

R2P MONITOR

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the Global Centre for the
Responsibility to Protect

The **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)** is a global norm, unanimously adopted by heads of state and government at the 2005 UN World Summit, aimed at preventing and halting Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity. R2P stipulates that:

- » Every State has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from the four mass atrocity crimes (Pillar I).
- » The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual States in meeting that responsibility (Pillar II).
- » If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter (Pillar III).

R2P Monitor applies the Responsibility to Protect lens to the following situations of concern:

CURRENT CRISIS

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.

IMMINENT RISK

The situation is reaching a critical threshold and the risk of mass atrocity crimes occurring in the immediate future is very high if effective preventive action is not taken.

SERIOUS CONCERN

There is a significant risk of occurrence, or recurrence, of mass atrocity crimes within the foreseeable future if effective action is not taken.

R2P Monitor:

- » Provides *background* on populations at risk of mass atrocity crimes, with particular emphasis on key events and actors and their connection to the threat, or commission, of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
- » Offers *analysis* of the country's past history in relation to mass atrocity crimes; the factors that have enabled their possible commission, or that prevent their resolution; and the receptivity of the situation to positive influences that would assist in preventing further crimes.
- » Tracks the *international response* to the situation with a particular emphasis upon the actions of the United Nations (UN), key regional actors and the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- » Suggests *necessary action* to prevent or halt the commission of mass atrocity crimes.

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CURRENT CRISIS

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.



3,179 children killed or maimed during 2017

AFGHANISTAN

Populations in Afghanistan are at ongoing risk of mass atrocity crimes as the Taliban intensifies its armed conflict with the government. Other armed extremist groups are also increasing their attacks on vulnerable civilians.

BACKGROUND

Since the Taliban was overthrown in 2001 by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition of military forces, it has conducted an insurgency against the internationally recognized Afghan government. While making substantial military gains during 2017 the Taliban perpetrated indiscriminate attacks on civilians. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), civilians living in Taliban-controlled territory suffer widespread human rights abuses, including recruitment of child soldiers and extrajudicial killings. The UN's 2017 strategic review reclassified Afghanistan from a post-conflict situation to an active conflict.

UNAMA's quarterly report documented the deaths of 1,692 civilians from 1 January to 30 June 2018. Attacks by the Taliban and other anti-government forces remain the leading cause of casualties, but other parties to the conflict also continue to use heavy weapons in civilian-populated areas. The government and Taliban agreed to a three-day ceasefire between 15-18 June for the Eid al-Fitr celebration, but the Taliban rejected the government's proposal to extend the truce and armed hostilities have resumed across the country.

During 2016 Afghanistan recorded the highest number of verified child casualties since the UN started globally documenting civilian casualties in 2009. The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict documented 3,179 children killed or maimed in Afghanistan during 2017, marking a decrease of 10 percent from 2016, although

the situation in Afghanistan is still responsible for the highest overall number of child deaths and injuries due to armed conflict.

During November 2017 the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC requested authorization to proceed with an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Afghanistan since May 2003. According to the ICC, the Taliban has potentially committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, particularly against civilians perceived to be supporting the Afghan government and foreign military forces. Afghan security forces and members of the United States military may have also committed war crimes, including the torture of detainees. On 22 February Afghanistan's new penal code came into force, incorporating the Rome Statute of the ICC regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Following the military defeat of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq, some supporters – designated ISIL Khorasan (ISIL-K) – have established a presence in Afghanistan. ISIL-K has claimed responsibility for several bombings, including two attacks in Nangarhar province that killed at least 46 people during the Eid al-Fitr ceasefire. A special report released by UNAMA during November 2017 documented a significant increase in attacks targeting places of worship and persons exercising their right to religious worship. Between 1 January 2016 and 7 November 2017 UNAMA recorded 51 attacks that resulted in 850 civilian casualties, including 273 deaths. These attacks have been increasingly directed at Afghanistan's Shia minority. On 1 July 2018 an ISIL-K suicide attack in Jalalabad targeted a delegation from minority communities, killing 19 people, mostly Sikhs and Hindus.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 5.5 million people in Afghanistan are in need of humanitarian assistance and 2.5 million Afghans are refugees – the second largest refugee population in the world.

ANALYSIS

The Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan from 1996-2001, is an armed Sunni extremist movement. As the Taliban has regained territory, the number of civilians at risk of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity has increased. During their 16-year war, both government forces and the Taliban have shown disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

In addition to fighting to expand territorial control, the Taliban has escalated its attacks on civilians in urban areas in an effort to undermine the government's ability to govern and provide basic security. Although government forces undertook successful measures to decrease civilian casualties during 2017, deliberate bomb attacks by the Taliban and ISIL-K on densely populated areas and civilian infrastructure present an escalating threat.

Unless sustained action is taken to address corruption, marginalization and political tensions within the Afghan government, conflict and insecurity will continue to increase.

The Afghan government needs ongoing international support to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

At the July 2016 NATO Summit member states pledged to sustain their mission in Afghanistan beyond 2016 and to continue their assistance to Afghan security forces until 2020. The United States currently has approximately 14,000 troops in Afghanistan.

UNAMA was established under UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1401 of 2002 and its mandate includes monitoring human rights violations and the protection of civilians. UNAMA's current mandate expires on 17 March 2019. Since 2011 the UNSC has imposed an arms embargo and sanctions on individuals or entities who support the Taliban and its affiliates.

Following a UNSC visit to Afghanistan from 13-15 January, the Council adopted a Presidential Statement reiterating its concern over continuing threats to the security and stability of Afghanistan from the Taliban and other armed groups.

NECESSARY ACTION

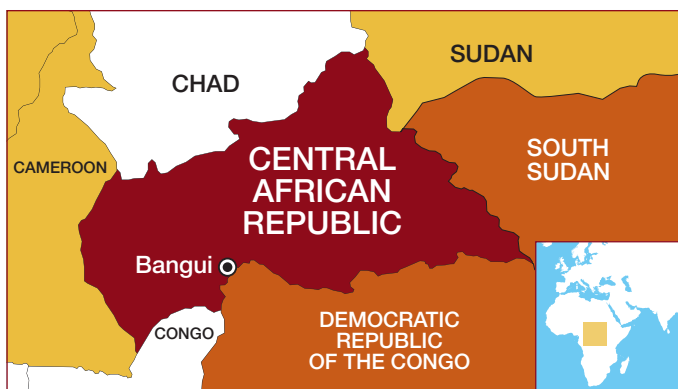
The international community should continue to provide support to the Afghan government to help combat the Taliban, ISIL-K and other armed extremist groups within the country. Increased efforts should be undertaken to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable minorities. Countering violent extremism while promoting good governance and the rule of law remains essential.

The Afghan security forces and all international military forces operating within Afghanistan must prioritize the protection of civilians and strictly adhere to IHL and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

The government and its international partners should fully cooperate with the ICC's investigation of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNAMA Website](#)
- » [Special Report on Attacks Against Place of Worship, Religious Leaders and Worshippers, UNAMA, 7 November 2017](#)
- » [UNAMA 2017 Annual Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Afghanistan, February 2018](#)
- » [UNAMA Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12 April 2018](#)
- » [Populations at Risk: Afghanistan](#)



70 percent of CAR remains under control of armed groups

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Populations in the Central African Republic are facing mass atrocity crimes due to ongoing violence committed by various armed groups.

BACKGROUND

Civilians in the Central African Republic (CAR) are facing mass atrocity crimes as fighting amongst armed groups continues in almost every region of the country, causing large scale displacement and death. The recent escalation of violence is not only rooted in divisions between the Muslim and Christian communities, but is fueled by shifting alliances between various predatory armed groups.

The crisis in CAR has its origins in the overthrow of President François Bozizé on 24 March 2013 by the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel alliance. Abuses by the Séléka led to the formation of predominately Christian anti-balaka militias and the collapse of state institutions. The UNSC-mandated Panel of Experts on CAR has reported that hate speech and incitement to ethnic and religious-based violence has reached unprecedented levels and warned that some anti-balaka affiliated groups are carrying out targeted attacks against the Muslim population.

Most fighters currently belong to either the anti-balaka, including affiliated "self-defense groups," or are members of armed groups loosely affiliated to the ex-Séléka rebel alliance. In recent months the intensification of violence has particularly affected the center of the country.

On 3 April anti-balaka fighters attacked a base of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) in the town of Tagbara, killing one peacekeeper. Twenty-two anti-balaka attackers were also killed. On the same day UN peacekeepers also discovered the bodies of 21 civilians, including women and children, who had been killed near a church in Tagbara. The humanitarian and political situation has also deteriorated in the southeast, where clashes continue between so-called "self-defense groups" and the ex-Séléka Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique.

Violence has also surged in Bangui where MINUSCA troops recently battled with armed militias and criminal gangs in the PK5 area for several days. Beginning on 8 April, fighting between UN peacekeepers and armed men resulted in the death of one peacekeeper and more than 30 PK5 residents. On 11 April the dead bodies of a number of PK5 residents were left outside MINUSCA headquarters following a protest. On 2 May an armed attack on a church near the PK5 area killed at least 16 worshippers, including a priest.

A report published by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during May 2017 found that both anti-balaka and ex-Séléka forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity between 2013-2015. Sexual violence against the civilian population has been used as a tactic by both the Séléka and anti-balaka. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has also warned that children have been targeted during attacks, with reports of rape, abduction and recruitment into armed groups.

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased by more than 70 percent since the beginning of 2017 and is now at the highest level recorded in CAR. More than a quarter of the country's population has fled their homes, with over 670,000 Central Africans internally displaced and almost 583,000 refugees in neighboring countries. Attacks by armed groups have also resulted in the death of 20 humanitarian workers since the beginning of 2017. As a result of increasing violence, several humanitarian agencies have suspended their operations.

ANALYSIS

Governmental control remains extremely limited in most areas outside Bangui. According to the UN, an estimated 70 percent of the country is still in the hands of armed groups competing for territory, power and resources. Illegal trafficking allows for arms proliferation and armed groups benefit from revenues generated through the control of roads and natural resource extraction sites. Civilians remain the primary victim and target of ongoing violence.

In many parts of the country MINUSCA remains the only force capable of maintaining security, but it continues to face critical capacity gaps that impede its ability to consistently uphold its civilian protection mandate. Since January 2017 20 peacekeepers have been killed in malicious acts. Targeted attacks, threats and harassment of UN personnel highlight MINUSCA's highly insecure operating environment.

Despite the establishment of the Special Criminal Court for CAR, a hybrid judicial mechanism that was created in 2015 to prosecute those responsible for mass atrocity crimes, funding shortfalls have inhibited the court from becoming fully operational. In May 2018 the National Assembly adopted the rules of procedure and evidence for the Court.

The CAR government requires sustained international assistance to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has passed 11 resolutions since October 2013 that emphasize the government's responsibility to protect all populations in CAR, including Resolution 2399 of 30 January 2018 which extended the sanctions regime that has been in place since 2013. The resolution authorized the imposition of travel bans and asset freezes on those who incite ethnic or religious violence.

In May 2014 the government referred the situation in CAR to the ICC, which opened an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity by both Séléka and anti-balaka forces since 2012.

On 15 November 2017 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2387, authorizing an additional 900 MINUSCA troops to protect civilians and prevent any further deterioration of the security situation. As of June 2018, more than 11,000 military personnel have been deployed to MINUSCA.

NECESSARY ACTION

MINUSCA must improve its ability to rapidly respond to emerging threats and strengthen its civilian protection capability. MINUSCA should also continue to bolster local disarmament and reintegration efforts.

Notwithstanding its numerous reconstruction, reconciliation and security challenges, the government should also prioritize accountability for mass atrocity crimes by carrying out national criminal prosecutions as well as by cooperating with the ICC. National authorities should ensure the Special Criminal Court can fulfill its mandate and help end the cycle of impunity.

The international community should continue to assist the government in upholding its protective responsibilities and help restore state authority throughout the entire country.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [MINUSCA Website](#)
- » [Report of the UN Secretary-General, S/2018/611](#), 18 June 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Central African Republic](#)



Over 720,000 ethnic Rohingya have fled atrocities and crossed into Bangladesh since 25 August 2017

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Atrocities committed against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar (Burma) constitute crimes against humanity under international law. These crimes may also amount to genocide.

BACKGROUND

Security forces in Myanmar have committed mass atrocity crimes against the ethnic Rohingya community – including the unlawful killing of civilians, rape, and the burning of at least 362 villages – since so-called “clearance operations” began in Rakhine State on 25 August 2017. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), over 720,000 people have fled the violence, bringing the number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to more than 900,000 people. Myanmar’s security forces launched the “clearance operations” after the so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) armed group attacked police posts and an army base.

The UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, have stated that the systematic attacks on the Rohingya may constitute genocide. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, also stated that “acts of genocide” may have been committed and that the situation should be referred to the ICC.

Myanmar’s authorities appear to have made a deliberate attempt to conceal evidence of these atrocities, including by bulldozing mass graves and systematically clearing some Rohingya villages. The Myanmar authorities also continue to deny access to northern Rakhine State for the Human Rights Council (HRC)-mandated Fact-Finding Mission and Special Rapporteur Lee. On 31 May the government announced plans to establish an “independent commission of inquiry.” Special Rapporteur Lee referred to the commission as another attempt to “diffuse the pressure the government is facing, and neutralize the calls to end impunity.”

The Rohingya, a distinct Muslim ethnic minority group of approximately 1 million people, have been systematically persecuted. Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law rendered most of the population stateless. The Rohingya are also subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, with more than 120,000 Rohingya confined to camps since 2012. The rights of the Rohingya are further limited by the so-called “Protection of Race and Religion” laws that place harsh restrictions on fundamental religious freedoms, as well as reproductive and marital rights.

On 6 June the UN and the government of Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at “creating conducive conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh.” However, the Memorandum does not provide guarantees on citizenship and freedom of movement.

Fighting between the military and ethnic armed groups elsewhere in Myanmar, particularly in Shan and Kachin States, has also intensified. Clashes between the government and Kachin Independence Army have been ongoing since a ceasefire broke down in June 2011, with violence increasing in recent months. The army has conducted aerial bombings and directed artillery fire against civilian populated areas in Kachin State. Although an estimated 123,000 people are currently displaced in Kachin and Shan States as a result of ongoing conflict, the government has announced plans to close a number of IDP camps.

ANALYSIS

Despite the transition to democracy, Myanmar’s security forces continue to pose an existential threat to the Rohingya population and other ethnic minorities. Unless discriminatory laws and policies are repealed or amended, the Rohingya will continue to face the threat of further atrocities. The 1982 Citizenship Law and the Protection of Race and Religion laws are intended to eradicate the legal right of the Rohingya to exist as a distinct ethnic group in Myanmar.

The denial of access to the HRC Fact-Finding Mission and the UN Special Rapporteur undermines efforts to independently investigate atrocities in Myanmar.

The failure of the international community to hold the government accountable for atrocities committed against the Rohingya has emboldened the military to intensify its campaign against vulnerable populations in Kachin and Shan States.

The government of Myanmar has not only manifestly failed to uphold its Responsibility to Protect the Rohingya, it bears responsibility for the ongoing commission of crimes against humanity and possibly genocide.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The only formal response of the UNSC to the situation in Rakhine State since 25 August 2017 has been the adoption of a Presidential Statement on 6 November. That statement

called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and stressed the “primary responsibility of the Myanmar government to protect its population.” On 31 May the UNSC sent a letter to Myanmar requesting access for international investigators, cooperation with UN bodies, and full implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine Commission.

On 9 April the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC asked for a ruling on “whether the Court may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh.” While Myanmar is not a State Party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, Bangladesh is.

On 26 April the European Union (EU) extended its arms embargo on Myanmar for a year, prohibited the export of goods and equipment that “might be used for internal repression,” and banned military training and cooperation with Myanmar’s army.

On 25 June the EU and Canada imposed sanctions on seven members of Myanmar’s military and police, including the former head of the army’s Western Command, Major General Maung Maung Soe, who was also sanctioned by the United States in December 2017. Six of the officers sanctioned by the EU and Canada are also on the list of thirteen officials identified by Amnesty International as having command responsibility for atrocities committed in Myanmar.

From 12–21 June the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, conducted her first official visit to Myanmar. On 1–3 July the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and the World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim, traveled to Bangladesh where they met with government officials and Rohingya refugees.

NECESSARY ACTION

The UNSC should demand immediate access for independent investigators to Rakhine State, including Special Rapporteur Lee and members of the Fact-Finding Mission. The UNSC should refer the situation in Rakhine State to the ICC and impose an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on all senior military officers with command responsibility for atrocities committed in Rakhine State.

Individual governments and regional organizations should suspend all cooperation and training programs with Myanmar’s armed forces. All international trade and development programs in Rakhine State should be scrupulously reviewed.

The government of Myanmar should fully implement the recommendations of the Rakhine Commission. The government must also repeal or amend all laws that systematically discriminate against the Rohingya, including the Protection of Race and Religion laws and the 1982 Citizenship Law.

The government must take proximate steps towards building a more inclusive society in which the human rights of all of Myanmar’s diverse populations are protected, regardless of

religion, citizenship status or ethnicity. The government should engage in meaningful dialogue to end the conflict in Kachin and Shan States.

It is essential that any repatriation of Rohingya refugees is conducted on a strictly voluntary basis, in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the principle of non-refoulement.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2017/22](#), 6 November 2017
- » [UN HRC Resolution, A/HRC/37/32](#), 23 March 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Myanmar \(Burma\)](#)



SYRIA

Populations continue to face war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by government forces and their allies in Syria's ongoing civil war. Various non-state armed groups are also committing mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Since the Syrian crisis began in 2011 the conflict between the government and opposition groups has escalated into a civil war where over 500,000 people have been killed. As of June there were over 5.6 million Syrian refugees and at least 6.6 million IDPs – the largest number of people displaced by any conflict in the world. Over 13.1 million Syrians remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

For over six years the HRC-mandated Commission of Inquiry (CoI) has reported that government forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity as a matter of state policy. Numerous armed opposition groups have also committed war crimes. The CoI’s June 2018 report on the military offensive on eastern Ghouta, which was captured by government forces in May 2018, noted that all parties perpetrated war crimes, including indiscriminate attacks on civilian populated areas. The Syrian government also committed crimes against humanity, including through the denial of food and medicine to besieged

civilians. Over 1,700 civilians were killed and more than 150,000 people were displaced during the offensive.

Despite UN-led political negotiations aimed at ending the civil war, as well as separate talks between the governments of Turkey, Russia and Iran, fighting between Syrian government forces, their allies and armed opposition groups has continued, most notably in Idlib governorate and in the southwest governorates of Quneitrah and Dera'a.

Although Idlib and Dera'a were formally designated "de-escalation zones" during 2017, on 7 June suspected Russian airstrikes on a market in the town of Zardana, Idlib governorate, killed over 47 people, including 9 children. Additionally, on 22 June Syrian government forces launched an offensive on Dera'a, shelling opposition-held territory for the first time in nearly a year. According to OCHA, at least 330,000 people were displaced within Dera'a governorate and dozens of civilians have been killed. On 13 July Syrian government forces retook the strategic and symbolic city of Dera'a, the capital of the governorate.

Although ISIL no longer controls any cities within Syria, it continues to pose a threat to civilians, and its fighters have carried out crimes against humanity in remote areas still under their control. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), ISIL has killed approximately 5,000 civilians in Syria since June 2014.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-Joint Investigative Mechanism determined that Syrian government forces used chlorine gas between 2014 and 2015 and that ISIL was responsible for two sulfur-mustard attacks during 2015 and 2016. A suspected chemical weapons attack took place in Douma on 8 April in which at least 70 people were killed. On 14 April the United States, United Kingdom and France carried out airstrikes on a number of targets inside Syria linked to the production, storage and use of chemical weapons.

Russia, Iran and Hezbollah continue to provide essential military support to the Syrian government. Since September 2015 Russian airstrikes have largely targeted opposition forces and civilian areas outside government control, despite the Russian government claiming their operations are only targeting terrorist groups. The CoI reported on 6 March that some airstrikes by the Russian air force may amount to war crimes.

The SOHR has reported that Russian airstrikes have killed 4,982 ISIL fighters and over 7,835 civilians, including 1,885 children, as of 30 June. According to the SOHR, airstrikes by the United States-led anti-ISIL coalition have also killed 3,072 civilians since September 2014, including 736 children.

ANALYSIS

All parties to the conflict in Syria have committed indiscriminate attacks and the lives of countless civilians remain imperiled by the ongoing civil war. Attacks on medical facilities and

civilian infrastructure demonstrate a complete disregard for international law and directly contravene UNSC Resolutions 2286 and 2139.

The Syrian government, with support from its international allies, continues to utilize its military resources to retain power at all costs. The direct participation of Russian and Iranian forces in numerous attacks on civilian-populated areas, including eastern Ghouta, makes them complicit in alleged war crimes.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar continue to provide crucial assistance to some armed opposition groups. The United States also has several thousand troops working with armed opposition groups in former ISIL-occupied territories. However, the fracturing and radicalization of the opposition compounds the difficulty of achieving a negotiated political settlement.

The UNSC has been unable to enforce compliance with its resolutions, with bitter divisions evident amongst the permanent members. Russia has systematically shielded Syria from accountability measures. Despite the current political impasse, Russia, United States, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia remain essential to any potential negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The government of Syria has not only manifestly failed to uphold its Responsibility to Protect, it bears primary responsibility for the ongoing commission of mass atrocity crimes.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following the outbreak of violence during March 2011, the international community responded by censuring the Syrian government for its widespread violations of human rights. The CoI, UN Secretary-General and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have all called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC.

Despite this, the UNSC has failed to adequately respond. Since 2013 the UNSC has passed 23 resolutions on humanitarian access, peace talks and chemical weapons in Syria. Several of these refer to the government's responsibility to protect populations, but none have been fully implemented. Meanwhile, Russia and China have jointly vetoed six UNSC draft resolutions and Russia has independently vetoed a further six resolutions. Most recently, on 10 April Russia vetoed a resolution that would have enabled an independent investigation of the chemical weapons attack in Douma. On 27 June members of the OPCW voted by 82 to 24 to enable the organization to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

On 21 December 2016 the UN General Assembly voted to establish an International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of atrocities in Syria. The HRC has adopted 25 resolutions condemning atrocities in Syria. The latest, adopted on 19 March, reiterates the demand that the Syrian authorities uphold their responsibility to protect the population.

NECESSARY ACTION

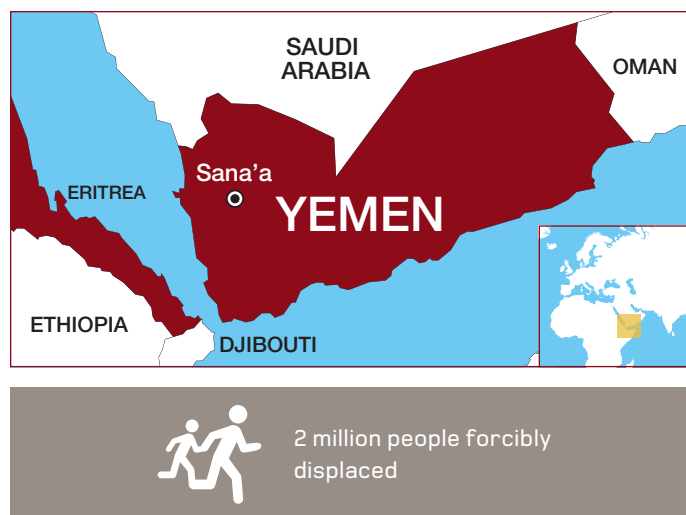
In keeping with various UNSC resolutions, Syrian government forces, armed opposition groups and all international parties to the conflict must facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to all civilians trapped or displaced by fighting. The UNSC should mandate the deployment of UN monitors to oversee voluntary evacuations and help deter human rights violations and abuses.

Russia, Iran and Hezbollah must cease enabling the crimes of the Syrian government. Countries opposed to the rule of President Bashar Al Assad must withhold all support from armed groups that commit war crimes and target civilians.

UN member states should fully cooperate with the IIIM and facilitate its work. The IIIM should be incorporated into the UN's regular budget.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2393](#), 19 December 2017
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2401](#), 24 February 2018
- » [UN HRC Resolution, A/HRC/37/L.38](#), 19 March 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Syria](#)



YEMEN

Mass atrocity crimes are being committed in Yemen as pro-government forces and a regional military coalition fight against Houthi rebels who still control much of the country.

BACKGROUND

Fighting between Houthi rebels, members of the General People's Congress (GPC) and various pro-government forces, as well as airstrikes by a Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led international coalition, has killed more than 10,000 people in Yemen since March 2015, although the actual death toll is considered to be much higher.

As a result of the ongoing conflict, Yemen is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. At least 8.4 million people are at risk of famine while an estimated 22.2 million people – over three

quarters of the population – require humanitarian assistance. OCHA estimates that if humanitarian conditions do not improve a further 10 million people will be at risk of famine by the end of 2018. Since a cholera outbreak began in May 2017, over 1.1 million cases have been reported and at least 2,300 people have died.

During 2014, amidst a UN-facilitated political transition process, the Houthis – an armed movement originating amongst the Shia population in northeast Yemen – and military units loyal to deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the GPC, took control of the governorates of Sa'ada, Hodeida, Dhamar, Amran and Sana'a. On 26 March 2015 Saudi Arabia, the UAE and a coalition of eight other countries responded to a government request for regional military intervention.

After a breakdown of the alliance between troops loyal to former President Saleh and Houthi forces, on 2 December 2017 Saleh announced his willingness to cooperate with the Saudi/UAE-led coalition. Following intense fighting in Sana'a, Saleh was killed on 4 December.

On 12 June Yemeni government forces, supported by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, launched an offensive on the port city of Hodeidah. Yemen imports 90 percent of its staple food supplies and Hodeidah serves as the entry point for 70 percent of the country's humanitarian aid. In advance of the offensive OCHA warned that a sustained battle or siege of the city could endanger the lives of as many as 250,000 civilians. Government-allied forces captured Hodeidah airport on 21 June, but at the time of publication they had not made further advances into the city.

Despite several temporary ceasefire agreements during 2015 and 2016 and intermittent UN-brokered peace talks, the conflict in Yemen continues to leave civilians facing mass atrocity crimes. The last attempted ceasefire, on 19 November 2016, collapsed within 48 hours and political negotiations have been suspended for two years.

Throughout the conflict Houthi and government-allied forces have targeted civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, as well as humanitarian workers. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said that respect for the distinction between civilian and military targets has been "woefully inadequate" by all sides. Additionally, the conflict has been characterized by the obstruction of humanitarian aid by all parties to the conflict, including the temporary closure of all air and sea ports in November 2018 by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition.

The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict documented the deaths of 552 children in Yemen during 2017, noting that the Saudi/UAE-led coalition was responsible for killing or wounding at least 670 children, while the Houthis were responsible for 324 casualties. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition was also responsible for attacks on five hospitals during 2017. On 27 March UNICEF reported that at least 2,419 child soldiers have been recruited in Yemen since March 2015.

Other armed groups continue to take advantage of the conflict to perpetrate violence against civilians, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Since March 2015 ISIL has also claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on Shia mosques and car bombings in Sana'a and Aden. The conflict has also resulted in increased religious persecution of the country's Bahá'í population.

ANALYSIS

All parties to the conflict have perpetrated indiscriminate attacks and targeted civilian infrastructure, amounting to possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. Despite the magnitude of the crisis, the UNSC has failed to adequately respond to the conflict in Yemen. A substantive UNSC resolution has not been passed since April 2015.

While Saudi Arabia and the UAE remain the main forces behind the regional military coalition, Iran has provided some military assistance to the Houthis. Civilian casualties caused by international coalition airstrikes have resulted in public pressure for the United States and United Kingdom to cease selling arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The dissolution of the alliance between Houthi and pro-Saleh forces, as well as political disputes amongst pro-government forces, threatens to further fracture Yemeni society. Terrorist groups, such as AQAP and ISIL, are also trying to exploit the conflict to increase their influence.

All sides of the conflict appear manifestly unwilling or unable to uphold their Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

During 2011 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2014, which condemned human rights violations by the government of former President Saleh and affirmed Yemen's primary responsibility to protect its population.

The UNSC imposed sanctions on former President Saleh and Houthi leaders in November 2014. On 14 April 2015 the UNSC passed Resolution 2216, establishing an arms embargo against Houthi leaders and some supporters of former President Saleh, and demanding the Houthis withdraw from all areas they had militarily seized. On 26 February 2018 the UNSC renewed sanctions for an additional year.

On 29 September 2017 the HRC adopted a resolution establishing a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen.

On 15 March the UNSC adopted a Presidential Statement calling for unhindered humanitarian and commercial access, and calling upon all parties to uphold their obligations under IHL. On 18 June the UN Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, presented a plan for political negotiations to the UNSC.

On 14 June the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide expressed grave concern regarding the potential impact of a military offensive on Hodeidah.

NECESSARY ACTION

The dire humanitarian situation in Yemen is a direct result of the ongoing armed conflict and requires a political solution. The UNSC and regional powers need to facilitate a sustained ceasefire and ensure that parties to the conflict return to substantive peace negotiations. The UNSC should immediately adopt a resolution demanding all parties cease attacks against civilians and ensure accountability for all atrocities committed during the conflict.

The distinction between military and civilian targets is central to IHL and must be adhered to at all times. All UN member states should immediately halt the sale of weapons to parties to the conflict who routinely violate IHL, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The UNSC should immediately impose sanctions on any party responsible for the deliberate obstruction of vital humanitarian assistance to civilians.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UN HRC Resolution, A/HRC/36/L.4](#), 29 September 2017
- » [UNSC Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2018/5](#), 15 March 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Yemen](#)

IMMINENT RISK

The situation is reaching a critical threshold and the risk of mass atrocity crimes occurring in the immediate future is very high if effective preventive action is not taken.



4.5 million IDPs and
735,000 refugees

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to face an imminent risk of mass atrocity crimes committed by the security forces and various militias, as well as the threat of inter-communal violence.

BACKGROUND

Various armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continue to utilize instability and the weakness of state authority in various parts of the country to sporadically attack security forces and perpetrate mass atrocity crimes. Despite military offensives conducted by the government's armed forces (FARDC) with assistance from the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade, attacks by armed groups and inter-communal violence continue.

According to UNHCR, 4.5 million Congolese are currently internally displaced and more than 735,000 have fled to neighboring countries. Nearly half of all IDPs in the DRC were forced to flee during 2017.

Several provinces in eastern DRC - notably North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika - have been plagued by a recent rise in inter-communal violence and attacks by armed groups. Recent clashes over access to land and water between the Banyamulenge and Bafuliro ethnic groups and affiliated militias near Uvira, South Kivu, have displaced more than 76,000 people. On 7 July militias in Uvira burned 10 people to death. UNHCR has also warned that populations in Tanganyika province are facing mass displacement as a result of inter-communal violence

between the Luba, Twa and other ethnic groups. UNHCR has reported evidence of potential atrocities in the province, including torture, murders, forced labor, and rape.

Fighting between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups that erupted in Ituri province last year led to more than 260 people being killed and 120 villages and towns being pillaged or destroyed between December and March. MONUSCO discovered five mass graves in Ituri province during April. More than 60,000 people have fled from Ituri province into Uganda since January.

Tensions between the government and a local militia, Kamuina Nsapu, have also resulted in atrocities in Kasai, Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental provinces since August 2016. The UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC identified at least 80 mass graves in the Kasai region during 2017, with responsibility for most of these attributed to the FARDC. OHCHR has accused the FARDC and local officials of fomenting ethnic violence and supporting the formation of a pro-government militia, Bana Mura. The UN has also documented children being used as combatants or human shields by Kamuina Nsapu, as well as sexual violence perpetrated against young girls. Bana Mura has also targeted populations based upon ethnicity and alleged support for Kamuina Nsapu.

As a result of a failure to hold elections during 2016, mediation between the government and opposition took place under the aegis of the Conference Episcopale du Congo (CENCO). On 31 December 2016 the negotiations resulted in an agreement for elections to be held during 2017 and for President Joseph Kabila to abstain from seeking a third term. The government is finally preparing to hold presidential elections on 23 December 2018.

Since 31 December 2017 Catholic organizations and opposition groups have held demonstrations to pressure the government to uphold the CENCO agreement and to hold elections. The UN has reported that security forces have shot and killed at least 100 people during protests.

Candidates are required to register for the election by 8 August. Since President Kabila has not publicly confirmed that he will not run for a third term, church leaders have announced plans to mobilize protests from 12-14 August.

ANALYSIS

Widespread violence in areas that have been relatively calm in recent years, including the Kasai region, is indicative of the enduring challenge of building effective governance and political stability in the DRC. Competition for control of profitable minerals, as well as unresolved inter-communal conflicts, have enabled the proliferation of militias and armed groups.

Growing government repression and the population's frustration with the unconstitutional delay in elections enhances the risk of further political instability. Security forces have repeatedly used disproportionate and deadly force against peaceful demonstrators and perpetrated more than 1,100 extrajudicial and arbitrary executions during 2017. Rumors of President Kabila's intention to run for a third term have led to additional protests.

The government of the DRC has struggled to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and its own forces have sometimes been complicit in the perpetration of mass atrocity crimes.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC currently subjects 13 entities and 31 individuals in the DRC to sanctions. Several governments and regional organizations, including the United States and EU, have also imposed sanctions on government officials who have impeded the election process or are deemed responsible for deadly attacks on peaceful demonstrators.

On 31 March the UNSC extended MONUSCO's mandate until March 2019, emphasizing that the DRC government "bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including protection from crimes against humanity and war crimes."

During a 13 April Humanitarian Conference on the DRC, co-hosted by the EU and UN, donors pledged \$528 million. The government boycotted the conference, accusing the UN of exaggerating the extent of the humanitarian crisis.

On 22 June 2017 the HRC established an international team of experts to collect evidence and investigate alleged human rights violations and abuses within the Kasai region.

NECESSARY ACTION

The DRC government and MONUSCO must ensure that protecting civilians remains their primary priority as they address the ongoing threat posed by various armed groups. The government should implement measures to mediate inter-communal tensions and address structural issues of land access, resource allocation and poor governance.

The government should undertake measures to ensure accountability for crimes perpetrated in the Kasai region, as recommended by the HRC's international team of experts. The government must also halt support for Bana Mura and end the ethnic targeting of civilians.

The government must continue to take meaningful steps towards holding the December 2018 elections and ensuring a timely and peaceful transition of power.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [MONUSCO Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2409](#), 27 March 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: DRC](#)



4.5 million South Sudanese – over a quarter of the population – have fled their homes since December 2013

SOUTH SUDAN

Armed conflict between government armed forces and rebel groups in South Sudan continues to pose an imminent threat to populations who may be targeted on the basis of their ethnicity and presumed political loyalties.

BACKGROUND

Despite regional diplomatic efforts to revitalize the August 2015 peace agreement, which formally ended South Sudan's 2013-2015 civil war, serious fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO) and other armed groups has continued. On 10 July the Human Rights Division of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reported on fighting between the SPLA and SPLA-IO between 16 April and 24 May. The report documented SPLA attacks on at least 40 villages and settlements in Unity State, during which 120 girls and women were raped and more than 230 civilians were killed. Among the victims were 35 children and 50 women, many of whom were hanged or burned alive.

On 27 June President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar agreed to the so-called "Khartoum Declaration" to establish a permanent ceasefire. However, both sides accused the other of violating the agreement within hours of it going into effect on 30 June, with fighting reported in Wau and Upper Nile States.

Despite the failure of numerous past agreements, the Khartoum Declaration was another attempt to end armed conflict in South Sudan. President Kiir and Machar initially signed the "Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan" (ARCSS) during 2015, but an escalation in fighting between the SPLA and SPLA-IO during July 2016 has led to a further two years of sporadic conflict. During 2017 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) in an attempt to reinvigorate the ARCSS. Despite hosting three rounds of HLRF meetings, the parties failed to reach a sustainable agreement.

Between 2013 and 2015 at least 50,000 people in South Sudan were killed as parties to the civil war perpetrated war crimes

and crimes against humanity, including widespread extrajudicial killings, torture, child abductions and sexual violence, with both sides targeting civilians as part of their military tactics.

Since December 2013 an estimated 4.5 million South Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes, with 2.6 million refugees spread across neighboring countries. According to OCHA, 7.1 million people are severely food insecure and 1.1 million children are acutely malnourished. The government has been accused of intentionally denying aid to civilians in rebel-held areas. South Sudan is also the deadliest country in the world for humanitarian workers, with more than 100 killed since December 2013.

ANALYSIS

Political instability and armed conflict have been pervasive in South Sudan for the majority of its seven years of independence.

The ARCSS called for a permanent ceasefire, as well as the establishment of an independent Hybrid Court for South Sudan to investigate atrocities committed during the conflict. A pervasive culture of impunity has fueled recurring cycles of violence and mass atrocities in South Sudan as the government has repeatedly delayed the formation of the Hybrid Court. The ARCSS and subsequent ceasefire agreements have never been fully implemented and the root causes of the conflict have not been addressed.

The government of South Sudan is manifestly unwilling and/or unable to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 15 March 2018 the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until March 2019 and expressed its intention “to consider all measures, including an arms embargo, to deprive the parties of the means to continue fighting.”

On 23 February the HRC-mandated Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan reported on 41 senior officials who bear individual responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed during 2016 and 2017. On 20 March 2018 the HRC extended the mandate of the Commission for another year, emphasizing that the government has “the responsibility to protect all of its population in the country from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”

The UNSC, African Union (AU), and IGAD have all declared a willingness to take measures to punish those who continue to violate agreements and obstruct the peace process in South Sudan. On 2 February the United States announced a unilateral arms embargo against South Sudan. On the same day, the EU added two current and one former government official to its sanctions list.

On 13 July the UNSC imposed an arms embargo on the country, meaning that all UN member states are now required to prevent the supply, sale or transfer of all arms and related material to South Sudan. The UNSC also subjected two additional senior officials to targeted sanctions, meaning that a total of eight rebel leaders or government officials are now on the sanctions list. Resolution 2428 reiterates that the government of South Sudan “bears the primary responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity,” and urges the government “to expeditiously sign the Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union for the creation of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan.”

NECESSARY ACTION

The government and opposition must establish a sustainable peace agreement. The government must implement all provisions of the ARCSS that are still relevant. The SPLA, SPLA-IO and all affiliated militias must ensure that UNMISS is able to move freely and without threats to its personnel.

The AU and IGAD should actively assist in imposing and monitoring the arms embargo. The UNSC should further expand targeted sanctions against all senior military officers, politicians and leaders of non-state armed groups implicated in atrocities or of violating numerous peace agreements.

The AU and the government should expeditiously establish the Hybrid Court and ensure that it has the resources to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for mass atrocities committed since December 2013. All those responsible for atrocities in South Sudan must be held accountable, regardless of their affiliation or position.

MORE INFORMATION:

- » [UNMISS Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2406](#), 15 March 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: South Sudan](#)

SERIOUS CONCERN

There is a significant risk of occurrence, or recurrence, of mass atrocity crimes within the foreseeable future if effective action is not taken.



More than 1,200 people killed and 430,000 refugees since April 2015

BURUNDI

Populations in Burundi face a risk of potential mass atrocity crimes as systematic human rights violations and abuses continue.

BACKGROUND

Ongoing violations and abuses of human rights leave populations in Burundi at risk of mass atrocity crimes. The HRC-mandated CoI on Burundi has found that potential crimes against humanity may have been committed in the country since April 2015, including sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture.

Violations and abuses of human rights have primarily been carried out by the National Intelligence Service and police, sometimes in collaboration with the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party, Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD). Opposition elements have also been accused of assassinations and grenade attacks in Bujumbura.

More than 1,200 people have been killed in politically inspired violence since April 2015 and more than 10,000 Burundians have been arbitrarily detained. Approximately 430,000 refugees remain in neighboring countries.

The crisis developed following the April 2015 announcement that President Pierre Nkurunziza would seek a third presidential term. This was regarded by many as violating the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement, which ended a civil war that claimed over 350,000 lives between 1993–2005. Following a failed coup and protest violence, President Nkurunziza was reelected during July 2015. The East African Community (EAC) has attempted

to mediate between the government and opposition parties, but talks have stalled.

On 17 May a controversial national referendum approved the government's draft changes to the constitution, which will allow President Nkurunziza to potentially run for office for another two seven-year terms and provide an opportunity to abolish ethnic quotas within the government. The referendum was preceded by a violent campaign against perceived critics of the president, and opposition groups have denounced the outcome. On 27 June the CoI on Burundi reported that some opponents of the referendum faced torture and execution "amid a continuing environment of threats and intimidation."

ANALYSIS

The government has severely limited the space for political debate by banning independent non-governmental organizations, curtailing independent media and repressing the political opposition. While the government has reported that 73 percent of voters were in favor of the constitutional amendments, numerous reports of killings, arrests, physical violence, intimidation and harassment of perceived opponents highlight the tense political environment.

The government's refusal to cooperate with the UNSC, the HRC's CoI, OHCHR and the ICC is a disturbing indication of its unwillingness to engage with the international community and adhere to international law.

The government is failing to uphold its Responsibility to Protect all Burundians, regardless of ethnicity or political affiliation.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 18 October 2016 President Nkurunziza initiated Burundi's withdrawal from the Rome Statute, which came into effect during October 2017. Prior to withdrawal, the ICC opened an investigation into crimes committed in Burundi from April 2015 until 26 October 2017.

On 29 July 2016 the UNSC passed Resolution 2303, authorizing UN police to monitor the security and human rights situation. The government of Burundi refused to accept the monitors. One year later the UNSC adopted a Presidential Statement expressing the Council's intention to pursue targeted measures against those who threaten the peace and security of Burundi. There has been no subsequent diplomatic action.

On 30 September 2016 the HRC created the CoI to investigate human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. On 29 September 2017 the HRC extended the mandate of the CoI for another year, despite the refusal of the government to allow the Commissioners to enter Burundi.

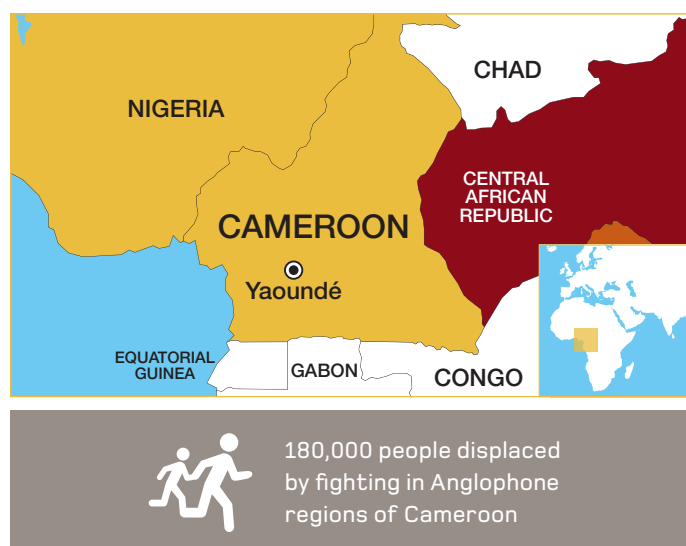
NECESSARY ACTION

In the aftermath of the May referendum, it remains essential that the Burundian government deescalate tensions, end the violent targeting of political opponents and avoid any further ethnicization or militarization of the conflict. The HRC-mandated Col on Burundi should be granted immediate access to investigate alleged systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights.

The government should engage constructively with the mediation efforts led by the EAC and collaborate with OHCHR, the HRC and UNSC. The UNSC should impose targeted sanctions against all those who continue to threaten peace and security in Burundi, including the list of suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity supplied by the Col.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [Report of the Commission of Inquiry, A/HRC/36/54](#), 4 September 2017
- » [Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Burundi, S/2018/89](#), 25 January 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Burundi](#)



CAMEROON

There is a growing risk of mass atrocity crimes due to increasing violence between government security forces and armed separatists in Cameroon's Anglophone regions.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions over cultural rights and identity have been growing in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2016 when English-speaking lawyers, students and teachers began protesting against their under-representation and cultural marginalization by the Francophone-dominated government. Violent repression by the security forces resulted in arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and the killing of several protesters.

Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon were unified in 1961, but there have been long-term disputes over the extent to which government resources and access to employment have been controlled by the French-speaking majority. Although the Anglophone minority constitutes 20 percent of the population of Cameroon, they are concentrated in the Northwest and Southwest regions. President Paul Biya has held power in Cameroon since 1982.

The recent crisis in Cameroon deepened after Anglophone separatists organized large-scale protests from 22 September to 1 October 2017 and symbolically proclaimed independence, establishing a state of "Ambazonia." During the protests security forces responded with disproportionate and deadly force, leading to at least 40 deaths. Since then, violence between security forces and armed separatists has escalated. Government forces have arbitrarily arrested and tortured detainees, and destroyed a number of villages in the Anglophone regions.

Separatist forces have also killed at least 44 military personnel and attacked teachers for not participating in a separatist boycott. At least 40 schools in the Anglophone region have been burned down. Some armed separatist groups have kidnapped state officials and sought to make the Anglophone areas "ungovernable." According to the UN, more than 180,000 people have fled their homes as a result of the ongoing violence.

Military operations against the armed extremist group Boko Haram also continue in the north of the country. There have been widespread allegations of extrajudicial killings, especially following the recent circulation of a video showing two women and two children accused of links to Boko Haram being executed by Cameroonian soldiers.

ANALYSIS

The targeting of individuals based upon their cultural identity and perceived political allegiances poses a direct threat to both Anglophone and Francophone civilians. Although the government created the Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism during 2017, it has failed to address the root causes of the conflict and provide a political means for peacefully resolving it.

There are also growing concerns that upcoming presidential elections in October could lead to a further escalation and militarization of the conflict.

The government of Cameroon is failing to uphold its Responsibility to Protect in the Anglophone regions and requires international assistance to end the conflict and prevent potential atrocity crimes.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Since 2017 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, has called for the government of Cameroon to conduct impartial investigations into violence in the Anglophone regions. On 17 November 2017 six UN Special Rapporteurs

issued a joint statement urging the government to engage in meaningful dialogue and halt violence in Northwest and Southwest Cameroon.

On 20 June the EU called upon the government to allow UN bodies access to the Southwest and Northwest Cameroon.

NECESSARY ACTION

The government of Cameroon should immediately initiate a dialogue with Anglophone community leaders and constructively address the historic grievances of the English-speaking minority. The security forces must end the use of disproportionate and deadly force and ensure that the human rights of all Cameroonians are protected, regardless of language or cultural identity. Soldiers responsible for the unlawful killing of civilians must be held accountable for their actions.

The government should allow the UN access to Southwest and Northwest Cameroon to investigate potential human rights violations and abuses, including those committed by armed separatists

MORE INFORMATION

» [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Cameroon](#)



94 mass graves discovered in formerly ISIL-held territory

IRAQ

The potential for recurring armed conflict in Iraq leaves civilians at risk of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

During July 2014 ISIL seized vast territory across northern Iraq. A military coalition comprised mainly of the Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga, operating with United States air support, has successfully recaptured all major cities once occupied by ISIL. On 21 November 2017 the government announced the end of major anti-ISIL military operations. Nevertheless, sporadic clashes continue across parts of Nineveh governorate, where 641,400 people remain displaced.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and OHCHR have reported that ISIL's past violations, "may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly genocide." An estimated 30,000 civilians have been killed and 55,000 injured since January 2014, and OHCHR and UNAMI have reported that 94 mass graves have been found in formerly ISIL-held territory since June 2014. The CoI on Syria has also reported that ISIL "has committed the crime of genocide as well as multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Yazidis" in Iraq.

Despite losing all their territory within Iraq during 2017, ISIL fighters continue to pose a threat to vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, Shabak, Yazidis and Turkmen. ISIL also continues to target civilians from the majority Shia population in terrorist attacks. Following the 12 May national parliamentary elections, on 21 June the Supreme Court of Iraq ruled in favor of a manual recount of ballots in response to allegations of electoral fraud.

OHCHR and human rights organizations have expressed concern at reports of forced evictions, killings, torture, sexual violence and denial of humanitarian aid to Sunni communities in parts of Iraq that have been reclaimed from ISIL. Iraqi courts have also reportedly sentenced 3,130 prisoners accused of links to ISIL to death. UNAMI has expressed concerns regarding the mass hanging of 42 ISIL prisoners on 25 September and 38 prisoners on 14 December. Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) security forces have also reportedly carried out extrajudicial executions of captured ISIL members.

OCHA estimates that as of June 8.7 million people in Iraq – one third of the population – were still in need of humanitarian assistance, with 2 million people still internally displaced.

ANALYSIS

Cultural identities and religious loyalties continue to be manipulated by some forces in Iraq, posing a threat to the country's long-term political stability and social cohesion. Following the recount of ballots for the parliamentary elections on 12 May the new Iraqi government must take active steps to facilitate reconciliation, counter violent extremism, and minimize the risk of recurring armed conflict.

The Iraqi government needs ongoing international assistance to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 14 June the UNSC adopted Resolution 2421, renewing the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2019.

On 21 September UNSC Resolution 2379 authorized the establishment of an Investigative Team to support domestic accountability efforts by collecting evidence regarding potential atrocities committed by ISIL in Iraq. On 31 May the Secretary-General appointed Karim Asad Ahmad Khan as the Special Adviser and Head of the Team.

NECESSARY ACTION

While continuing to battle ISIL and other armed extremist groups, it is essential that the Iraqi government protects all civilians and addresses the underlying sources of conflict between Sunnis, Shias, Kurds and other minorities within Iraq.

All relevant authorities must actively prevent reprisals against Sunni civilians in areas recaptured from ISIL. The Iraqi government should take steps to demobilize and reintegrate members of the Popular Mobilization Forces, and accelerate security sector reform.

UN member states should support the swift operationalization of the Investigative Team established by Iraq and the UNSC, and provide financial and technical assistance. The government of Iraq should adopt enabling legislation to incorporate genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity into domestic law. All perpetrators of atrocities in Iraq, regardless of affiliation, should be held accountable for their crimes.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNAMI Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2379](#), 21 September 2017
- » [UNAMI OHCHR Report on Human Rights in Iraq, January-June 2017](#), 14 December 2017
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Iraq](#)



Between 30 March and 13 June at least 135 Palestinians were killed during protests at the Gaza-Israel border

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Violence on the Gaza border and recurring armed conflict between Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups poses an ongoing threat to civilians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

BACKGROUND

Impunity for past violations of international law and the failure to reach a comprehensive peace agreement has contributed to recurring armed conflict between Israel and the Hamas de-facto administration in Gaza.

Between 30 March and 13 June at least 135 Palestinians were killed and over 14,605 wounded by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) along the border between Gaza and Israel during a series of mass demonstrations. The demonstrations were initially organized in the lead up to the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel and the Palestinian "Nakba" (Catastrophe) on 14 and 15 May, respectively. Fifty-seven Palestinians were shot dead and 1,700 wounded on 14 May alone.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008. The last conflict escalated on 7 July 2014 when the IDF launched an offensive to halt indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. The 50-day conflict led to the death of over 1,500 civilians and the displacement of approximately 500,000 Palestinians.

Since 2014 the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza has been exacerbated by an ongoing air, sea and land blockade by Israel. Illegal Israeli settlements, prohibited under international law, also continue to expand in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 4 July the Israeli authorities proceeded with plans to demolish and expel the Palestinian Bedouin community of Khan Al-Ahmar in the West Bank in order to prepare for another

potential Israeli settlement. An Israeli court has temporarily blocked the demolition.

Hamas security forces in Gaza have also committed grave human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, summary executions and torture of Palestinian civilians. Between 13-15 July Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups fired over 200 rockets and mortar shells towards Israel. In retaliation Israel carried out its heaviest airstrikes on Gaza since the 2014 war.

Negotiations between Israel and Palestinian representatives regarding a lasting peace agreement have been suspended since April 2014. On 12 October 2017 Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal which would see administrative control of the Gaza Strip handed to a Fatah-backed Palestinian unity government, but negotiations have since stalled.

ANALYSIS

In the absence of a meaningful peace process, conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups is likely to result in recurring armed hostilities. Previous attacks on civilians in Gaza and Israel violate IHL and may constitute war crimes. No Israeli or Hamas officials have been held accountable for unlawful attacks committed during the 2014 war.

The systematic nature of human rights violations in the OPT may amount to possible crimes against humanity. Israel's military blockade of Gaza, in force since 2007, is also a potentially illegal form of collective punishment of Gaza's 1.8 million inhabitants. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its civilian population into occupied territory. Illegal Israeli settlements have contributed to the volatile situation in the West Bank. Increased anti-Semitic and anti-Arab rhetoric is also exacerbating tensions between communities across Israel and the OPT.

Despite ongoing political conflict over sovereignty and the OPT's future, Israel, the Hamas de-facto administration and the Palestinian Authority are obligated to uphold their Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute in January 2015, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC announced the opening of a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine. On 22 May the Palestinian Authority referred the situation in Gaza to the ICC.

On 24 June 2015 the HRC-mandated Col on the Gaza conflict reported on violations of IHL and IHRL that may amount to war crimes. On 18 May the HRC decided to establish an independent, international Col to investigate all such violations in the context of large-scale civilian protests in the OPT.

On 23 December 2016 the UNSC adopted a resolution reaffirming that Israeli settlements in the OPT constitute a violation of international law. This was the first UNSC resolution adopted on Israel and the OPT since 2009. On 1 June the UNSC failed to adopt two draft resolutions on Palestine, one due to a veto by the United States and the other because it received only one vote in favor.

On 13 June the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by the IDF against Palestinian civilians, by a vote of 120 in favor to 8 against.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must work towards a sustainable political solution. Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza, cease illegal settlement-related activity, and immediately end the use of disproportionate and deadly force against Palestinian protesters. The Palestinian Authority must help end indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians and rigorously prosecute those responsible. The Hamas de-facto administration in Gaza must permanently halt indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel.

It is essential for Israel and the Palestinian Authority to end the culture of impunity and ensure that all those responsible for violations of IHL and IHRL are held accountable. All parties should condemn anti-Semitic and anti-Arab hate speech and incitement to violence, and cooperate fully with the preliminary examination of the ICC.

States with strong political and economic ties with Israel, the Palestinian Authority or Hamas should push for a lasting political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, strict adherence to IHL, and the protection of human rights for all civilians in Israel and the OPT regardless of ethnicity or religion.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Press Statement, SC/12052-PAL/2196](#), 17 September 2015
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2334](#), 23 December 2016
- » [UNGA Resolution, A/RES/ES-10/20](#), 13 June 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Israel and the OPT](#)



2,000 people killed each year since 2011 in fighting between herders and settled farming communities

NIGERIA

Increasing inter-communal violence in Nigeria's "middle belt" region, as well as sporadic attacks by Boko Haram, constitute a serious threat to civilians.

BACKGROUND

Attacks by the armed extremist group Boko Haram, as well as recurring violence in Nigeria's "middle belt," leaves civilians at risk of mass atrocity crimes. According to research by Amnesty International, at least 1,800 people have been killed since January 2018 in herder-farmer violence, inter-communal violence, banditry and Boko Haram attacks.

Clashes between semi-nomadic herdsman and settled farming communities have escalated in Nigeria's "middle belt." Fighting over land in Benue and Taraba states led to nearly 100 deaths and 80,000 people displaced between December and January. At least 104 people were also killed in Plateau and Adamawa states following clashes that started on 21 June. More than 50 homes were also burned down in several villages during violence between Fulani herdsman and ethnic Berom farmers.

Recurring conflict in Nigeria's "middle belt" region is often rooted in historical grievances over land use and resource allocation. These disputes have been exacerbated by growing desertification in the north of Nigeria, which has driven many ethnic Fulani herdsman, who are mainly Muslim, southward into areas traditionally farmed by settled communities that are predominately Christian. The competition for resources has resulted in increasing violence and has sharpened religious and ethnic tensions.

Meanwhile, although Boko Haram has been seriously weakened by the government's counter-insurgency campaign, smaller attacks, particularly suicide bombings, continue. Despite losing

all the territory it once held in northeastern Nigeria, during May and June Boko Haram killed at least 45 people and destroyed mosques and markets during attacks on several villages in Borno and Adamawa states.

ANALYSIS

The ongoing effects of climate change, including drought and desertification, will likely increase the competition for resources between nomadic and settled communities, putting civilians at ongoing risk of inter-communal violence. Large-scale displacement and insecurity have increased unemployment and poverty in northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region.

Although the Nigerian government officially declared victory over Boko Haram more than two years ago, insecurity in the north of the country leaves civilians at continued risk of violence.

The government of Nigeria continues to struggle to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and needs ongoing support from the international community.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

A regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has been leading efforts to combat Boko Haram since 2015.

During the 25 June UN General Assembly formal debate on the Responsibility to Protect, the Nigerian delegation acknowledged its ongoing domestic security challenges and pledged to uphold its Responsibility to Protect all vulnerable civilians.

NECESSARY ACTION

It is essential that the government of Nigeria addresses the root causes of recurring inter-communal conflict, especially in the "middle belt" region, through socio-economic initiatives and political reforms that tackle land rights and poor governance, as well as access to employment and educational opportunities. Utilizing the Early Warning System of the Economic Community of West African States, the Nigerian government should work with local civil society to help identify, monitor and ameliorate long-standing grievances between the Fulani and settled communities.

The government should also expand efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change, including by accelerating regional initiatives aimed at restoring environments affected by drought and desertification.

The Nigerian government should intensify programs that strengthen local security and bolster the rule of law. Such efforts should include comprehensive security sector reform.

MORE INFORMATION

» [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Nigeria](#)

R2P MONITOR

**Global Centre for the
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