

## Turkey: UN report details serious rights violations since July 2015 in country's southeast

10 March 2017 – The UN human rights office today published a report detailing allegations of massive destruction, killings and numerous other serious human rights violations committed between July 2015 and December 2016 in southeast Turkey.

"I am particularly concerned by reports that no credible investigation has been conducted into hundreds of alleged unlawful killings, including women and children over a period of 13 months between late July 2015 and the end of August of 2016," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a news release published by his Office (OHCHR).

"It appears that not a single suspect was apprehended and not a single individual was prosecuted," he added.

During that period, Government security operations affected more than 30 towns and neighbourhoods and displaced between 335,000 and half a million people, mostly of Kurdish origin.

Mr. Zeid acknowledged the complex challenges Turkey has faced in addressing the attempted coup of July 2016 and in responding to a series of terror attacks. However, he said the apparent significant deterioration of the human rights situation in the country is cause for alarm and would only serve to deepen tensions and foster instability.

The news release said that measures taken under the state of emergency following the attempted coup of July 2016, including the dismissal of more than 100,000 people from public or private sector jobs during the reporting period, have also deeply affected the human rights situation in the southeast.

Some 10,000 teachers were reportedly dismissed on suspicion of having links with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which the Government considers a terrorist organization, without due process.

The use of counter-terrorism legislation to remove democratically elected officials of Kurdish origin, the severe harassment of independent journalists, the closure of independent and Kurdish language media and citizen's associations and the mass suspension of judges and prosecutors have also severely weakened checks and balances and human rights protections.

"The Government of Turkey has failed to grant us access, but has contested the veracity of the very serious allegations made in this report. But the gravity of the allegations, the scale of the destruction and the displacement of more than 355,000 people mean that an independent

investigation is both urgent and essential,&#8221 Mr. Zeid said.

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## [With fighting near industrial sites, UN expert warns Ukrainians of chemical disaster risk](#)

10 March 2017 – Unless the fighting in eastern Ukraine is stopped and precautions are taken to secure industrial facilities in the area, the armed conflict could lead to a catastrophic chemical disaster, an independent United Nations human rights expert today warned.

&#8220Battles are now being fought in cities, close to industrial centres, with factories increasingly becoming at risk of being hit: the consequences for anyone living close-by would be severe,&#8221 said Baskut Tuncak, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes.

Most of Ukraine’s industrial facilities are located in the eastern part of the country. These include heavy industrial infrastructures operating in the mining, metallurgical, chemical and power sectors.

&#8220The presence of a range of explosive and toxic substances at these sites is a source of serious concern,&#8221 according to the press release from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

As an example, on 24 February, a shell hit a building housing more than 7,000 kg of chlorine gas. While no damage was reported damage to just one fraction of the containers would have killed anyone within 200 meters and severely impact the health of anyone within 2.4 km, according to experts cited by OHCHR.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has also voiced concern about potential impact to the health of residents. According to information cited in the press release, OCHA and humanitarian partners have called for demilitarizing the areas adjacent to civilian infrastructure and for essential safety equipment to be stored at facilities out of the reach of the government.

UN human rights experts are part of what it is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, the general name of the independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work.

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## Child-abuse website shut down

A website full of young girls' obscene photos has recently been shut down by the police bureau of Beijing.



Illicit picture of young girls posted at the Eight Wolves Forum. [Photo: wechat account of the Youth League]

The website, called Eight Wolves Forum, enticed users to join its account of an online group chat room registered on Tencent's QQ platform, and then sent them illicit pictures.

After receiving several reports, the Youth League, an organization among young people in China, used its WeChat (China's equivalent of Twitter) account – Tuan Tuan, to go undercover. Disguised as a new user asking for access to the website, they were overwhelmed by the multiple erotic photos of young girls.

The perpetrator surnamed Du, a 20-year technical school student from a divorced family in Nanchong, Sichuan Province, projected that the pornographic business would make him a fortune.

"I wanted a new computer, but every time I asked my parents to finance me they would berate me. Now I have a step father who makes my situation even worse," Du told Tuan through the online chat room.

However, Du was not alone in sending photos online. What was worse, according to the League, many of the photos were posted by pedophiles.

“The emergence of such websites will greatly threaten the safety of children, by motivating pedophiles,” said Prof. Long Di (PhD), from the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

In 1984, US professor David Finkelhor, researched crimes against children and coined a theory of Four Preconditions. Namely, the motivation to sexually abuse a child, overcoming internal inhibitors, overcoming external inhibitors and overcoming child resistance, before one resolves to molest a child.

“The motivation of pedophiles can be constrained according to the first two conditions. However, the photos and content in such websites tempts and galvanizes their desire and leads them to infringe upon the rights of children, by using the young bodies to satisfy their sexual or psychological desires,” Long said.

“It can be exemplified as a person who causes no damage, even though, he desires food when he is starving. But once he starts to loot groceries to feed himself, he definitely violates laws and brings agonies and hurts to others,” she explained.

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## [Work begins on PPP high-speed railway in Zhejiang](#)

Construction of a new high-speed rail link between east China’s cities of Hangzhou and Wenzhou began on Thursday and is expected to be complete by 2021.

The Hangzhou-Wenzhou line stretches about 331 km and is China’s first public-private partnership PPP funded high-speed railway project by the National Development and Reform Commission, with the private sector having holding status.

Upon completion, travel time between two cities will be more than halved from 2.5 hours to about one hour. Passengers can also transfer to Beijing and south China’s Guangdong Province via the the new line.

The Wenzhou-Hangzhou high-speed railway is part of a national initiative to establish a modern, integrated transportation system laid out in the country’s 13th five-year plan (2016-2020).

China has the world’s largest high-speed rail network, stretching more than 22,000 km, while its total rail network is over 124,000 km.

By 2020, the length of high-speed railways in operation is expected to be around 30,000 km, connecting more than 80 percent big cities.

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