Ghouta, where some 400,000 people are trapped.

"The UN has not reached any part of eastern Ghouta since October last year," said Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, in the daily briefing at UN Headquarters in New York.

He said that the UN stands ready to immediately deliver life-saving assistance to those in need of assistance in eastern Ghouta, located in the suburbs of Damascus, should the pause be established and abided by all parties to the conflict.

The spokesperson said the UN remains concerned about reports of intensified fighting among non-State armed groups in the enclave over the past few days.

With commercial and humanitarian supplies continue to be blocked, prices of basic staple goods have gone up significantly, he said, noting that civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities and schools, continue to be affected by the tight restrictions and reports of shelling, airstrikes, and ground fighting.

Mr. Dujarric also announced that UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) Executive Director David Beasley is visiting Lebanon and Syria through 3 May – his first visit since taking office last month. Mr. Beasley is expected to meet Syrians affected by the ongoing crisis to witness the profound humanitarian crisis first-hand.

UN calls for protection of civilians sheltering in South Sudan's Upper Nile area

1 May 2017 – A senior United Nations humanitarian official in South Sudan today demanded that parties to the conflict uphold their responsibilities to protect thousands of Shilluk civilians sheltering in and around Aburoc, following the resumption of the government offensive and clashes along the West Bank of the Nile River last week.

“Civilians in Aburoc are living in fear, not knowing what each day will bring,” [said](#) the Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for the country, Serge Tissot, in a press release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“I call on the Government to respect the civilian nature of these settlements and ensure they are not subject to attacks, and call on the opposition forces to ensure that areas highly populated by civilians are, and remain, demilitarized,” he added.

According to OCHA, thousands of civilians have arrived into Aburoc in recent days. Many have walked for days on foot and are arriving exhausted and weak. Thousands are reportedly now moving toward Sudan out of fear of potential future attacks. Prices are exorbitant and transport is inadequate, so many people are having no choice but to walk.

On 23 and 24 April, humanitarian organizations relocated staff from Kodok and Aburoc amidst the spread of conflict on the Nile's West Bank. Several courageous local staff remain in the community and are doing all they can to assist people in need. However, key humanitarian assets were looted by opposition forces and other actors in recent days.

“I demand the immediate return of all looted humanitarian assets in Aburoc, which are absolutely vital to life-saving humanitarian action,” said Mr. Tissot.

Humanitarians are exploring all feasible options to provide assistance to those fleeing the fighting but are facing major challenges, including lack of fuel in the area.

An interagency team visited Aburoc on 29 April to see the situation first-hand and the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) recently released funds that will support the scale-up of emergency operations in locations where civilians are arriving.

“This operation is the true definition of life-saving,” said Mr. Tissot. “I therefore call on both parties to ensure immediate, free and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians, wherever they may flee, including for

trucks to safely access the river and carry water to locations where [internally displaced persons] are sheltering.”