

UN health agency stepping up efforts to provide trauma care to people in Mosul

27 January 2017 – As the conflict in Mosul intensifies and greater numbers of civilians are caught in the crossfire, the United Nations health agency and its partners have increased trauma care services to ensure that patients requiring medical care for injuries have a greater chance of survival.

“WHO [The World Health Organization] remains committed to supporting the ongoing response provided by the Ministry of Health and other health partners,” said Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in a news release Wednesday. “However, additional funds are needed to provide the full scale of health services to the 2.7 million people affected by the Mosul operation.”

To fully support the health needs resulting from the Mosul operation, WHO requires a total of \$65 million of which \$14 million, or 21 per cent, has been received.

Many hospitals in Mosul have suffered extensive damage and are no longer able to provide health services.

Trauma casualty rates remain high near frontline areas, with many trauma cases requiring referral from Mosul to Erbil in northern Iraq.

Three field hospitals, with a capacity of 40–50 beds, will soon be established to support access to trauma care to the west and south of Mosul. These hospitals will fill a critical gap, as trauma patients are currently transported to referral hospitals in Erbil, a one- to two-hour drive away. From 17 October 2016 to 18 January 2017, 1610 wounded civilians were sent to Erbil’s two main hospitals.

Honouring Holocaust victims, UN chief Guterres pledges to battle anti-Semitism, all forms of hatred

27 January 2017 – The world has a duty to remember that the Holocaust was a systematic attempt to eliminate the Jewish people and so many others, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said today, noting that building a future of dignity and equality for all will honour the victims of this

incomparable tragedy in human history [...] who we will never allow to be forgotten.

Marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, Mr. Guterres said in video message that it would be a dangerous error to think of the Holocaust as simply the result of the insanity of a group of criminal Nazis.

On the contrary, the Holocaust was the culmination of millennia of hatred, scapegoating and discrimination targeting the Jews, what we now call anti-Semitism, he emphasized, adding that tragically and contrary to the international community's resolve, anti-Semitism continues to thrive.

Moreover, the world is also witnessing a deeply troubling rise in extremism, xenophobia, racism and anti-Muslim hatred. Irrationality and intolerance are back, said the UN chief.

Stressing that this is in complete contrast to the universal values enshrined in the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he said: We can never remain silent or indifferent when human beings are suffering. We must always defend the vulnerable and bring tormentors to justice. And as the theme of this year's observance highlights, a better future depends on education.

After the horrors of the 20th century, there should be no room for intolerance in the 21st. I guarantee you that as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I will be in the frontline of the battle against anti-Semitism and all other forms of hatred, said Mr. Guterres.

Also today, in his remarks, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said the day of remembrance for the victims of the Nazi Holocaust forces the world to contemplate the horrors to which bigotry, racism and discrimination ultimately lead.

The sadistic brutality of the atrocities inflicted by the Nazi regime on Jews, Roma, Slavs, persons with disabilities, political dissidents, homosexuals and others was nourished by layer upon layer of propaganda, falsifications and incitement to hatred, he said, adding that they were denigrated and smeared; one after another, their rights were refused, and finally, even their humanity was denied.

'It happened, therefore it can happen again,' wrote Primo Levi, who endured and survived the concentration camp at Auschwitz Birkenau. As we honour the victims of the Holocaust, we must also acknowledge the need to prevent the recurrence of anti-Semitism and all forms of racial and religious hatred and discrimination today, the UN rights chief stated.

It is therefore essential to uphold independent rule of law institutions and a free press, which can hold leaders to account and establish a truthful record of the facts. It is crucial to maintain respect for human rights, especially in respect of the right to life and wellbeing of all people regardless of their origin or ethnicity.

Above all, education must be at the core of all efforts to combat anti-Semitism, racism, and all forms of discrimination. Although an important part of that work must be centred on schools and other academic fora, education in this sense must extend far more broadly, so that we can undo the stereotypes which generate so much injustice and prejudice throughout society," stressed Mr. Zeid.

A Holocaust Memorial Ceremony is taking place today at UN Headquarters in New York, hosted by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Cristina Gallach. Speakers are expected to include Peter Thomson, President of the UN General Assembly; Danny Danon, Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN; and Michele J. Sison, United States Deputy Representative to the UN.

Noah Klieger, a 90-year old Holocaust survivor, will be keynote speaker. Cantor Israel Singer, of Congregation Temple Emanu-El of Closter, New Jersey, will recite the memorial prayers and be accompanied by violinist Artur Kaganovskiy. The ceremony will include music by guitarist Gary Lucas and vocalist Rachel Joselson, Doctor of Music Arts and Associate Professor at the University of Iowa.

FEATURE: Story of Japan's 'Schindler' offers lessons for tackling contemporary xenophobia

26 January 2017 – During World War II, Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat posted as an acting consul in Lithuania, disobeyed instructions from his own Government and issued visas for Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

Sugihara issued more than 2,000 transit visas to Jewish refugees in 1940, continuing to sign the travel documents even after the Japanese consulate was closed down and until his train pulled away from the station. Many of the visas were for entire families. As a result, it is estimated that Sugihara saved 6,000 Jews.

Sugihara came to be known as Japan's Schindler after Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who hired about 1,200 Jews to work at his factories during the Holocaust, thus saving their lives.

My father was No. 299 on the list and my uncle was No. 27

Ahead of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, observed annually on 27 January, dozens of descendants of the

so-called “Sugihara” survivors attended yesterday’s screening of a film that depicts his humanitarian acts – one of the many Holocaust remembrance events being held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York this week.

“My father was No. 299 on the list and my uncle was No. 27,” Richard A. Salomon told *UN News*, stressing that without Sugihara’s act of kindness and righteousness, “they would have died and perished at the hands of the Nazis.”



Sugihara’s family at the Japanese consulate in East Prussia, Germany.
Photo/NPO Chiune Sugihara Visas For Life

The journey allowed them passage through Japan to Shanghai, China, and from there to India and ultimately to the United States.

“Sugihara gave an ultimate gift – gift of life – to my family and so many others. We need to continue to keep that memory alive,” Mr. Salomon said, adding that he has co-founded a Holocaust museum in Illinois, which has the largest collection of Sugihara memorabilia in the United States.

The 2017 theme for the Holocaust remembrance and education activities undertaken by the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme – a programme established under a resolution in 2005 of the UN General Assembly – is “Holocaust Remembrance: Educating for a Better Future.”

“The main message is simple. Any person can make a difference. One person can make a huge difference,” Cellin Gluck, Director of *Persona Non Grata*, told *UN News*.

History repeats itself and we should try to learn from our past.
But we have a tendency to forget what we’ve learned

Noting that Sugihara’s action resulted in the saving of the lives of more than 6,000 people, Mr. Gluck said “now more than 75 years later, it’s not just those 6,000 people who came out.” Those 6,000 Jews have now an estimated 40,000 to 100,000 descendants. “You can see how one person’s action can make a huge difference,” he said.

“History repeats itself and we should try to learn from our past. But we have a tendency to forget what we’ve learned,” Mr. Gluck warned, noting that his film is “synchronistically, very contemporary” because the world is facing a similar problem again, perhaps not exactly the same way, but in the forms of discrimination against refugees and of groups ostracized. “We cannot allow it to repeat itself,” he emphasized.

VIDEO: Movie Director Cellin Gluck describes to UN News how his film, which explains how Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara saved the lives of thousands of Jews, can teach us not to repeat the mistakes of the past. *Credit: UN News*

As a result of issuing visas for Jewish refugees, Sugihara became a “persona non grata” (a Latin expression for unwanted person) to his own Government, which has since recognized his heroism.

Speaking before the film screening, UN Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information Cristina Gallach told the audience that “by telling personal stories of the Holocaust, films can help remind us all of the dangers of extremism and its impact on our fellow human beings.”

UN Department of Public Information has embarked on a number of activities, including special events, film screenings, discussion papers from leading academics, information materials, partnerships with intergovernmental organizations and other initiatives, to encourage awareness and remind the world of the threat posed to us all when genocide and crimes against humanity are allowed to occur.

[Urging ‘bold decisions’ to end Yemen conflict, UN envoy says viable peace plan within reach](#)

26 January 2017 – Amid attacks and counter-attacks, those seeking a military solution will only prolong the suffering caused by the war, allow the terrorist threat to grow and deepen the challenges that will face the country’s eventual recovery, the United Nations envoy for the war-riven country said today.

Briefing the Security Council, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, said the past several months have seen a “dangerous escalation” of military activities with tragic consequences for the Yemeni people. Also briefing the Council was UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien.

Indeed, he explained, armed hostilities continued in many areas of the country, including Sana’a governorate, Taiz city and in border areas between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

“Civilians in Taiz continue to suffer from indiscriminate shelling in the city’s residential areas, with such attacks increasing in recent days, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said, adding that ground fighting and airstrikes had also escalated along the western coastline following the launch of operation Golden Spear by the Yemeni Government and allied forces.

Both sides continue to claim significant military progress in the media, “but I remain convinced that there is no possibility of a military solution.”

Describing “daily attacks and counter-attacks,” he said the continued

military activities are all the more tragic as viable proposal for peace is on the table and within reach of both parties. "With political courage and will, the war can be stopped," he said, pressing both sides to demonstrate the political courage needed to stop the nearly two-year-long war.



Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the Secretary General's Special Envoy for Yemen, briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Recalling that during a meeting hosted by Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister in Riyadh on 18 December 2016, senior officials from Oman, United Arab Emirates, United States and the United Kingdom had concluded with calls for a rapid cessation of hostilities, he said: "We are committed to ensuring that the upcoming cessation of hostilities will be durable and provide real relief to the Yemeni people."

He went on to state that, while Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress had accepted the road map as a basis for consultations last November, their unwillingness to discuss security arrangements seriously did not help to advance peace. Moreover, he also was disappointed at their decision to appoint a parallel government, and urged President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi to commit himself to consultations based on the proposals.

Stressing that "there is a clear path out of the violence," Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed emphasized that his proposals have reflected the concerns and needs of both sides, and took Yemen's political, security and social situations into consideration. "I hope Yemen's leaders will be able to see the impact that this tragedy has had on the country, make the bold decision to commit to a political solution and put an end to the senseless violence."

UN aid chief warns of 'silent deaths,' possible famine scenario for 2017

For his part, Mr. O'Brien said the conflict in Yemen is now the primary driver of the largest food security emergency in the world. "If there is no immediate action, famine is now a possible scenario for 2017."

From the beginning of the hostilities in March 2015 to 31 December 2016, 7,469 Yemenis were killed and 40,483 injured due to the conflict, he said, noting that the true number is likely to be higher. The casualty figures include more than 1,400 children killed and over 2,140 children injured. Another 1,441 children have been recruited by warring parties, some as young as eight years old.

Beyond the direct casualties of the armed conflict, there are also the so-called 'silent deaths' of Yemenis that go largely unnoticed and unrecorded, he said.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which Mr. O'Brien heads up, more than two thirds of the population – an alarming 18.8 million – is in need of humanitarian and protection assistance, including an astounding 10.3 million Yemenis who require

immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives. This is about the size of the entire population of Sweden and the numbers are rising, he added.

Some 14 million people are currently food insecure, of whom half are severely food insecure.

So far, he said, the UN verified over 325 attacks on schools, health facilities, markets, roads, bridges and even water points. Over two thirds of the damage to public infrastructure is a result of airstrikes.

In spite of the difficult conditions and tremendous challenges, the humanitarian community reached 5.6 million Yemenis in 2016, with more than 114 aid organizations are working in Yemen, he said, adding that thanks to the swift intervention by humanitarian partners, the cholera outbreak which started in October is now in decline.

Roughly \$2 billion is required to support the 2017 humanitarian response, targeting 10 million of the most vulnerable people in Yemen. "I request Member States to pledge generously at the forthcoming Yemen Pledging Conference in late March," Mr. O'Brien stressed.

He concluded his briefing by requesting Council members to once again call for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and use their influence over the parties to the conflict to ensure that they respect international humanitarian law and to provide timely, full and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Syria: UN chief Guterres clarifies tasks of panel lay groundwork for probe into possible war crimes

26 January 2017 – Following the approval late last year of an independent panel to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria, the United Nations today announced that the mechanism will be headed by a senior judge or prosecutor with extensive criminal investigations and prosecutions experience.

According to a note from a UN spokesperson, the mechanism will be established in phases until it is fully functioning and the Secretary-General will announce the person leading it by the end of February.

The head of the mechanism, which is formally called the 'International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011,'

will be assisted by a deputy and a secretariat.

The two primary tasks assigned to the mechanism include:

- Collecting, consolidating, preserving and analyzing evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses; and
- Preparing files in order to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings, in accordance with international law standards, in national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have or may in the future have jurisdiction over these crimes, in accordance with international law.

In discharging its responsibilities, the mechanism will closely cooperate and coordinate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (Syria CoI) and the two panels will be complementary to each other.

“However, there is a clear distinction between the Syria CoI and the mechanism in terms of functions. The Syria CoI focuses on information collection, publicly reporting and making recommendations notably to Member States,” explained the spokesperson.

The mechanism will build on the information collected by others, by collecting, consolidating, preserving and analysing evidence and information. It will also prepare files to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law.

The resolution approving the mechanism was adopted by the General Assembly – the universal body comprising all 193 UN Members States – on 21 December by a recorded vote of 105 in favour and 15 against, with 52 abstentions.

See also: Syria: UN approves mechanism to lay groundwork for investigations into possible war crimes