



Bi-Weekly Press Briefing 28 June 2022

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Story

High-level Meeting on Libya Constitutional Track

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), informed that on 28 and 29 June, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Libya, Stephanie Williams, would facilitate a meeting between the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aguila Saleh, and the President of the High State Council of State, Khaled Mishri. The two leaders would discuss the draft constitutional framework for elections considering the outcome of the Joint Committee held from 12 to 20 June.

The press corps would be informed as soon as possible about media opportunities. They were also informed that the meeting had started at 11 am.

Civilian casualty figures in the Syrian conflict

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that 306,887 casualties had been recorded in Syria between March 2011 and March 2021. These were the civilians who had been killed because of the hostilities, and the number did not include those who had died because of other causes, for example the lack of access to health care. This was the highest estimate yet of conflict-related civilian deaths in Syria.

The report contained disaggregated data for the documented deaths, including by age, gender, year,

governorate, actors allegedly responsible and the cause of death by weapon type. The estimate of 306,887 meant that on average, every single day, for the past ten years, 83 civilians had suffered violent deaths due to the conflict. The report set out the challenges in recording casualties during a conflict, beyond the immediate risk to civil society actors who tried to access the sites of incidents where attacks had taken place.

“The work done by casualty recorders in documenting individually verifiable information on each casualty is critical. The process is victim-centred, placing individuals, their families and communities at the centre by ensuring that those killed are not forgotten, and that information is available for accountability-related processes and to access a range of human rights,” the report stated.

Francesca Marotta, Chief of the Methodology, Education and Training Section with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), responding to questions, said the figures released today were disaggregated, and it was now known how many victims were civilian. She reiterated that the total estimated civilian deaths stood at 306,887. There was still no estimate of total non-civilian deaths – that work remained to be done; until now, however, 138,975 combatant deaths were already clearly documented.

Full press release is [here](#); full report is [here](#).

Emergency plan for Afghanistan earthquake response

Jens Laerke, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), informed that the UN team in Afghanistan had launched an emergency appeal following the previous week’s earthquake. The appeal called for USD 110 million to urgently help 362,000 people for the next three months in the hardest-hit areas in the provinces of Paktika and Khost. This new appeal is part of this year’s Humanitarian Response Plan, which calls for USD 4.4 billion, but it was massively underfunded at just over one third. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, had announced the release of USD 10 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to help support the initial phases of our assistance to people in Afghanistan.

Dr. Luo Dapeng, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Afghanistan, stated that as of 27 June, more than 1,000 people had died; almost 3,000 had been injured; and about 1,200 trauma cases had been received in health facilities.

Based on initial reports, about 4,500 homes had been damaged and about 800 families were now living out in the open in the worst-affected districts of Barmal, Giyan in Paktika province and Spera in Khost province.

Dr. Dapeng informed that the WHO had already sent 34.8 metric tonnes of trauma kits and surgical supplies, medical equipment, and other emergency supplies to treat the injured and replenish health supplies for hospitals in the affected provinces of Paktika, Khost and Paktia. On site, eight ambulances and 20 mobile health teams provided by WHO helped transport victims and bodies from affected areas to the nearest hospitals.

To prepare for possible secondary emergencies from disease outbreaks, WHO was now increasing surveillance of infectious diseases such as acute watery diarrhoea, measles, and COVID-19 by deploying disease surveillance and control officers and distributing medicines and supplies to health facilities in anticipation of an increase in cases.

Despite all the efforts rapidly mobilized by the WHO, the UN and humanitarian aid agencies, the needs remained huge, and more support was needed now, stressed Dr. Dapeng. Before the earthquake, he reminded, Afghanistan’s health system had been already facing crucial challenges and the affected communities included those with very minimal or no access to health services.

New report on protecting children in war

Tasha Gill, Senior Advisor, Child Protection in Emergencies at the United Nations Children’s Fund

(UNICEF), informed of the new UNICEF report – “25 years of children and armed conflict: Taking action to protect children in war” - being launched today, which analyzed 16 years of data on grave child rights violations and showed the impact of armed conflict on children around the world. From 2010 to 2022, there had been a 185 percent increase in verified grave child-right violations in conflict. Children continued to bear the brunt of war: every day, boys and girls living in conflict zones continued to experience traumas that no child should ever endure.

Ms. Gill said that the parties to conflict had killed, maimed, raped, forcibly married or enslaved children. Most children experienced more than one violation, increasing their vulnerability. The verified figures provided by UNICEF were only a fraction of the more realistic, much larger figures. Between 2016 and 2020, 82 per cent of all verified child casualties had occurred in only five contexts: Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Syria, Yemen, and Somalia. UNICEF continued to call on all parties to conflict to engage with the United Nations and establish clear, concrete action plans, which would play a critical role in improving the situation for children. The report also included recommendations on providing care and support to children, data collection and monitoring. On a positive side, thanks to the work done by UNICEF and partners, since 2000 at least 170,000 children had been released from armed forces and groups, many having survived multiple violations, including abduction or sexual violence.

Responding to questions, Ms. Gill stressed the importance of speaking out and speaking up, especially when the families of the affected children were not able to do so. While monitoring and reporting capacities had improved, there was a clear increase in the number of violations. Ms Gill specified that 41,900 children had been killed and maimed in the five contexts listed earlier. All States were called upon to sign up for all relevant international treaties protecting children.

The report can be accessed [here](#).

Deteriorating food security situation in the Sahel

Alexandre Lecuziat, Senior Emergency Preparedness and Response Advisor for West and Central Africa at the World Food Programme (WFP), states that West Africa’s Sahel region was at a critical turning point. In 2022 the region was witnessing the colliding crises of conflict, climate, the economic impact of COVID-19 and now skyrocketing costs of food, fuel, and fertilizer. All of those factors at the same time were causing a wave of hunger and suffering that was driving parts of the region to the brink and upending years of development gains.

Mr. Lecuziat said that 12.7 million people were acutely hungry in 2022 in the Sahel – three times the figure for 2019 – including 1.4 million in emergency (IPC4). Six million children were expected to be acutely malnourished in 2022 with millions more at risk. Acute hunger was driven primarily by conflict that continued to trigger massive population displacement and the violence was often preventing people from accessing markets, fields, or humanitarian assistance. The conflict in Ukraine was having a direct impact on shortages on fertilizers: only 46 percent of the region’s fertilizer needs had been met.

To meet immediate food needs today and save lives, to prevent further cuts to existing programmes, and to prevent the Sahel from becoming an all-out humanitarian catastrophe, WFP urgently required USD 329 million in the coming six months for the WFP [operations](#) in the five Sahelian countries. Failure to meet those funding needs would hamper WFP’s ability to respond effectively, leading to further ration cuts which would have a severe impact on the food security and nutritional situation of communities.

Life-saving aid needed for millions affected by drought in the Horn of Africa

Shabia Mantoo, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), stated that UNHCR was appealing for urgent support to help displaced people and local host communities affected by the catastrophic drought in the Horn of Africa. The drought, a stark reminder of the devastating impact of the global climate crisis, was

the worst in the region in four decades and was the culmination of four consecutive failed rainy seasons.

Water sources had dried up and crops and livestock had died, stripping people of their livelihoods and the ability to support themselves. Food shortages had been further exacerbated by rising food and commodity prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The cost of food staples, including grain and cereal prices, had risen significantly. As the crisis worsened, hundreds of thousands of people had also been forced to flee their homes in search of life-saving aid. Since the end of last year, more than 800,000 people in Somalia had been internally displaced and nearly 16,000 had crossed the border into Ethiopia.

To deliver life-saving assistance and protection to some 1.5 million refugees, internally displaced people and local host communities affected by the drought in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, UNHCR was appealing for USD 42.6 million. This appeal would cover critical humanitarian needs in refugee and IDP settlements until the end of the year including water, sanitation facilities, nutrition, health care and protection. It also sought to provide cash assistance for those most vulnerable.

UNHCR press release is [here](#).

Migrant deaths

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), emphasized that an effective independent investigation had to be held into the loss of life and injuries reported during attempted crossings of the fence between Nador in Morocco and Melilla, Spain. Accountability had to be guaranteed. It was the single largest single casualty figure recorded in one such incident. In addition to at least 23 African migrants dying, a number of Moroccan board guards had also been injured. Both Morocco and Spain were called upon by the OHCHR to respect the human rights of migrants along their common border. Access to safe migration pathways and protection against arbitrary detention ought to be guaranteed.

Reports had been received of migrants beaten with batons, kicked, shoved, and attacked with stones by Moroccan officials as they had tried to scale the barbed-wire fence, some six to 10 metres high, separating Morocco from Melilla. The exact circumstances of the incident were still not clear, and there were conflicting reports on what had happened, which was why the OHCHR was insisting on a prompt, independent investigation, said Ms. Shamdasani in a response to questions.

Ms. Shamdasani added that the OHCHR was also deeply disturbed by reports that at least 46 bodies of migrants had been found in an abandoned truck in San Antonio, Texas, in the US, presumably after having crossed the border. This incident illustrated again the critical need for regular safe pathways for migration.

Responding to questions, Shabia Mantoo, for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), said that the UNHCR was deeply concerned about the events. The authorities were called upon to refrain from the excessive use of force and uphold the rights of migrants. An independent inquiry was necessary, she stressed. A joint [press statement](#) had been issued by the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Human Rights Council

Rolando Gomez, for the [Human Rights Council \(HRC\)](#), stated that a press release had been issued today announcing the appointment of Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka as a member of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. Ms. Coomaraswamy would join Kaari Betty Murungi of Kenya (chair) and Steven Ratner of the United States of America, who had been [appointed](#) to serve on the human rights investigative body on 2 March 2022.

The urgent debate on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan would take place on 1 July from 12 noon to 3 pm and would focus on the plight of women and girls in the country. A resolution was expected to be adopted the following week. The tabling deadline for draft resolutions was on 29 June.

Mr. Gomez said that on 4 July at 11 am, there would be a press conference to present the report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya. Speakers would be Mohamed Auajjar, Chair of the Fact-Finding Mission, Tracy Robinson and Chaloka Beyani, members.

Announcements

Christian Lindmeier, for the World Health Organization (WHO), informed that the WHO Director-General would hold a press conference on 29 June around 3 pm, while today there would be another social media live with Dr. Mike Ryan. “Making the Choice for Health” would be the theme of the [World Health Summit 2022](#), which would take place in Berlin and online from 16 to 18 October, informed Mr. Lindmeier.

Alessandra Vellucci, for the UN Information Service, informed that the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen would brief the Security Council on 29 June at 9 pm Geneva time. A transcript of the briefing would be distributed after the briefing.

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that an updated version of the Istanbul Protocol would be released on 29 June, a result of a six-year process involving experts from around the world. Originally produced in 1999, the Protocol was a series of principles that set out the minimum standards for States to investigate and document torture and ill-treatment. An event would be held at the Geneva Academy from 2 to 4 pm on 29 June and would be accessible virtually.

Speaking for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Ms. Vellucci said that the revised publication date of the Global Trade Report would be shared as soon as it was available.

Speaking for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ms. Vellucci informed that UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States would launch on 29 June at 3 pm Geneva time its Human Development Report for the region, seventh in the series. This edition focused on post-COVID recovery, assessing long standing development challenges across the spheres of governance, society, and economy to put the region on a resilient and sustainable human development path. The report also assesses adequacy and efficacy of response policies. The launch would feature two panel discussions with Ministers from Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco and an introduction from the UNDP Administrator. Registration is possible [here](#).

A hybrid press conference to provide an update on the humanitarian situation in Syria would be held today at 3 pm. The speaker would be Imran Riza, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria.

On 29 June at 10 am, there would be a hybrid press conference by UN Women to address government responses to COVID-19: lessons on gender equality for a world in turmoil. Speakers would be Adriana Quiñones, Director, Geneva Liaison Office, UN Women; and Laura Turquet, Policy Advisor and Deputy Chief of Research and Data, UN Women.

On 1 July at 12 pm noon, there would be a hybrid press briefing by OCHA to provide an update on the humanitarian situation in Lebanon. Speaker would be Najat Rochdi, United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon.

The Conference on Disarmament was holding this morning a public plenary meeting, the first one under the presidency of Ambassador Paul Empole Efabembe of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Human Rights Committee, which had opened its 135th session the previous day, had decided yesterday, upon request of the Russian Federation, to postpone to the next session its review of the report of that country. On 29 June, the Committee would begin the review of the report of Luxembourg.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had held this morning a public

meeting to brief States parties on its draft general recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls.