

Iraq: UN assessment reveals extensive destruction in western Mosul

13 April 2017 – Using satellite imagery and local researches, the most recent evaluation confirms that western Mosul has undergone extensive destruction, “far greater than in the east,” according to a senior United Nations aid official in the country.

“The [level of damage](#) in western Mosul is already far greater than in the east, even before the battle to retake the Old City begins,” said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, in a news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

With more than 1,140 housing sites having been destroyed across the city, the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) confirms that damage to houses in western Mosul is two and a half times greater than in the eastern districts with one-third of the residential devastation reported to have occurred in the Al Jadeda neighbourhood.

Ms. Grande pointed out that nearly 300,000 civilians have already fled western Mosul and “hundreds of thousands more may in the days and weeks ahead.”

She stressed that homes are being destroyed, schools and health centres damaged and that crucial public infrastructure, including electricity and water stations, are in ruins.

“Under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict are obliged to do everything possible to protect civilians and limit damage to civilian infrastructure. Nothing is more important,” concluded the Humanitarian Coordinator.

‘Radical’ investments needed to meet global water and sanitation targets – UN report

13 April 2017 – Against the backdrop of almost two billion people around the world relying on sources of drinking-water contaminated with faeces, the United Nations has called on countries to “radically” increase investments in water and sanitation infrastructure not only to protect their populations from deadly diseases but also to ensure that they are able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

Contaminated drinking-water is estimated to cause more than 500,000 diarrhoeal deaths each year and is a major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, and trachoma,” [said](#) Maria Neira, the Director of Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health at the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) in a news release today.

The UN report, [Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water 2017](#), notes that while countries have increased their budgets for water, sanitation and hygiene at an average annual rate of about 4.9 per cent over the last three years, 80 per cent of countries have reported that the increase is still insufficient to meet nationally-defined targets for those services.

Therefore, in order to meet the ambitious SDG targets, which aim for universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services by 2030, countries need to use financial resources more efficiently as well as increase efforts to identify new sources of funding.

The Global Assessment also highlights that these efforts are particularly important for developing countries where current national coverage targets are based on achieving access to basic infrastructure and which may not necessarily provide continuously safe and reliable services.

The report has been issued by WHO, on behalf of UN-Water – the inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater-related issues, including sanitation.

Funding gap is vast but countries have the ability to mobilize resources

According to estimates by the World Bank, investments in infrastructure need to triple to \$114 billion per year – a figure which does not include operating and maintenance costs.

While this funding gap is vast, there are recent examples of countries having demonstrated the ability to mobilize the needed resources to meet development targets.

For instance, 147 countries around the globe were able to successfully mobilize the resources required to meet the Millennium Development Goal ([MDG](#)) [target](#) of halving the proportion of people without an improved source of water, and 95 among them met the corresponding target for sanitation. 77 countries met both.

[According](#) to Guy Ryder, the Chair of UN-Water and the Director-General of the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), nations have the ability to address the challenges of meeting the ambitious SDG targets.

“Increased investments in water and sanitation can yield substantial benefits for human health and development, generate employment and make sure that we leave no one behind,” he said.

Rights of refugees and migrants with disabilities must be priority in new global action plan – UN experts

12 April 2017 – Accessible social and health services, with dedicated human and financial resources must be addressed and made available for persons with disabilities in the new global framework on [refugees and migrants](#), a group of United Nations human rights experts have urged, as UN-led intergovernmental talks on the issue are set to launch consultation in 2018.

The framework, entitled [Global Compact for Migration](#) will set out a range of principles and commitments among governments to enhance coordination on international migration and is due to be adopted in 2018. The Compact is one of the key outcomes of last year's UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants.

"The new Global Compact is a [unique opportunity](#) to address the shortcomings of a migration and refugee system built on policies that lack consideration for persons with disabilities, said Theresia Degener, the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Dedicated human and financial resources, she stressed, should be included in the new framework to identify persons with disabilities in reception and detention centres and to provide adequate standards of living and healthcare, including psycho-social support.

However, "we are deeply concerned about the precarious situation of persons with disabilities in the current migration crisis," said Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

She added that many countries lack formal procedures to identify migrants and refugees with disabilities and, consequently, fail to provide them with protection and essential services, such as shelter and medical care that are accessible and responsive to their needs.

Persons with disabilities face exclusion and discrimination due to a lack of accessibility, including with respect to humanitarian assistance, and denial of reasonable accommodation, according to a joint statement on "Addressing disabilities in large-scale movements of refugees and Migrants", issued by the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The joint statement further called on Member States to realize the rights of migrants and refugees with disabilities in accordance with their international human rights treaty obligations.

"We need to be sure that, when world leaders commit to saving the lives of

refugees and migrants [...] they don't forget about persons with disabilities," said Jose Brillantes, the Chair of the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of Their Families.

On 6 April, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the modalities for negotiations for the next 12 months in the run-up to the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration.

UN chief announces senior appointments; sets up independent panel on Human Settlements Programme

12 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today announced the appointment of senior officials as his envoys dealing with prevention of sexual violence in conflict and for protection of children during such crisis, respectively.

He also appointed a new High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, and an independent panel to strengthen effectiveness of UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

According to statements issued today by the UN chief's spokesperson, Virginia Gamba of Argentina – currently the head of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) on the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria – [has been appointed](#) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Similarly, Pramila Patten of Mauritius, who as practicing Barrister at Law served, since 2003, as a Member of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, [has been designated](#) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

For the position of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the Secretary-General [appointed](#) Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu of Tonga. She is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Tourism of Tonga.

In the statements, Mr. Guterres expressed that he was grateful to the outgoing senior leaders who have served with distinction and true commitment to UN ideals.

Also today, Mr. Guterres [appointed an independent panel](#) to assess and enhance effectiveness of UN-Habitat after the adoption of the [New Urban Agenda](#) – the

outcome of the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (popularly known as [Habitat III](#)) – held in Quito, Ecuador, last October.

The independent assessment is a part of the follow-up and review of the Habitat III outcome and it will contain recommendations on enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat.

The assessment report will also serve as an input to a two-day High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly during the 71st session in September this year, to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in that regard.

The panel includes architect Peter Calthorpe; Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN; Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of the French capital, Paris; Sheela Patel, Founder and Director of the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres; Rosario Robles, Secretary of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development of Mexico; Ambassador František Ružicka, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the UN; Ponsto S.M. Sekatle, Minister of Health and Social Welfare of Lesotho; and Mpho Parks Tau, President of United Cities and Local Governments and South African Local Governments Association.

Russia blocks Security Council action on reported use of chemical weapons in Syria's Khan Shaykhun

12 April 2017 – With a ‘no’ vote from permanent member Russia, the United Nations Security Council today failed to adopt a resolution that would have condemned the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria and called on the Government to cooperate with an investigation into the incident.

While 10 of the Council's 15 members voted in favour, Russia rejected the text, as permanent member China, as well as non-permanent members Ethiopia and Kazakhstan abstained. A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council's five permanent members means a resolution cannot be adopted.

The proposed measure – drafted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Council's other permanent members – would have strongly condemned “the reported use of chemical weapons in the [Syria], in particular the attack on Khan Shaykhun,” the site of last week's incident that has drawn increasing global attention.

The measure would also have called on the Syrian Government to comply with relevant recommendations of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapon's (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the [OPCW-UN](#) Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

In February, Russia and China vetoed a measure that would have imposed sanctions on a number of individuals and entities linked to the use of chemical weapons in cases where responsibility was [established](#) by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

Although the Council came together on 19 December to [unanimously adopt](#) a resolution demanding that all parties to the Syrian conflict ensure immediate and unhindered access for the monitoring of evacuations from eastern Aleppo, over the past five years, Russia has vetoed eight Council texts on the Syrian conflict, while China has vetoed six of those eight.

As the [Syrian crisis](#) enters its seventh year, civilians continue to bear the brunt of a conflict marked by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), 13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance. Moreover, some 6.3 million have been internally displaced by violence.

The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has been facilitating the [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, the latest round of which wrapped up in late March. The discussions are guided by Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#), focusing on matters of governance, including a new constitution for Syria and the holding of elections.

Briefing the Council in a meeting earlier today, Mr. de Mistura said the US and Russia [must find a way to work together](#) to stabilize the situation and support the political process. He said that last week's reported chemical weapons attack, the subsequent airstrikes by the US and intensified fighting on the ground have put the fragile peace process in "grave danger."

"This is a time for clear-thinking, strategy, imagination, cooperation," said Mr. de Mistura.

The meeting today comes as the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is in Moscow meeting with top Russian officials.