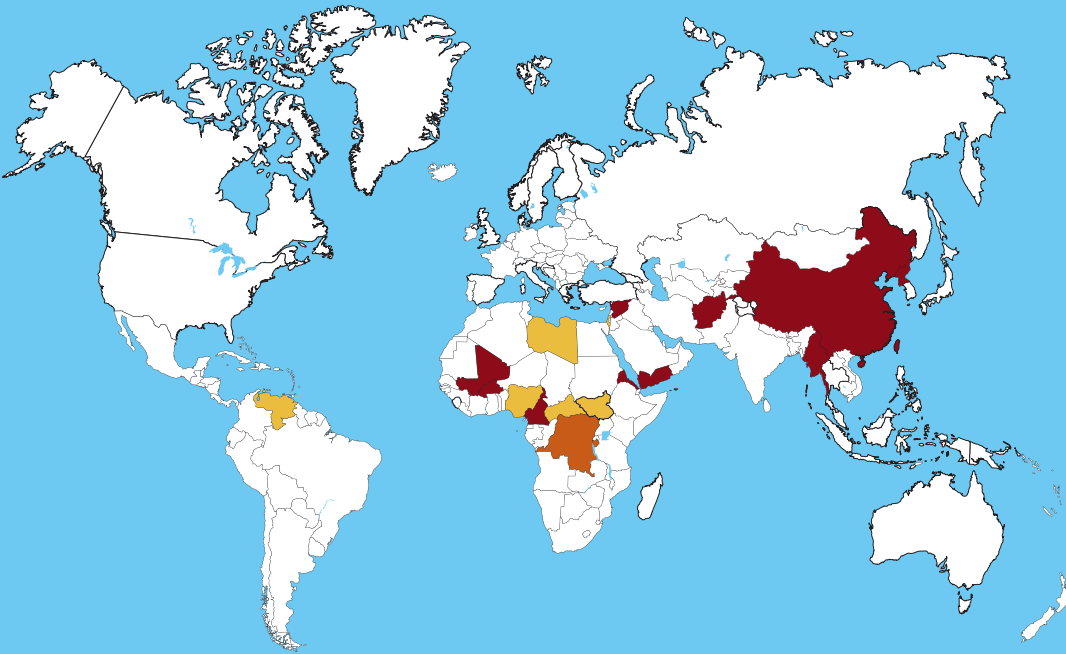


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the Global Centre for the
Responsibility to Protect

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 an atrocity prevention 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, key regional actors and the International Criminal Court.
- » 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.



More than 10,000 civilians
killed or injured during 2019

AFGHANISTAN

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

BACKGROUND

Since the Taliban were overthrown in 2001 by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition of military forces, they have conducted an insurgency against the internationally recognized Afghan government. Following the 2014 withdrawal of most foreign forces, the Taliban have made substantial military gains, currently controlling or influencing more than half the country. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has reported that civilians in Taliban-controlled areas suffer widespread human rights abuses, including recruitment of child soldiers and extrajudicial killings. According to the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Taliban have potentially committed crimes against humanity and war crimes. Afghan security forces and members of the United States (US) military may have also committed war crimes, including the torture of detainees and summary executions.

Despite talks between the US government and the Taliban to negotiate an end to the war, UNAMA reported that there were more civilian casualties in Afghanistan between 1 July and 30 September 2019 than in any other three-month period during the past ten years, with 1,174 civilians killed and 3,139 wounded. This brought the number of civilian casualties to more than 10,000 for the sixth year in a row. The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction also reported that the Taliban carried out 8,204 attacks in the final quarter of 2019 – the highest tally recorded since 2010 – and that US military aircraft dropped or fired 7,423 bombs and missiles during 2019.

The US and Taliban finalized a peace agreement on 29 February. The agreement includes guarantees to prevent the use of Afghan territory by terrorist groups, a timeline for withdrawal of all international forces, creation of conditions for intra-Afghan negotiations, and a permanent ceasefire.

However, shortly after the agreement was finalized the Taliban resumed their military campaign against the Afghan government. The Taliban carried out 76 attacks across 24 provinces in the week following the agreement, prompting the US to launch airstrikes. UNAMA also reported a drastic increase in incidents that killed or injured civilians in the month following the US-Taliban agreement. Intra-Afghan negotiations were set to begin on 10 March, but the Afghan government rejected this timeline. The Taliban have argued that the agreement is reaching a breaking point, citing ongoing US drone strikes and the Afghan government stalling on prisoner releases.

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) also continues to operate in Afghanistan, often targeting minority populations. On 25 March ISIL-K attacked the Dharamshala Sikh Temple in Kabul, killing at least 25 civilians. ISIL-K also perpetrated a suicide bombing at a funeral in Nangarhar province on 12 May, killing 32 civilians. That same day armed assailants attacked a maternity hospital in a predominantly Hazara neighborhood in Kabul, killing at least 24 people. At the time of publication no one had claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 2.1 million people in Afghanistan are internally displaced and 2.7 million Afghans are refugees – the second largest refugee population in the world.

ANALYSIS

During their 18-year war, the Taliban, government troops and some international forces have shown blatant disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In addition to fighting to expand their territorial control, the Taliban have continued their attacks on civilians in urban areas. Unless sustained action is taken to improve local governance, conflict and insecurity will continue.

Although government forces implemented measures to decrease civilian casualties, ongoing attacks and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by the Taliban and ISIL-K in populated areas continue to endanger civilians and may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The US-Taliban agreement is a welcome step towards ending the war. However, the threat of further war crimes and crimes against humanity will continue unless a comprehensive ceasefire is fully implemented. Innocent civilians have previously borne the brunt of failed negotiations and unimplemented ceasefires.

Instability in Afghanistan is exacerbated by the political impasse between incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah's competing claims of victory in the September 2019 presidential election. Both were sworn in as president in separate inauguration ceremonies on 9 March. The international community has encouraged Ghani and Abdullah to reach a settlement in accordance with the constitution.

The Afghan government needs ongoing international support to uphold its responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Since 2011 the UN Security Council (UNSC) has imposed an arms embargo and sanctions on individuals or entities who support the Taliban and its affiliates. On 10 March the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2513, welcoming the US-Taliban agreement. The resolution also stipulated that the easing of sanctions is dependent upon sustained progress towards peace.

Some US troops began leaving Afghanistan during March in line with the US-Taliban agreement to bring US troop presence down to 8,600 before mid-July. Some other NATO member states are also considering withdrawing forces from Afghanistan. On 23 March the US announced an immediate reduction in aid to Afghanistan by \$1 billion, claiming that President Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah's inability to agree on an inclusive government harmed US-Afghan relations.

During November 2017 the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC requested authorization to proceed with an investigation into alleged crimes committed in Afghanistan since May 2003. Despite the Court rejecting the Chief Prosecutor's request during April 2019, on 5 March the Appeals Chamber decided to allow the investigation to proceed.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties to the conflict should commit to an immediate ceasefire and the Taliban and Afghan government should commence substantive negotiations. Intra-Afghan talks must include meaningful representation of women, ethnic and religious minorities and civil society, and should focus on protecting human rights. Promoting good governance and the rule of law also remains essential.

Afghan security forces and all international military forces must prioritize the protection of civilians and strictly adhere to IHL and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). International forces should strengthen protocols to prevent civilian casualties and increase efforts to ensure the security of vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities.

The international community should continue to pursue international justice for war crimes committed in Afghanistan, regardless of the position, nationality or affiliation of the alleged perpetrator.



700,000+ people displaced by conflict in the north-west and south-west regions

CAMEROON

Civilians in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon continue to face mass atrocity crimes due to widespread violence between government forces and armed separatists. The armed extremist group Boko Haram also poses an ongoing threat.

BACKGROUND

Political conflict over cultural rights and identity escalated in Cameroon's Anglophone regions during 2016 when English-speaking lawyers, students and teachers began protesting against their under-representation and cultural marginalization by the Francophone-dominated government. Security forces violently repressed the protests, resulting in arbitrary arrests, sexual violence and the killing of civilians in the north-west and south-west regions.

Clashes between government forces and armed Anglophone separatists intensified during the lead-up to municipal and parliamentary elections on 9 February. Security forces were accused of burning Anglophone villages and of indiscriminately shooting civilians. Armed separatists were also responsible for killings, abductions and threats directed at any civilians who attempted to vote. On 14 February at least 22 civilians, including 14 children, were massacred by government forces in Ngaruh in the north-west region. Although the government scheduled a new election for 22 March in several Anglophone constituencies, the majority of the population abstained from voting out of fear of repercussions.

The political crisis in Cameroon has deepened since October 2017 when Anglophone separatists proclaimed independence, declaring a new state of "Ambazonia." The Anglophone and Francophone areas of Cameroon were unified in 1961, but there have been long-term disputes over the extent to which access to government resources is controlled by the French-speaking majority. Although the Anglophone minority constitutes 20 percent of the population of Cameroon, they are a majority in the north-west and south-west regions.

Since October 2017 at least 650 civilians, 235 members of the security forces and nearly 1,000 alleged separatists have reportedly been killed as a result of the armed conflict. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that as of 27 March at least 680,000 people have been internally displaced in the north-west and south-west regions, while 52,000 have fled to neighboring Nigeria.

Throughout the conflict there has been extensive evidence of the security forces perpetrating extrajudicial killings and burning Anglophone villages. Individuals detained by the government for alleged separatist ties are reportedly subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Armed separatist forces have also perpetrated atrocity crimes, including kidnapping and killing civilians. Due to a ban on government education by the separatists, 80 percent of schools in the two regions have closed or been destroyed.

In an attempt to ease tensions, during October the government released 333 prisoners from the Anglophone region, as well as opposition leader Maurice Kamto. On 21 December Cameroon's parliament proposed a bill that would grant "special status" to the Anglophone regions. The elections on 9 February were supposed to contribute to the decentralization of power.

The armed extremist group Boko Haram is also active in the Lake Chad Basin region that includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. During 2019 the group committed atrocities in the far north of Cameroon, including the killing of at least 225 civilians, as well as abductions and mutilations. During military operations against Boko Haram there have been widespread allegations of the security forces perpetrating extrajudicial killings. Ongoing violence in the far north region has displaced over 490,000 people.

ANALYSIS

The targeting of individuals based upon their cultural identity poses a direct threat to both Anglophone and Francophone civilians. Persistent attacks on civilians by both armed separatists and the security forces amounts to crimes against humanity.

The government continues to deny the severity of the crisis and has failed to address the root causes of the Anglophone conflict or provide a political means for resolving it.

The government of Cameroon is failing to uphold its responsibility to protect and requires international assistance to mediate and end the armed conflict in the north-west and south-west regions.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Despite the government's failure to protect populations from violations and abuses of human rights, or to hold security forces accountable for extrajudicial killings, during October 2018 Cameroon was elected to the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the 2019-2021 term. Following a visit to Cameroon, on 6

May 2019 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the government to hold accountable members of the security forces who commit serious human rights abuses.

On 13 May 2019 the UNSC held its first Arria Formula meeting on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Cameroon.

On 17 February 2020 UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the killings in Ngarbuh and called upon the government "to conduct an investigation and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable." The government has since acknowledged the military's involvement in the massacre.

The UN's Special Representatives on Children and Armed Conflict, Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Violence Against Children, as well as the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, issued a joint statement on 21 February deploring human rights abuses committed against civilians in the south-west and north-west regions of Cameroon.

NECESSARY ACTION

The security forces must end all extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians and ensure that the human rights of all Cameroonians are equally protected, regardless of language, cultural identity or political affiliation. Security forces implicated in violations of IHL and IHRL should be investigated and held accountable. Armed separatist groups must also halt attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. The government and armed separatists should immediately negotiate a ceasefire.

The government of Cameroon should grant the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) immediate and unfettered access to the north-west and south-west regions to investigate potential violations and abuses of IHRL. Foreign governments and regional organizations should suspend all military aid to Cameroon until its security forces have made demonstrable progress towards upholding the human rights of vulnerable populations.

In order to work towards a negotiated political solution to the crisis in the Anglophone regions, the government should hold an inclusive dialogue mediated by a neutral player on neutral territory. The African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Central African States should work with Cameroon's government to prevent any further deterioration of the armed conflict. The UNSC should add the situation in Cameroon to its formal agenda.



Approximately one million Uighurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities are currently being detained in "re-education" or "de-extremification" facilities

CHINA

The treatment of ethnic Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in China may amount to crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

Under the auspices of combatting religious extremism and terrorism, in recent years the government of China and authorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have increased their repression of members of the ethnic Uighur community as well as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Hui. China's approach to combatting "religious extremism" has resulted in large-scale arbitrary detention, severe restrictions on religious practice, and pervasive surveillance of the country's Muslim population.

Approximately 1 million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities are currently being detained in "re-education" or "de-extremification" facilities without formal charges or due process. Former detainees have reported that while in state custody they were subjected to abuse and forced indoctrination. The government has also reportedly separated nearly half a million Muslim children from their families, often denying access to information on their location.

During February The Associated Press published leaked information from a database that includes profiles of over 300 detainees from Karakax County, XUAR. The database demonstrates that the Chinese government focused on religious devotion as one of the main reasons for detention, including ordinary activities such as fasting, praying or attending mosque.

These measures have been imposed in conjunction with increased restrictions on religious practice. In March 2017 XUAR authorities passed the "Regulation on De-extremification," which prohibits a range of "extreme" behaviors, such as "abnormal" beards.

On 1 March the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published a report which found that over 80,000 Uighurs are working under "conditions that strongly suggest forced labor," with

many transferred directly from detention camps to factories across China. According to the report, these factories are part of supply chains that provide goods for 83 global brands, including Apple, BMW, Gap, Nike and Samsung.

China has also expanded its pervasive surveillance across XUAR. Authorities monitor the daily lives of almost all Uighurs, including religious gatherings. Authorities collect DNA during medical check-ups, monitor mobile and online communications, and install a GPS tracking system on all vehicles. Data is reportedly used to profile persons at risk of "extremist thought" prior to being sent to "re-education" camps.

Authorities have also engaged in the systematic destruction of Uighur cultural heritage, including demolishing historic mosques and shrines. At least 100 Uighur cemeteries as well as over 100 mosques have reportedly been partially destroyed or completely demolished in XUAR.

On 1 April the Uyghur Human Rights Project reported on the Chinese authorities' systematic refusal to renew passports of Uighur citizens and denial of other documentation, threatening them with possible statelessness.

Leaked government documents reveal that the crackdown in Xinjiang was a result of pressure from senior officials. Following a visit to XUAR in April 2014, President Xi Jinping called for a "struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism" to be conducted with "absolutely no mercy." The Communist Party Secretary of XUAR, Chen Quanguo, then intensified Uighur persecution and drastically expanded the detention camps.

ANALYSIS

The large-scale detention program, abuse of detainees and lack of information regarding the fate of persons in state custody in XUAR could constitute crimes against humanity under international law. The targeted destruction of places of cultural significance may be part of a systematic attempt to eradicate Uighur cultural heritage in China.

Systematic discrimination against the Uighurs and other Muslims, as well as surveillance systems that target these groups, increase their vulnerability to violations and abuses of their fundamental human rights. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" for all human beings.

The government of China is failing to uphold its responsibility to protect and is perpetrating possible crimes against humanity against the Uighurs and other Muslim minorities.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Twenty-two governments sent a letter to the President of the HRC on 8 July 2019 calling upon China to halt its mass detention of ethnic Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. In response, on 12 July ambassadors from 37 governments sent a letter to the HRC President defending China's policies.

During October 2019 the US imposed visa restrictions on Chinese government and Communist Party officials “who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uighurs, Kazakhs, or other members of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang.” On 3 December the US House of Representatives passed the Uighur Act of 2019, calling for sanctions against senior officials responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

On 29 October 2019 the United Kingdom (UK) delivered a statement on behalf of 23 states at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, urging China to respect freedom of religion and belief and to allow OHCHR and UN Special Procedures “immediate unfettered, meaningful access to Xinjiang.”

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said on 4 March that she requested access to China “to carry out an independent assessment of the continuing reports pointing to wide patterns of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, particularly in [XUAR].”

On 10 March Nike announced that it was reviewing its supply chain in China to address allegations of using forced Uighur labor.

NECESSARY ACTION

The government of China should immediately halt widespread violations and abuses of human rights in XUAR and repeal the “Regulation on De-extremification.” The authorities should release all Uighurs and members of other minorities being arbitrarily detained in “re-education camps” and related facilities. The authorities should immediately end the enforced separation of Uighur children from their families and cease the deliberate destruction of the unique cultural heritage of XUAR.

Countries that receive asylum seekers from Xinjiang must ensure respect for the principles of non-refoulement and not force them to return to China, where they are at risk of further persecution.

The Chinese government should grant unfettered access to OHCHR. UN bodies, including the HRC, should consider mandating a fact-finding mission to investigate international crimes and systematic violations of human rights committed in XUAR.

Recognizing the important influence they may have in urging China to reconsider its policies, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Muslim-majority countries, and neighboring states, should urge China to respect the rights of Muslim minorities and cease their systematic persecution of the Uighur population.



More than 4,000 people killed in attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger during 2019

MALI AND BURKINA FASO

Populations in Mali and Burkina Faso face potential atrocity crimes as a result of attacks by armed Islamist groups, as well as growing conflict between ethnic militias and community “self-defense groups.”

BACKGROUND

Since 2015 Islamist armed groups have expanded their activities from northern to central Mali, as well as to Burkina Faso and Niger, prompting the formation of ethnic militias and armed “self-defense groups” in many communities. Over the past year civilians across the Sahel – particularly in central Mali and neighboring parts of Burkina Faso – have endured increasing attacks by terrorist groups as well as inter-communal violence perpetrated by rival self-defense groups. According to the Head of the UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), more than 4,000 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger during 2019 as compared to 770 during 2016. Nearly half of those killed were in Burkina Faso.

A cycle of reprisal attacks in the Mopti region of Mali has also dramatically increased since early 2019. Violence has taken place between Dozos (traditional hunters mainly from the Dogon ethnic community) and ethnic Bambara fighters, against members of the predominantly Muslim Fulani community. The attacks include the burning of villages and destruction of food sources. On 23 March 2019 Dozos massacred at least 150 people, including 50 children, in the predominately Fulani village of Ogossagou. Despite the government’s commitment to increasing security in the area, on 14 February 2020 at least 37 people were killed during another attack on Ogossagou.

Following a 2012 military coup, Tuareg separatists and armed Islamist groups seized territory in northern Mali. Despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force (MINUSMA) and a French-led intervention force, as well as the 2015 “Bamako Agreement,” violence between government forces and various armed groups has continued. MINUSMA has frequently been attacked by these

groups, with more than 130 peacekeepers killed since July 2013, including three killed by an IED on 10 May.

The porous border between Mali and Burkina Faso has facilitated the expansion of armed Islamist groups throughout the Sahel. Since mid-2018 these groups have perpetrated atrocities against populations in Burkina Faso, particularly in the regions bordering Mali. Such groups have also increased their attacks on Christian places of worship. Attacks in Burkina Faso since January have resulted in the deaths of 509 civilians according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

Counter-terrorism operations by the Burkinabè security forces have also led to grave human rights abuses perpetrated against civilians presumed to be sympathetic to Islamist armed groups. This includes the killing of 31 Fulani detainees in Djibo on 9 April.

According to UNHCR, the violence in Burkina Faso has forced 848,329 people to flee their homes since January 2019. The UN reported that close to 5 million children in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger will need humanitarian assistance in 2020 and that more than 4,000 schools have closed.

ANALYSIS

Militias and self-defense groups continue to target civilian populations on the basis of their ethnic and/or religious identity. Historically, the Dogon, Bambara and Fulani communities have clashed over land, water and grazing rights. Recent fighting in central Mali and neighboring areas of Burkina Faso has been exploited by armed Islamist groups who have targeted young Fulani men for recruitment.

Any security response in Mali and Burkina Faso must take mass atrocity risks into consideration in addition to countering violent extremism. Weak state institutions, porous borders, a climate crisis, and arms proliferation have exacerbated conflict in both countries. Despite support from international military forces, Malian and Burkinabè security forces have been unable to adequately protect civilians in the vast regions of central Mali and northern Burkina Faso. The Burkinabè government's announcement during January that it would arm civilian security "volunteers" presents numerous risks as the proliferation of arms and militias may inadvertently fuel further violence.

The governments of Burkina Faso and Mali are struggling to uphold their responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following a referral by the interim government of Mali, the ICC launched an investigation in January 2013. During August 2017 former Ansar Dine leader Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi was sentenced for the war crime of partially destroying the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Timbuktu.

MINUSMA was authorized by the UNSC during April 2013 with a civilian protection mandate. On 28 June 2019 the UNSC renewed the mandate for an additional year. During January the UNSC also approved the extension of the mandate of UNOWAS.

On 20 December 2018 the UNSC authorized targeted sanctions on three individuals for obstructing the peace process and violations of human rights, including recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on UN personnel. The Council sanctioned five additional people on 10 July 2019.

On 23 and 24 March 2019 the UNSC conducted a visiting mission to the Sahel. On 27 March 2019, following the Ogossagou attack, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide issued a statement calling for Malians "to prevent and refrain from stigmatizing entire communities." The Special Adviser released a statement, together with the Special Advisers on the Responsibility to Protect and on Children and Armed Conflict, on 10 June condemning atrocities perpetrated against civilians in the Mopti region.

Operation Barkhane, a 5,100-member French force, has led the international military response in Mali since January 2013. During July 2017 the G5 Sahel Force was established to combat border insecurity using troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The G5 Sahel countries and France established the International Coalition for the Sahel on 27 April in order to coordinate responses to security, political and development issues in the region.

On 27 March France and several other European countries also established a new task force to counter violent extremism in the Sahel.

NECESSARY ACTION

While countering violent extremism remains crucial for Mali and Burkina Faso, it is essential that both governments ensure that their efforts do not further exacerbate inter-communal tensions and are undertaken in strict compliance with IHRL. Additional measures must be implemented to end the proliferation of arms, militias and self-defense groups. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts need to be focused on areas where atrocity risks are increasing in both Mali and Burkina Faso. International donors should also support efforts by UNHCR to provide shelter and psychosocial support to those fleeing atrocities.

The governments of Mali and Burkina Faso, with the support of MINUSMA, UNOWAS and OHCHR, should investigate human rights abuses and violations of international law, ensuring perpetrators are held accountable. Both governments should work with traditional and religious leaders to develop capacity building programs aimed at improving inter-communal relations and reducing recruitment into armed groups and ethnic militias.



Over 900,000 ethnic Rohingya who have fled atrocities are currently refugees in Bangladesh

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Populations in Myanmar (Burma) face the ongoing threat of mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Populations in Myanmar remain at risk of genocide and other atrocity crimes perpetrated by the security forces and as a result of discriminatory laws and policies.

Since November 2018 Myanmar's military and the Arakan Army (AA), an armed group seeking greater autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine Buddhist population, have engaged in an armed conflict in Rakhine State. Myanmar's security forces have shelled villages, blocked food supplies and arbitrarily detained civilians. AA members have also been accused of violations and abuses. According to OCHA, at least 77,700 people are currently displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as a result of the fighting. Although the AA declared a unilateral ceasefire due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the military rejected ceasefire calls and over 100 civilians were killed during April. On 29 April the outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, said the military's "conduct against the civilian population of Rakhine and Chin States may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity."

The latest conflict in Rakhine State ignited roughly a year after the military launched so-called "clearance operations" on 25 August 2017. Since then an estimated 745,000 people – the majority of the Rohingya population – have been forced to flee Myanmar, bringing the total number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to over 900,000 people. In its 2018 report, the HRC-mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) on Myanmar concluded that the military has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes in Rakhine State, as well as acts of genocide against the Rohingya. The IFFM concluded in September 2019 that Myanmar had breached its obligations under the Genocide Convention and "continues to harbor genocidal intent" towards the Rohingya.

On 11 November The Gambia, on behalf of the OIC, filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Myanmar of violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention. On 23 January the ICJ ordered Myanmar to comply with four provisional measures – prevent genocidal acts, ensure military and police forces do not commit genocidal acts, preserve all evidence of genocidal acts, and report on compliance with these measures. Myanmar's first report is due on 23 May. On 8 April the Office of the President of Myanmar issued three directives requesting all ministries and local authorities to not commit genocide, to ensure that people do not destroy evidence of acts described in Article II of the Genocide Convention, and to prevent hate speech.

The Rohingya, a distinct Muslim ethnic minority group in Myanmar, have been systematically persecuted for generations. Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law rendered most of the population stateless. 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. An estimated 600,000 Rohingya who remain in Rakhine State are subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and more than 100,000 Rohingya have been confined to camps since 2012.

ANALYSIS

Although the government of Myanmar issued directives not to commit acts of genocide and to preserve evidence, it has failed to repeal or amend laws and policies that systematically discriminate against the Rohingya. Until these change and the perpetrators of past crimes are held accountable, the threat of atrocities endures.

A government-imposed information blackout in Rakhine and Chin states makes it difficult for the international community to verify Myanmar's compliance with the ICJ ruling. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, internet restrictions also prevent populations from accessing crucial information, leaving them vulnerable to infection.

The government of Myanmar has manifestly failed to uphold its responsibility to protect the Rohingya and other minority populations, and bears responsibility for the commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The only formal response of the UNSC to the genocide against the Rohingya was the adoption of a Presidential Statement on 6 November 2017 that stressed the "primary responsibility of the Myanmar government to protect its population." On 4 February 2020 the UNSC discussed the ICJ's provisional measures order.

Since August 2017 individual states and regional organizations have responded to atrocities in Rakhine State. The European Union (EU) has reinforced its arms embargo on Myanmar and imposed restrictive measures on 14 individuals, while Canada, Australia and the US have imposed targeted sanctions on

senior military officers. During May Germany announced that it was suspending development cooperation with Myanmar. A number of countries have also recognized the crimes against the Rohingya as constituting genocide, including the parliaments of the Netherlands and Canada.

During September 2018 the HRC created an Independent Investigative Mechanism to "collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law" committed in Myanmar. The mechanism has been operational since August 2019.

During November 2019 the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, supported by Argentinian organizations, filed a case in an Argentinian court under the principle of universal jurisdiction, urging the prosecution of senior Myanmar officials responsible for the Rohingya genocide. On 14 November Pre-Trial Chamber III of the ICC authorized the Chief Prosecutor to proceed with an investigation into crimes against humanity that may have been committed against the Rohingya, resulting in forced deportation across the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

Eighteen ambassadors to Myanmar issued a joint statement on 1 April expressing concern about the situation in Rakhine and Chin states, and calling for a ceasefire, as well as the lifting of media and internet restrictions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

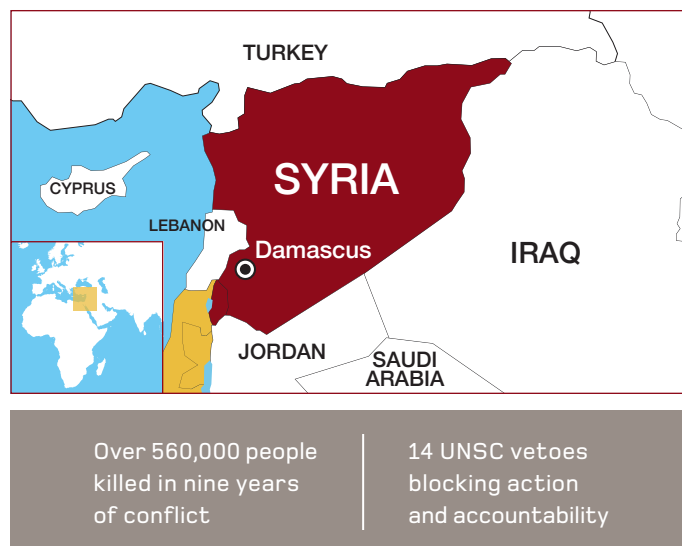
NECESSARY ACTION

Myanmar must fully comply with the ICJ order and address all underlying conditions that led to the genocide, including by repealing or amending laws that systematically discriminate against the Rohingya. The UNSC should monitor Myanmar's compliance with the provisional measures order, including by requesting the transmission of Myanmar's progress reports from the ICJ.

The UNSC should immediately refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC and impose an arms embargo.

All states in the region should ensure the safe arrival of Rohingya refugees and abide by the international obligation of non-refoulement.

Myanmar's military should declare a ceasefire in its armed conflict with the AA and provide unfettered access to Chin and Rakhine states for humanitarian actors.



SYRIA

Populations continue to face war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by various state forces and non-state armed groups in Syria's ongoing conflict.

BACKGROUND

Since the war in Syria began in 2011 at least 560,000 people have been killed in the conflict between the government and opposition groups. Nearly 13 million people have been displaced – the largest number displaced by any conflict in the world – including 6.7 million Syrian refugees. An estimated 12 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Since 29 April 2019 Syrian government and Russian forces have conducted an intense bombardment campaign in southern Idlib, northern Hama and western Aleppo governorates with the stated goal of eradicating non-state armed groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). OHCHR has confirmed over 1,500 civilian deaths since the launch of the offensive, nearly all of which are attributable to Syrian government and Russian forces. Civilian objects, including schools, markets and evacuation routes, have been heavily shelled and there have been at least 68 documented attacks on healthcare facilities. The HRC-mandated Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on Syria found that Syrian government and Russian forces have perpetrated war crimes in Idlib and that there are "reasonable grounds to believe" they are intentionally terrorizing civilian populations.

The situation in Idlib dramatically escalated in December as the Syrian government and Russian forces pushed to capture the strategic M5 highway linking Damascus with Aleppo. Entire villages have been razed and over 948,000 Syrians displaced since December 2019. Shortly after the Turkish government announced the launch of "Operation Spring Shield" against Syrian forces in Idlib, Russia and Turkey reached a fragile ceasefire agreement on 5 March. Three previous ceasefires have failed.

Meanwhile, in the northeast the Turkish military launched “Operation Peace Spring” during October 2019 against the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, which Turkey regards as a terrorist organization. A ceasefire was reached on 22 October, although sporadic clashes continue. The Col has reported that during the Turkish operation civilian objects were damaged by artillery and airstrikes and that the opposition Syrian National Army, which receives support from Turkey, perpetrated the war crimes of pillage and murder against the Kurdish population.

Since 2012 the Col has reported that Syrian 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. More than 100,000 arbitrary detentions, abductions or disappearances have been reported by the Col, with the majority attributable to the Syrian government. The Col has also reported on 37 instances of chemical weapons use since March 2013, including 32 attacks perpetrated by Syrian government forces. The Investigation and Identification Team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) recently found that units of the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons, including sarin, during attacks on Ltamenah during March 2017.

ANALYSIS

For more than nine years the government of Syria, its allies and armed opposition groups have all committed indiscriminate attacks on civilians and infrastructure, demonstrating a complete disregard for international law. All parties to the conflict have perpetrated acts that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Syrian government has directly violated various UNSC resolutions, and Russia has systematically shielded it from accountability measures.

The Syrian government, with support from Russia and Iran, continues to utilize its military resources to retain power at all costs. Ongoing fighting, particularly in the northwest, imperils the lives of millions of people. The grave situation in Idlib is the result of ongoing war crimes and the inability of the UNSC to hold perpetrators accountable. The increased military involvement of Turkey in northwest Syria amplifies the enduring risk to civilians.

The government of Syria has not only manifestly failed to uphold its responsibility to protect, it bears primary responsibility for the ongoing commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

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 UN Secretary-General has repeatedly called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC.

Despite this, the UNSC has failed to respond effectively. Since 2013 the Council has passed 25 resolutions on humanitarian

access, peace talks and chemical weapons in Syria. Several refer to the government’s responsibility to protect populations, but none have been fully implemented. Russia and China have jointly vetoed eight draft UNSC resolutions and Russia has independently vetoed a further six.

Following a 30 July demarche by 10 members of the UNSC, UN Secretary-General António Guterres created a Board of Inquiry to investigate attacks on hospitals and health facilities on the deconfliction list and other UN-supported facilities in northwest Syria. A summary of the Board of Inquiry’s findings was released on 6 April. The Board found it “plausible” or “highly probable” that the Syrian government and/or its allies carried out five of the seven attacks under investigation. HTS carried out one of the attacks. On 26 February nine members of the UNSC issued a demarche urging the Secretary-General to visit Idlib.

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. A number of countries have initiated domestic legal proceedings against suspected Syrian perpetrators under the principle of universal jurisdiction. The first trial of members of President Assad’s security services for alleged crimes against humanity, including torture, commenced in Germany on 23 April.

The HRC has adopted 29 resolutions condemning atrocities in Syria, the majority of which demand that the Syrian authorities uphold their responsibility to protect the population.

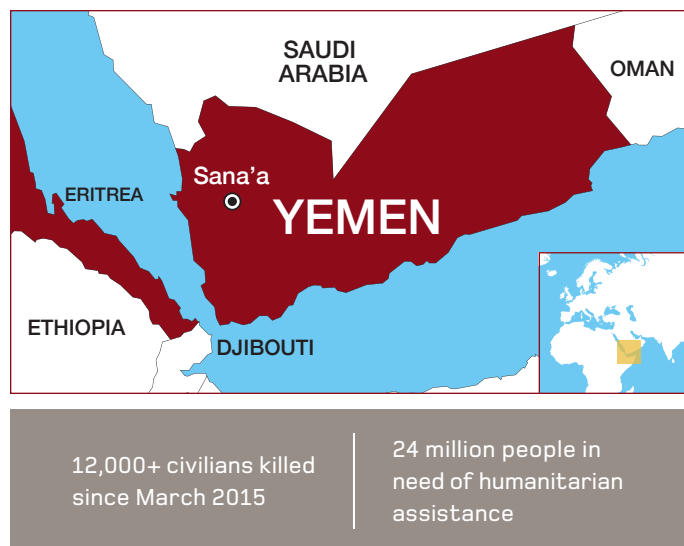
The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, is currently facilitating political negotiations with some parties to the conflict under the auspices of UNSC Resolution 2254.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties must uphold their obligations under IHL, including ending attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and establish a timetable for the release of all detainees and abductees. Syrian government forces, armed opposition groups and all international parties to the conflict must facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to civilians trapped or displaced by fighting. Parties to the conflict should uphold the ceasefire agreements in the northwest and northeast.

All returns of refugees and other displaced Syrians must be in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement with guarantees that returnees will not face persecution, discrimination or forced repatriation.

UN member states should continue to pursue accountability for alleged perpetrators of atrocities under the principle of universal jurisdiction. The UNSC should immediately refer the situation in Syria to the ICC and ensure that atrocity crimes do not continue with impunity.



YEMEN

War 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

Despite diplomatic efforts to end the war in Yemen, populations remain at risk of war crimes. Fighting between Houthi rebels, members of the General People's Congress, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), and forces loyal to the internationally-recognized government – as well as airstrikes by a Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led international coalition – has resulted in the deaths of more than 12,000 civilians since March 2015. The actual death toll is likely much higher. At least 3.6 million people have been displaced and the conflict has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Although parties to the conflict signed the Stockholm Agreement in December 2018, which established a ceasefire for Hodeidah Governorate, they continue to perpetrate widespread violations of IHL and IHRL. Hostilities are ongoing throughout Yemen, particularly in Al-Dhale, Sa'ada and Taizz governorates. Attacks have regularly targeted non-military objects, including recent strikes against Taizz Central Prison and Al-Thawra General Hospital. February saw the highest number of airstrikes since December 2018.

Violence escalated in mid-January 2020 in districts around Sana'a and Marib. On 28 February the Houthis took control of Hazm, the capital of Al-Jawf governorate. Violence and indiscriminate bombing have continued, and an estimated 60,000 civilians have fled their homes in Al-Jawf and the surrounding governorates since 19 January.

On 8 April the Saudi/UAE-led coalition announced a two-week unilateral ceasefire. The announcement followed a call by UN Secretary-General António Guterres for a cessation of hostilities in light of the threats from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also on 8 April, the Houthis published their own peace proposal. Since then Saudi Arabia has allegedly resumed indirect talks with the Houthis. Despite a one-month extension of the ceasefire, hostilities persist on numerous fronts.

Since August 2019 clashes have also taken place in southern Yemen between the UAE-supported STC and forces loyal to President Hadi. Mediation resulted in a power-sharing agreement signed in Riyadh on 6 November, allowing the government to formally regain control over Aden and all armed groups in the south. However, very few of the agreement's provisions have been implemented and parties continue to perpetrate extrajudicial killings. The STC declared self-administration in the south of Yemen on 25 April. The Saudi-led coalition called for this "escalatory action" to be rescinded.

The HRC-mandated Group of Independent Eminent Experts (GEE) on Yemen has documented that violations and abuses perpetrated by parties to the conflict may amount to war crimes, including indiscriminate airstrikes and shelling, torture, arbitrary detention, and sexual and gender-based violence. The GEE asserts that the US, UK, France and Iran may be complicit in violations due to their provision of military intelligence, arms and logistical support to parties to the conflict.

At least 24.1 million Yemenis need humanitarian assistance and the GEE has reported that parties to the conflict may have used starvation of civilians as a military tactic. Essential vaccines have also reportedly been blocked and the UNSC-mandated Panel of Experts reported in February 2020 that arrests and intimidation of humanitarian workers are increasing in Houthi-controlled areas in the north.

ANALYSIS

All parties to the conflict have perpetrated indiscriminate attacks and targeted civilian infrastructure, amounting to possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. A climate of impunity enables ongoing violations of IHL and IHRL and facilitates increasing risks to civilians in Yemen.

The protracted conflict in Yemen has been characterized by fragmenting coalitions and a multitude of fronts. Continued instability has also allowed al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to intensify their attacks on civilians.

Ongoing fighting threatens to derail progress towards a negotiated settlement in Yemen. The dire humanitarian situation is a direct result of the armed conflict, including the systematic obstruction of humanitarian aid, and requires a political solution. Ongoing humanitarian restrictions and the prior destruction of medical facilities present grave challenges as Yemen tackles the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak.

All parties to the conflict appear manifestly unable or unwilling to uphold their responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC imposed sanctions on former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Houthi leaders in November 2014. On 14 April 2015 the UNSC established an arms embargo against Houthi leaders and some supporters of Saleh and demanded the Houthis withdraw from all areas they had militarily seized. On 21 December 2018 the UNSC passed its first substantive resolution on the conflict in over three years, endorsing the Stockholm Agreement and authorizing the deployment of a monitoring team to oversee its implementation. On 16 January 2019 the UNSC established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement.

On 29 September 2017 the HRC requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish the GEE on Yemen. The government has repeatedly refused entry to the Group.

On 25 October 2019 the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on all EU member states to halt weapons exports to Saudi Arabia. The US Congress made four attempts during 2019 to end US military support for the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, however President Donald Trump vetoed these measures. On 20 June the Court of Appeal in London ruled that the UK government had failed to adequately assess the actions of the Saudi/UAE-led military coalition prior to issuing licenses for arms exports to Saudi Arabia. The UK has suspended arms sales until an appropriate assessment is conducted.

On 12 February complaints were filed under universal jurisdiction in the UK, US and Turkey to indict senior UAE officials on charges of war crimes and torture. The Saudi/UAE-led coalition also commenced unprecedented court martial proceedings in February in relation to airstrikes that killed civilians in Yemen.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties to the conflict should fully implement the terms of the Stockholm Agreement and extend the Hodeidah ceasefire to other areas, particularly Al-Dhale, Al-Jawf, Marib, Sa'ada, Sana'a and Taizz governorates. The government of Yemen should allow access to the GEE, as well as representatives from OHCHR, and ensure that all potential war crimes and crimes against humanity are properly investigated and prosecuted.

The distinction between military and civilian targets is central to IHL and must be adhered to at all times. In keeping with the Arms Trade Treaty, 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 adopt targeted sanctions against all those responsible for potential atrocities and the deliberate obstruction of vital humanitarian assistance. Accountability must be prioritized as the warring parties negotiate a potential resolution of the conflict.

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.



General elections
scheduled for 20 May

335,000 Burundians in
neighboring countries

BURUNDI

Severe repression and persecution of alleged government opponents leaves populations in Burundi at imminent risk of crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

Since President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would seek a third presidential term in 2015, Burundi has been trapped in a protracted political crisis. A failed coup and subsequent widespread protests and violence between 2015 and 2017 resulted in more than 1,200 people being killed and 10,000 arbitrarily detained. Since then the government has continued to persecute alleged government opponents, including civil society activists. Almost 335,000 Burundian refugees remain in neighboring countries.

The HRC-mandated Col on Burundi has warned that general elections scheduled for 20 May could trigger further violations and abuses that may amount to crimes against humanity. Utilizing the UN's "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes," during September 2019 the Col found that the government and its supporters have created an environment that could enable the commission of atrocities. On 9 March the Col reiterated this warning and said that risk factors had increased significantly.

In the lead up to the elections, the Imbonerakure – the youth wing of the ruling party – has intensified its targeting of alleged opponents. Since the start of the official campaign period on 27 April, violent confrontations between Imbonerakure activists and opposition supporters have been reported across the country.

The government also increased its repression of independent journalists and media outlets, further limiting civic space. Since late March, the authorities have responded to the spread of COVID-19 by restricting the flow of information even further and threatening individuals accused of spreading news about the government's poor response to the crisis. On 12 May the government expelled the World Health Organization from Burundi.

President Nkurunziza's decision to seek a third presidential term was regarded by many as violating the constitution and the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement, which ended a civil war that claimed over 350,000 lives between 1993-2005 and was fought largely between ethnic Hutu armed groups and the Tutsi-dominated army. Since 2015, the East African Community (EAC) has attempted to mediate between the government and opposition parties, but without success. President Nkurunziza is not running for re-election in 2020, but on 22 January Burundi's parliament voted to give him the honorary title of "supreme leader" after he steps down.

The Col has found that potential crimes against humanity have been committed since April 2015, including extrajudicial killings and summary executions, disappearances, sexual violence, arbitrary detention and torture. Such acts have primarily been carried out by the Imbonerakure together with members of the National Intelligence Service and police.

ANALYSIS

The current political environment, characterized by intolerance, public threats and hate speech, is not conducive to holding free and fair elections and there is a risk of post-election violence. The restriction of information regarding COVID-19 is emblematic of existing state-led repression and leaves Burundians extremely vulnerable to the pandemic.

Ongoing hostility towards UN mechanisms and institutions, as well as a lack of constructive engagement with regional mechanisms, has isolated Burundi and is a disturbing indication of the government's unwillingness to cooperate with the international community.

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 October 2017.

On 30 September 2016 the HRC created the Col to investigate human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. The government has continuously refused to allow the Commissioners to enter.

On 24 October 2019 the EU renewed travel bans and asset freezes on four Burundians for serious human rights violations and incitement to violence. On 16 January 2020 the European Parliament, referring to the findings of the Col, condemned ongoing violations of human rights ahead of the elections.

NECESSARY ACTION

It is essential that the government ends the violent targeting of its political opponents, demobilizes the Imbonerakure and engages in inclusive dialogue with civil society and opposition parties. The Col should be granted immediate and unrestricted access to the country.

Regional and international actors, including the EAC, AU and UN, should urge the government to end political persecution and intensify efforts to ensure a stable post-election environment.

The UNSC should invite the Col to brief the Council and impose targeted sanctions on all those who threaten peace and security in Burundi, including the list of suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity produced by the Col in 2018.



5.5 million people
internally displaced

At least 100 armed
groups still operating
in eastern DRC

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo face an imminent threat of mass atrocity crimes committed by various armed groups.

BACKGROUND

Attacks by armed groups operating in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as recurring inter-communal violence, pose an imminent threat

to vulnerable populations. 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, violence continues. According to UNHCR, over 5.5 million Congolese are internally displaced while more than 900,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries, making it the largest displacement crisis in Africa.

Several provinces in eastern DRC – notably North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika – as well as the Kasai region, have been plagued by inter-communal violence and attacks by armed groups. The UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in the DRC documented 6,545 human rights violations during 2019. In conflict-affected provinces more than 332 people were extrajudicially executed by government security forces while 1,027 were killed by non-state armed groups. UNJHRO also documented more than 1,054 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, a 62 percent increase over 2018.

During January UNJHRO reported on conflict between the Hema and Lendu communities in Ituri province, alleging that armed groups may have perpetrated war crimes or crimes against humanity. At least 700 people were killed and 142 were subjected to sexual violence during several waves of violence between December 2017 and September 2019. The majority of victims were from the ethnic Hema community, although some Hema armed groups also engaged in reprisal violence.

Inter-communal attacks as well as fighting between the FARDC and armed ethnic militias, particularly the predominantly-Lendu Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) armed group, have continued to escalate in Ituri. UNHCR reported on 8 May that more than 274 civilians have been killed and 200,000 displaced in the area since March. Attacks escalated as CODECO perpetrated violent reprisals following the killing of their leader, Ndujolo Duduko Justin, by the FARDC in mid-March. Between March and May UNHCR recorded more than 3,000 serious human rights violations, including more than 140 women raped.

Meanwhile, on 30 October the FARDC launched an offensive against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group in North Kivu. Since then the ADF has carried out retaliatory attacks against villages in the Beni region, killing more than 400 civilians. Those fleeing the violence have reported mass killings conducted with machetes, as well as sexual violence and abductions. The offensive was partly prompted by the role of the ADF in inhibiting the government and international community from confronting cholera, measles and Ebola outbreaks that have claimed the lives of thousands of people. The World Health Organization documented more than 390 attacks on health facilities in DRC during 2019.

ANALYSIS

For more than 20 years various armed groups have exploited the weakness of state authority to perpetrate attacks against civilians. Widespread violence in eastern DRC is indicative of the enduring challenge of building effective governance and stability.

Rampant impunity, competition for control of profitable minerals, as well as unresolved inter-communal conflicts, have enabled the proliferation of militias and other armed groups. Although the Hema and Lendu have a long history of conflict, they coexisted relatively peacefully from 2007 to 2017. The gravity of the recent attacks in Ituri demonstrates the need for inter-communal reconciliation and rapid disarmament of CODECO to prevent further atrocities.

The DRC government has struggled to uphold its responsibility to protect in the past, and government forces have at times 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.

On 8 July the ICC found former DRC warlord Bosco Ntaganda guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in Ituri from 2002–2003. Ntaganda was subsequently sentenced to 30 years imprisonment.

On 19 December the UNSC extended the mandate of MONUSCO for one year. The resolution emphasized that the government “bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its

territory and subject to its jurisdictions, including protection from crimes against humanity and war crimes.”

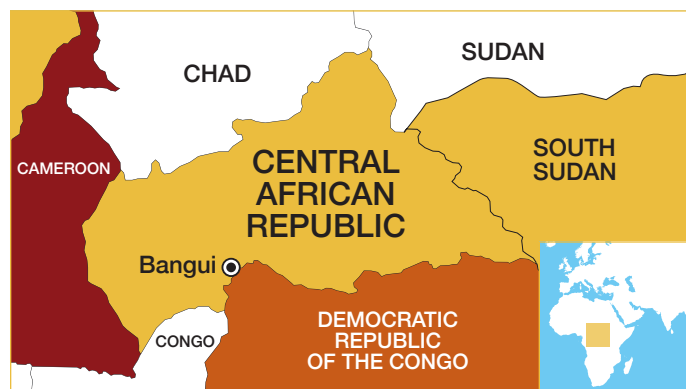
NECESSARY ACTION

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 cooperate with UNJHRO and ensure all state agents responsible for extrajudicial killings, sexual violence and other human rights violations and abuses are held accountable.

The government, with the support of MONUSCO, should implement measures to mediate inter-communal tensions in eastern DRC, and address structural issues of land access, resource allocation and poor governance. The government should conduct a thorough investigation of recent massacres in Ituri and hold the perpetrators accountable. Neighboring states should continue to uphold the Peace and Security Framework for the DRC and provide assistance in confronting the threat of armed groups to the region.

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.



1.2 million Central Africans have fled their homes since 2013

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Despite the February 2019 peace agreement, ongoing violence by armed groups leaves populations in the Central African Republic at risk of recurring mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Since 2013 endemic violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) has been fueled by predatory armed groups, including factions of the ex-Séléka rebel alliance and anti-balaka militias. These groups have targeted civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, committed sexual and gender-based violence, recruited children, and perpetrated attacks on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, medical facilities and places of worship.

On 6 February 2019, under the auspices of the AU, the government and 14 armed groups signed a peace deal to bring an end to the armed conflict. Despite the historic agreement, populations remain at risk of atrocity crimes. Violent clashes erupted between armed groups on 29 April killing at least 20 civilians and displacing at least 1,000 people in N'délé. Some signatories continue to violate the agreement and/or have exploited the peace agreement to consolidate their de-facto control over territory.

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. OHCHR has reported that both anti-balaka and ex-Séléka forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity between 2013-2015.

Although most perpetrators have not been held accountable, on 7 February the Bangui Court of Appeal sentenced five anti-Balaka leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity. On 27 February the parliament voted on the creation of a commission to “establish the truth about serious national events since 1959.” A hybrid judicial mechanism – the Special Criminal Court for CAR – expects to begin trials in late 2020.

More than 1.2 million Central Africans have fled their homes since 2013 and 2.6 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. According to UNHCR, armed groups have forced some IDPs to return to their places of origin, blaming them for the spread of COVID-19.

ANALYSIS

One year after the signing of the peace deal, there has only been limited implementation of its key provisions. Ongoing violence by armed groups, including parties to the agreement, highlights that governmental control remains extremely limited outside the capital, where armed groups continue to control the majority of territory and profit from illegal taxation and cross-border arms trafficking.

The Bangui Court of Appeal decision is an important step towards justice. However, the promotion of leaders of armed groups that are responsible for past atrocity crimes into senior governmental roles undermines attempts to end the climate of impunity in the country.

While the UN peacekeeping mission in CAR (MINUSCA) has been mandated to support the implementation of the peace agreement and assist in preparations for elections in 2020 and 2021, it has not been granted additional resources, potentially undermining its civilian protection capacity.

Trends related to COVID-19, including increased xenophobia and threats against IDPs and Muslims, poses a risk of renewed inter-communal violence.

The CAR government requires ongoing international assistance to stabilize the country and uphold its responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has passed 13 resolutions since October 2013 that emphasize the government's responsibility to protect populations in CAR. On 15 November the UNSC extended the mandate of MINUSCA for one year.

A UNSC-mandated sanctions regime and arms embargo have been in place since 2013, imposing travel bans and asset freezes on 12 individuals and 2 entities. Acknowledging the peace agreement, during September 2019 and January 2020 the UNSC approved measures to ease the arms embargo. On

20 April the UNSC imposed sanctions on former rebel leader and agreement signatory, Abdoulaye Miskine, due to his ongoing recruitment of fighters.

During May 2014 the government referred the situation in CAR to the ICC. On 11 March the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II confirmed charges against two former anti-balaka leaders, Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, committing both to trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

NECESSARY ACTION

MINUSCA must prioritize the protection of civilians and continue to strengthen its early warning capacity.

The government should prioritize accountability for atrocity crimes and ongoing reconciliation efforts. Signatories to the peace deal must fully participate in the follow-up mechanisms established under the agreement, refrain from any action limiting the restoration of state authority, and fully comply with their obligations under IHL.

The UNSC and AU should continue to closely monitor implementation of the peace agreement and impose targeted sanctions on any actors that breach its key provisions. Criteria for the further suspension of the arms embargo must focus on the successful reintegration of former fighters and on halting the illicit trafficking of weapons by armed groups.



At least 189 Palestinians killed and 25,252 wounded during protests on the Gaza border between March and December 2018

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Recurring armed conflict between Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups poses an ongoing threat to civilians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

BACKGROUND

Impunity for 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.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008. The last war broke out during July 2014 when the IDF launched an offensive to halt indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza. The 50-day conflict led to the death of over 1,500 civilians and the displacement of 500,000 Palestinians. Since then intermittent exchanges of rocket fire and airstrikes have continued.

For 13 years the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has been exacerbated by an ongoing air, sea and land blockade by Israel. An estimated 1.7 million people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are food insecure. On 25 August 2019, in response to new rocket attacks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to cut fuel transfers to Gaza in half, exacerbating the electricity crisis in Gaza. Hamas security forces in Gaza have also committed grave abuses against Palestinian civilians, including arbitrary arrests, summary executions and torture.

Illegal Israeli settlements, prohibited under international law, also continue to expand in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. According to OCHA, over 623 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized by Israeli government authorities during 2019 and an additional 167 have been demolished so far this year. A new unity government in Israel – led by Netanyahu and Benny Gantz – has agreed on plans to annex parts of the West Bank. Under international law annexation amounts to a prohibited act of aggression.

On 24 January the US government released a “Middle East Peace Plan” endorsed by the Israeli government. The plan contains no right of return for Palestinian refugees and proposes an undivided Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and Israeli sovereignty over settlements in the West Bank. Palestinian leadership and members of the international community condemned the plan.

ANALYSIS

Previous attacks on civilians in Gaza and Israel violate IHL and IHRL and may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. No Israeli or Hamas officials have been held accountable for unlawful attacks committed during the 2014 war, perpetuating a climate of impunity.

The systematic nature of human rights violations in the OPT may amount to possible crimes against humanity. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its civilian population into occupied territory. Illegal Israeli settlements are in violation of this provision and have contributed to the volatile situation in the West Bank. Israel’s military blockade of Gaza is also a potentially illegal form of collective punishment of Gaza’s 1.8 million inhabitants.

In the absence of a meaningful peace process, conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups is likely to result in recurring armed hostilities. The provisions included in the US

plan are in violation of international law as well as numerous UNSC resolutions.

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 2018 the Palestinian Authority referred the situation in Gaza to the ICC. On 20 December 2019 the Chief Prosecutor concluded that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine.

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 6 December 2019 the UN General Assembly failed to adopt a resolution condemning attacks by Hamas on Israel, falling short of the necessary two-thirds majority.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must work towards a sustainable political solution consistent with international law and numerous UNSC resolutions.

Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza, cease illegal settlement-related activity and annexation plans. 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. All parties should condemn anti-Semitic and anti-Arab hate speech and cooperate fully with the preliminary examination of the ICC.

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



At least 350 civilians have been killed and over 177,000 displaced since April 2019

LIBYA

Civilians in Libya face possible war crimes as a result of ongoing fighting between rival armed groups and competing governmental authorities.

BACKGROUND

On 4 April 2019 Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and his self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (now the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, or LAAF) launched an offensive to seize control of the country from the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli. Subsequent fighting has resulted in 177,000 people being displaced and at least 350 civilians killed. Airstrikes have damaged schools, medical facilities and other civilian infrastructure.

As part of a three-track negotiated settlement, the Libyan 5+5 Joint Military Commission commenced talks in February 2020 to reach a ceasefire. Despite this initiative, heavy clashes continued throughout March and April. On 29 April Haftar announced an LAAF ceasefire in response to calls for a humanitarian pause to tackle COVID-19. The GNA rejected the ceasefire on 30 April and fighting continues.

Various armed militias also continue to commit extrajudicial killings, torture and abductions, and have indiscriminately attacked civilian areas. The December 2019 report of the UN Panel of Experts on Libya detailed blatant violations of the UN arms embargo, highlighting that Chad, Jordan, Sudan, Turkey and the UAE have provided weapons, technical support or mercenaries to various parties to the conflict.

Armed militias in Libya also facilitate human trafficking and the enslavement of migrants and asylum seekers attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. The International Organization for Migration estimated in December 2019 that more than 654,000 migrants and asylum seekers were in detention centers in Libya, where many are subject to a range of abuses, including sexual violence.

The current political crisis has its origins in the 2011 overthrow of the Libyan government by various rebel forces. Despite the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement, which led to the creation of the GNA, Haftar continues to contest the GNA's legitimacy and on 27 April declared the agreement "a thing of the past."

ANALYSIS

Since 2011 various transitional governing bodies have failed to restore stability to the country, and the UN-facilitated peace process has faced continual obstacles and delays. While the conflict has been presented as a battle between secular, moderate forces and their extremist Islamist rivals, in reality it is dominated by shifting personal, tribal and regional enmities and alliances.

Armed groups on all sides have violated IHL and IHRL. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has said that some LAAF airstrikes may amount to war crimes. Armed groups have also repeatedly blocked Tripoli's water system, effectively weaponizing access to water. There is also evidence that competing foreign powers, including permanent members of the UNSC, have provided arms and support to parties to the conflict despite a UN-mandated arms embargo.

The GNA needs sustained international assistance in order to end armed conflict, establish the rule of law and uphold its responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 15 August 2017 the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Major Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf al-Werfalli of the LAAF for alleged war crimes committed during 2016 and 2017.

On 7 June 2018 the UNSC imposed targeted sanctions on six individuals accused of people smuggling in Libya. On 10 June 2019 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2473, renewing the arms embargo for one year. On 4 April 2020 the European Council launched a military operation to enforce the arms embargo.

On 19 January, at a conference in Berlin, several states involved in the conflict committed to refrain from further interference in Libya. On 12 February the UNSC adopted Resolution 2510 endorsing the conclusions of the Berlin Conference and welcoming the 5+5 Joint Military Commission.

NECESSARY ACTION

The UNSC should impose targeted sanctions against all individuals and forces who actively seek to subvert the Libyan peace process, including Haftar and the LAAF. All armed groups need to uphold their obligations under IHL and immediately cease military operations in heavily populated areas. All UN member states need to act in accordance with the arms embargo.

All those responsible for mass atrocities in Libya, both past and present, should be held accountable for their crimes.



35,000 people killed since 2009 due to insecurity caused by Boko Haram

NIGERIA

Increased attacks by Boko Haram and inter-communal violence in Nigeria's "Middle Belt" region leave civilians at risk of mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Multiple security threats continue to leave civilians in Nigeria at risk of mass atrocity crimes, including increased attacks by the armed extremist group Boko Haram and recurring inter-communal violence in the "Middle Belt" region.

Despite claims by the government that it had defeated Boko Haram, over the past year the armed extremist group and the so-called Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) have intensified their attacks in the north-east of Nigeria, killing hundreds of people. On 9 February at least 30 people were killed by Boko Haram outside Maiduguri, Borno State.

In an attempt to neutralize the armed group, since the start of 2020 the Nigerian government has increased its military operations, reportedly killing hundreds of Boko Haram fighters. The military has also reportedly forcibly displaced entire villages in the north-east and arbitrarily detained individuals suspected of supporting armed extremist groups.

Since 2009 Boko Haram has pursued a violent campaign aimed at overthrowing Nigeria's secular government. According to OCHA, 35,000 people have been killed since 2009 and 2.5 million remain internally displaced in north-eastern Nigeria as a result of insecurity caused by Boko Haram. The International Committee of the Red Cross also reported that at least 22,000 people are still missing due to the decades-long conflict. In recent years Boko Haram's attacks have expanded into neighboring states, killing and displacing civilians in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Conflict in Nigeria's "Middle Belt," often rooted in historical grievances between herders and farming communities, has also escalated in recent years. While recent data is lacking, clashes between herders and farmers left more than 1,300 people dead

and displaced 300,000 across the country between January and June 2018. Hundreds of people were also killed in clashes in Kaduna, Nassarawa and Adamawa states between February and April 2019. Since 13 April 2020 at least 25 people have been killed in violence between the Shomo and Jole communities in Taraba State.

Nigeria has also experienced an increase in armed banditry in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina and Niger states, internally displacing more than 160,000 people since early 2019, despite efforts by the security forces to neutralize such groups.

ANALYSIS

Although the "Middle Belt" region has experienced recurring inter-communal violence, growing desertification has increased competition for resources. The loss of grazing land in the north has driven many ethnic Fulani herdsman, who are mainly Muslim, southward into areas farmed by settled communities that are predominately Christian. Arms proliferation has helped make these conflicts more deadly.

Since 2018 Boko Haram and ISWA have increased their attacks. Although the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has made significant progress in confronting these groups, civilians remain at risk of terrorist attacks and identity-based violence. Civilians also face the threat of human rights abuses committed by the Nigerian security forces during counter-terrorism operations.

The government of Nigeria is struggling to uphold its responsibility to protect and needs ongoing support from the international community.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

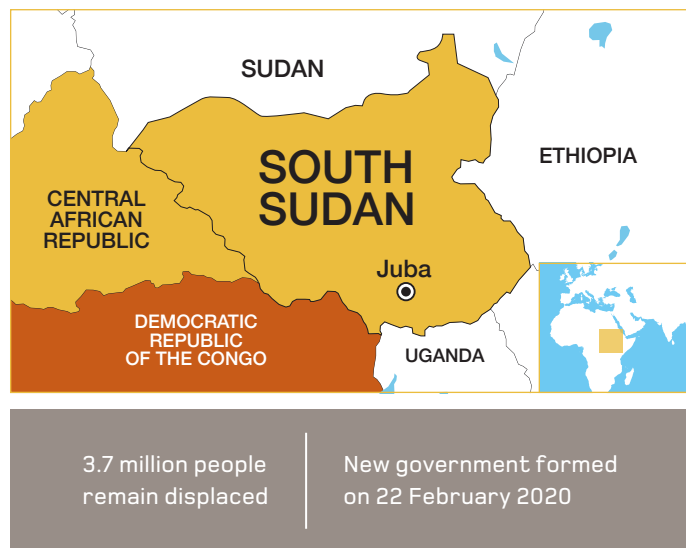
The regional MNJTF has led efforts to combat Boko Haram since 2015. On 19 August 2018 the UN Secretary-General called for "the international community to increase support to regional efforts in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin."

In September 2019, during a visit to Nigeria, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions condemned rising violence across Nigeria and a "lack of accountability" for perpetrators.

NECESSARY ACTION

It is essential that the government of Nigeria addresses the root causes of inter-communal violence in the "Middle Belt" through socio-economic initiatives and political reforms that tackle land rights and poor governance. The government should work with local civil society to ameliorate long-standing grievances between herding and settled communities. Utilizing the Early Warning System of the Economic Community of West African States, the government should increase police and military deployments to vulnerable areas. The government should also implement its "National Policy on Climate Change and Response Strategy" and accelerate initiatives in regions affected by drought and desertification.

The Nigerian government should continue to support programs that strengthen local security and bolster the rule of law in areas where ISWA and Boko Haram attacks continue. Such efforts should address comprehensive security sector reform, including by incorporating IHL and IHRL into all military and police training. The government and international community should increase efforts to prevent illicit arms being trafficked into Nigeria.



SOUTH SUDAN

Despite the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity, the risk of recurring armed conflict between government forces and armed rebel groups, and increased inter-communal violence, poses a threat to civilians in South Sudan.

BACKGROUND

During September 2018 parties to the conflict in South Sudan signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), formally ending a civil war that started during December 2013. Despite severe delays, on 22 February South Sudan finally formed a new Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU).

Although a ceasefire has largely been maintained and armed violence has reduced since September 2018, instability continues. On 9 March the UN HRC-mandated Commission on Human Rights (CoHR) in South Sudan reported ongoing killing, torture, sexual violence and rape, intentional starvation of civilians, displacement and enforced disappearances perpetrated by both government forces and non-state armed groups.

Inter-communal clashes between the Lou Nuer and Murle in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative area has resulted in hundreds of people killed since February. More than 26,000 people have fled as a result of battles stemming from disputes over cattle and access to water and grazing land.

Clashes between government forces and rebel groups outside the R-ARCSS, including the National Salvation Front (NAS), also continue. During January violence in Central Equatoria and the Upper Nile forced 8,000 civilians to flee to Ethiopia and internally displaced another 11,000. Fighting also broke out between the NAS and Sudan People's Liberation Army - In Opposition (SPLA-IO) in Eastern and Central Equatoria at the beginning of April.

Between December 2013 and August 2015 an estimated 400,000 people in South Sudan were killed as the army (Sudan People's Liberation Army, or SPLA) and armed rebels from the SPLA-IO perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity, including widespread extrajudicial killings, torture, child abductions and sexual violence. Despite the signing of numerous peace agreements between August 2015 and September 2018, atrocities continued. Since December 2013 an estimated 4 million South Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes, with nearly 2.2 million refugees still spread across neighboring countries.

ANALYSIS

Political instability and armed conflict have been pervasive in South Sudan for the majority of its almost nine years of independence and numerous previous peace agreements have failed. The establishment of the TGoNU enables South Sudan to start addressing long-term political divisions.

Recurring inter-communal violence continues to pose a threat to civilians. While there is a history of seasonal inter-communal raids and violence between Nuer, Murle and Dinka communities in parts of South Sudan, recent disputes have been exacerbated by resource pressures caused by flooding in Jonglei, arms proliferation, and the decline of state authority in much of the region.

Despite an August 2015 agreement calling for an independent Hybrid Court for South Sudan to investigate atrocities committed during the conflict, the government has repeatedly delayed its formation.

The TGoNU of South Sudan is struggling to uphold its responsibility to protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has subjected eight persons to targeted sanctions since 2015 and imposed an arms embargo since 2018.

On 12 March 2020 the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan until March 2021, emphasizing that, "South Sudan's government bears the primary responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity." The resolution also expressed concern that possible war crimes and crimes against humanity continue.

On 30 April the Council of the EU urged the TGoNU to end widespread violations of human rights and the culture

of impunity and called upon the UNSC to strengthen the arms embargo.

NECESSARY ACTION

The international community must continue to exert sustained diplomatic pressure on all parties to the R-ARCSS to ensure its full implementation. The UNSC should impose further targeted sanctions against any individuals who undermine the peace process in South Sudan, regardless of position or office, and should extend the arms embargo. The AU, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and neighboring countries should actively assist in monitoring the arms embargo.

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 past atrocities. All perpetrators of such crimes should be held accountable, regardless of their affiliation or position.



VENEZUELA

Ongoing state-sanctioned persecution and violence in Venezuela leaves populations at risk of potential crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

Following President Nicolás Maduro taking office during 2013, a catastrophic economic crisis resulted in hyper-inflation, food shortages and the collapse of essential services in Venezuela. Popular discontent with the government led to widespread protests, which the authorities have responded to with disproportionate force as well as the mobilization of pro-government groups, including so-called armed "colectivos." During 2018 a panel of independent experts mandated by the Organization of American States (OAS) accused the government of perpetrating crimes against humanity.

The political crisis escalated further during January 2019 when President Maduro was sworn in for a second term

amidst allegations of electoral fraud. Since then more than 50 countries, including the US and many Latin American and European governments, have recognized the leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim President instead. President Maduro has recently recognized a rival leadership in the National Assembly.

In addition to the government's violent crackdown on protests, Special Action Forces (FAES) have been accused of widespread extrajudicial killings. The Venezuelan government has reported that 6,856 people were killed in "security operations" between January 2018 and June 2019 alone. During 2019 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, warned that the FAES is being used as an instrument to maintain social control and instill fear.

High Commissioner Bachelet has warned about ongoing threats and intimidation directed against opposition members, media, civil society, human rights defenders and military defectors. This includes the arbitrary detention of government opponents and their family members, often accompanied by allegations of torture, ill-treatment and sexual and gender-based violence.

According to OCHA, an estimated 7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. At least 4.9 million Venezuelans have left the country since the outbreak of the crisis in 2014, constituting the largest migration crisis in Latin America.

ANALYSIS

Despite international isolation, the Maduro government remains in control of key state institutions and the security forces. Impunity for serious human rights violations committed by various state forces has emboldened the government to continue extrajudicial killings, torture and other crimes, as well as the systematic persecution of its alleged opponents. Since April nation-wide fuel shortages and COVID-19 quarantine measures have triggered renewed protests, increasing the risk of further instability and violence.

The government is failing to uphold its responsibility to protect all Venezuelans regardless of political affiliation.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Since November 2017 the EU has imposed travel bans and asset freezes on 25 senior government officials. On 3 December a number of regional governments also imposed targeted sanctions on 29 senior government officials. The US government has also imposed extensive sanctions on Maduro, his family and senior members of his government.

On 26 September 2018 Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru referred the situation in Venezuela to the ICC, requesting the Chief Prosecutor open a formal investigation into possible crimes against humanity.

On 27 September 2019, under the leadership the "Lima Group," the HRC adopted a resolution establishing an independent

Fact-Finding Mission for Venezuela, mandated to investigate extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment of detainees since 2014.

NECESSARY ACTION

The government must end the systematic persecution of its opponents and ensure impartial investigations of all extrajudicial killings. The government should grant the FFM unrestricted access to the country. The government and opposition should negotiate an agreement to ensure the delivery of essential humanitarian aid and commit to renewed dialogue to ensure a peaceful solution to the crisis.

UN member states should continue to impose targeted sanctions on all senior government officials responsible for systematic violations and abuses of human rights, but refrain from any measures that may further limit the population's access to basic goods, essential services or humanitarian aid. As requested by High Commissioner Bachelet, general sanctions imposed by the US should be eased to allow for the delivery of essential medical equipment necessary to fight against COVID-19.



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