

# R2P MONITOR

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A bimonthly bulletin by  
the Global Centre for the  
Responsibility to Protect

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

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

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

### CURRENT CRISIS

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.

### IMMINENT RISK

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

### SERIOUS CONCERN

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

## R2P Monitor:

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

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\*Access constraints have prohibited updated monitoring of DPRK and Eritrea.

**CURRENT  
CRISIS**

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.



3,800+ civilians killed  
during 2018

1,361 civilians killed by  
IEDs during 2018

## AFGHANISTAN

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

### BACKGROUND

Since the Taliban was overthrown in 2001 by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition of military forces, it has conducted an insurgency against the internationally recognized Afghan government. Following the 2014 withdrawal of most foreign forces from Afghanistan, the Taliban has made substantial military gains, currently controlling or influencing more than half of the country. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), civilians living in Taliban-controlled areas suffer widespread human rights abuses, including recruitment of child soldiers and extrajudicial killings.

UNAMA documented 10,993 civilian casualties during 2018, including 3,804 deaths, representing an 11 percent increase in civilian deaths compared to 2017. Attacks by the Taliban and other anti-government forces using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are the leading cause of civilian casualties, with over 1,361 civilian deaths due to IEDs during 2018. On 6 February the UN Mine Action Service reported 1,415 civilians were killed or injured by mines and explosive remnants during 2018. Civilians have also been killed by government and international military forces during anti-Taliban operations.

According to UNAMA, among those killed in 2018 were 927 children, the highest number recorded during the conflict in a single year. According to previous UN reports, during 2016 the situation in Afghanistan was responsible for the highest number of verified child casualties in any conflict since the UN started globally documenting such casualties in 2009.

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) has also established a significant presence in Afghanistan. ISIL-K carried out at least 38 terrorist attacks in Afghanistan during 2018. These attacks have often been directed at the Shia minority.

Since December the United States government, led by Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, has participated in formal talks with the Taliban in an effort to end the 17-year war. The Afghan government has not been officially represented at any of the negotiations.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 6.3 million people in Afghanistan are currently in need of humanitarian assistance and 2.5 million Afghans are refugees – the second largest refugee population in the world.

### ANALYSIS

As the Taliban regains territory the number of civilians at risk of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity continues to increase. During their 17-year war, government forces and the Taliban have both shown disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

In addition to fighting to expand their territorial control, the Taliban has escalated attacks on civilians in urban areas in an effort to undermine the government's ability to function. The rise of ISIL-K across Afghanistan has also put civilians – in particular members of the Shia religious minority – at elevated risk of mass atrocities. Although government forces implemented successful measures to decrease civilian casualties during 2017, the use of IEDs by the Taliban and ISIL-K in populated areas continues to endanger civilians, and may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

While progress made by the United States government and Taliban towards a potential peace agreement is welcome, the exclusion of the Afghan government from discussions, as well as representatives of women, ethnic and religious minorities, and civil society, risks the further marginalization of vulnerable populations within Afghan society.

Unless sustained action is taken to address corruption and mismanagement within the Afghan government, conflict and insecurity will continue to increase. Ahead of the October 2018 parliamentary elections UNAMA documented 56 civilian deaths due to an "organized campaign of numerous attacks by anti-government elements, mainly Taliban, directed at civilian objects and in civilian-populated areas ... including attacks against schools used as polling centres." The upcoming presidential election, scheduled for July 2019, provides a potential focus for further violence by armed extremist groups.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

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

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

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. According to the ICC, the Taliban has potentially committed crimes against humanity and war crimes. Afghan security forces and members of the United States military may have also committed war crimes, including the torture of detainees. During February 2018 Afghanistan's new penal code came into force, incorporating the Rome Statute of the ICC.

On 27-28 November the UN hosted a conference that led to the adoption of the "Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework," which is designed to monitor reforms that support peace and development, reduce poverty and improve the welfare of the people of Afghanistan.

On 29 January United States government and Taliban officials announced their agreement on a framework that would lead to a withdrawal of United States forces from Afghanistan and potentially end the conflict. High level talks took place in Doha, Qatar, from 25 February to 12 March. The Russian government also hosted talks during February between the Taliban and a delegation of Afghan officials led by former President Hamid Karzai.

## NECESSARY ACTION

The international community should continue to support the Afghan government as it combats the Taliban, ISIL-K and other armed extremist groups. Increased efforts should be undertaken to ensure the security of vulnerable minorities. Afghan security forces and all international military forces operating within Afghanistan must prioritize the protection of civilians and strictly adhere to IHL and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

Countering violent extremism while promoting good governance and the rule of law remains essential. Ahead of the presidential elections the government must take proximate steps to ensure that all voters are able to safely participate in the political process.

The UN, United States and other international stakeholders should support the inclusion of civil society, women and

representatives of ethnic and religious minority communities in all formal negotiations on Afghanistan's political future.

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

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNAMA Website](#)
- » [Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework](#), 28 November 2018
- » [UNAMA Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2018](#), February 2019
- » [Populations at Risk: Afghanistan](#)



Over 720,000 ethnic Rohingya fled atrocities and crossed into Bangladesh between August-December 2017

## MYANMAR (BURMA)

*Populations in Myanmar (Burma) continue to face mass atrocity crimes. Atrocities committed against the Rohingya minority may constitute genocide under international law.*

## BACKGROUND

Populations in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states, remain at risk of mass atrocity crimes perpetrated by the security forces and as a result of discriminatory laws and policies. The 2018 report of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC)-mandated Fact Finding Mission (FFM) for Myanmar concluded that the military, as well as some civilians, committed crimes against humanity and war crimes in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states, as well as acts of genocide in Rakhine State.

Since the start of so-called "clearance operations" in Rakhine State on 25 August 2017, over 723,000 people – mostly ethnic Rohingya – have fled to Bangladesh, bringing the total number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to an estimated 900,000 people. According to the FFM, the treatment of the minority Rohingya population by Myanmar's security forces amounts to four of the five prohibited acts defined in the Genocide Convention. Namely, "perpetrators have killed Rohingya, caused serious bodily and mental harm to Rohingya, deliberately

inflicted conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Rohingya, and imposed measures intended to prevent births of Rohingya.”

The FFM reported that Myanmar’s civilian authorities, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, have not met their “responsibility to protect the civilian population” and have enabled the commission of atrocity crimes. The FFM found evidence of “genocidal intent,” including government policies designed to alter the demographic composition of Rakhine State and a premeditated plan for the destruction of Rohingya communities. The report listed alleged perpetrators of these atrocities, including Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing, and called for Myanmar’s top military officials to be prosecuted for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The FFM also called upon the UNSC to refer the situation to the ICC or create an ad hoc international criminal tribunal.

The government of Myanmar has so far failed to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh, including addressing key issues of citizenship and freedom of movement. Access to Rakhine State remains severely restricted for UN agencies and investigators, humanitarian organizations and the media. On 3 September 2018 a Myanmar court sentenced two Reuters journalists who were investigating a massacre of Rohingya villagers to seven years in prison for allegedly breaking the Official Secrets Act.

Since early December 2018 conflict has also flared in Rakhine State between Myanmar’s military and the Arakan Army (AA), an armed group that claims to represent the Buddhist Rakhine ethnic population. Myanmar’s security forces have shelled villages, blocked food supplies and detained civilians for alleged ties to the AA. Reports indicate that the same military divisions involved in atrocities against the Rohingya were deployed to fight the AA. Access to conflict-affected areas within Rakhine State has been denied to UN agencies since January. According to OCHA, an estimated 5,500 people have been displaced since December.

Following the 2011 breakdown of a ceasefire between the military and the Kachin Independence Army, fighting in Kachin and Shan states displaced more than 106,000 people who have been living in 172 camps, according to OCHA. On 21 December 2018 the military declared a unilateral four-month ceasefire. The UN has not been permitted to deliver assistance in areas beyond government control in Kachin and northern Shan states since June 2016.

## ANALYSIS

The Rohingya, a distinct Muslim ethnic minority group of over 1 million people, have been systematically persecuted for generations. Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law rendered most of the population stateless. The Rohingya are also subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, with more than 120,000 Rohingya confined to camps since 2012. The rights of the Rohingya are further limited by the so-called “Protection

of Race and Religion” laws that place harsh restrictions on fundamental religious freedoms, as well as reproductive and marital rights. Despite Myanmar’s partial transition to democracy, until discriminatory laws and policies are repealed or amended and perpetrators of atrocities are held accountable, the threat of further atrocities endures.

The failure of the UNSC to hold accountable those responsible for atrocities committed against the Rohingya has enabled the military to continue its campaign against other populations.

Restricting the access of UN agencies and humanitarian organizations to Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states undermines efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable civilians. Without independent assessment of local conditions, repatriation of Rohingya refugees cannot be carried out in a safe and sustainable manner.

The government of Myanmar has manifestly failed to uphold its Responsibility to Protect the Rohingya and other minority groups, 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 situation in Rakhine State since 25 August 2017 has been the adoption of a Presidential Statement on 6 November 2017. That statement called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and stressed the “primary responsibility of the Myanmar government to protect its population.”

Since August 2017 the European Union (EU), Canada, United States, Australia and others have responded to atrocities in Rakhine State, including by suspending cooperation with Myanmar’s military and imposing targeted sanctions on senior officers. During 2018 Canada’s House of Commons and the United States House of Representatives both recognized the crimes committed against the Rohingya in Myanmar as genocide.

On 18 September the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, announced that her office was proceeding with a preliminary investigation into the alleged deportation of more than 700,000 Rohingya civilians from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

On 27 September the HRC adopted a resolution creating an “independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Myanmar.” The resolution extended the mandate of the FFM until the new mechanism is operational.

The UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, visited Myanmar from 18–29 January. Special Envoy Burgener briefed the UNSC on 28 February, calling for unfettered humanitarian access and appealing to all parties to uphold their obligations under international law.

On 15 February UN aid agencies and NGO partners launched the “2019 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis,” seeking to raise \$920 million address the refugee situation in Bangladesh and support host communities.

### NECESSARY ACTION

The international community should support the FFM’s recommendations and ensure that those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes do not evade justice. Governments and regional organizations should impose targeted sanctions on those responsible for atrocities.

The UNSC should refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC and impose an arms embargo on the country, as well as targeted sanctions on all senior military officers with command responsibility for atrocities. The UNSC should demand immediate and unfettered access for humanitarian organizations, UN agencies and independent investigators to Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states. It is essential that any repatriation of Rohingya refugees is conducted on a strictly voluntary basis, in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement, and in consultation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Myanmar’s government must repeal or amend all laws that systematically discriminate against the Rohingya, including the Protection of Race and Religion laws and the 1982 Citizenship Law. The government should take proximate steps towards building a more inclusive society in which the human rights of all of Myanmar’s diverse populations are protected, regardless of religion, citizenship status or ethnicity. All international trade and development programs in Rakhine State should be scrupulously reviewed to ensure that they do not reinforce discriminatory structures.

### MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2017/22](#), 6 November 2017
- » [Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#), 18 September 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Myanmar \(Burma\)](#)



Over 560,000 people  
killed in eight years  
of conflict

12 UN Security Council  
vetoes blocking action  
and accountability

## SYRIA

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

### BACKGROUND

Since the Syrian crisis began in 2011 the conflict between the government and opposition groups has escalated into a civil war in which at least 560,000 people have been killed. There are 5.7 million Syrian refugees and at least 6.2 million people are internally displaced - the largest number of people displaced by any conflict in the world. An estimated 13 million Syrians are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

Idlib and adjoining portions of Aleppo and Hama governorates constitute the last remaining major opposition strongholds within Syria. Idlib was designated a “de-escalation zone” in 2017 and of the 3 million civilians living within the governorate, at least 1.5 million are internally displaced. On 17 September 2018 the governments of Turkey and Russia agreed to the establishment of a 15 kilometer-wide “demilitarized zone” within Idlib Governorate. Although opposition fighters removed all heavy weaponry from the designated area by 10 October, they did not entirely withdraw their forces and fighting has escalated across the territory since the start of 2019.

On 1 January hostilities erupted between two major armed groups within Idlib governorate - Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Nour el-Din el-Zinki. During the clashes HTS gained control of a number of towns. In response, on 6 January the Turkish government deployed its forces along the front lines in northwestern Syria and the Syrian government has intensified shelling and aerial bombardment of the territory. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), at least 48 civilians were killed in Idlib between 29 January and 18 February due to government shelling and continued violence by armed opposition groups. The increase



in hostilities has renewed concerns of a possible major Syrian government offensive against Idlib governorate.

Violence has also continued in Deir-Ezzour Governorate, where fighting between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by United States airstrikes, and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have continued. OCHA has reported that over 38,000 civilians have been displaced since December, and at the time of publication at least 200 families remain trapped in Baghouz, the last ISIL-held village in Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that ISIL has killed approximately 5,500 civilians in Syria since June 2014.

Since 2012 the HRC-mandated Commission of Inquiry (Col) has reported that government forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity as a matter of state policy. Numerous armed opposition groups have also committed war crimes. The UN Secretary-General's report on "children and armed conflict in Syria" documented the killing of at least 3,891 children and attacks on over 350 schools and 340 hospitals by all parties to the conflict between November 2013 and June 2018.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-Joint Investigative Mechanism has also determined that Syrian government forces used chlorine gas between 2014-2015 while ISIL used sulfur-mustard in attacks during 2015-2016. On 15 October the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) published an investigation alleging that at least 106 chemical weapons attacks have taken place in Syria since the government acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013. The Col has publicly reported 37 instances of chemical weapons use between March 2013 and March 2019, including 32 attacks perpetrated by Syrian government forces.

Russia, Iran and Hezbollah continue to provide essential military support to the Syrian government. Since September 2015 Russian airstrikes have largely targeted opposition forces and civilian areas outside government control, despite the Russian government claiming their operations are only targeting terrorist groups. According to the SOHR, Russian airstrikes have killed 5,233 ISIL fighters and over 7,990 civilians, including 1,937 children, as of 30 January 2019. The Col has reported that some Russian airstrikes may amount to war crimes.

The United States has several thousand troops present in formerly ISIL-occupied territories working with the SDF. According to the SOHR, airstrikes by the United States-led anti-ISIL coalition have killed 3,640 civilians since September 2014, including 922 children.

## ANALYSIS

The government of Syria, its allies and opposition groups have all committed indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations. Attacks on medical facilities and civilian infrastructure, as well as the use of chemical weapons, demonstrate a complete disregard for international law.

Ongoing fighting between opposition groups and a potential military offensive on Idlib could imperil the lives of millions of civilians. The fracturing and radicalization of the opposition has also compounded the difficulty of negotiating an end to the civil war.

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

The UNSC has been unable to enforce compliance with its resolutions, with the Syrian government and its partners often directly violating various resolutions. With bitter divisions evident amongst the permanent members of the Council, Russia has systematically shielded Syria from accountability measures.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

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

Despite this, the UNSC has failed to adequately respond. Since 2013 the UNSC has passed 24 resolutions on humanitarian access, peace talks and chemical weapons in Syria. Several of these refer to the government's responsibility to protect populations, but none have been fully implemented. Meanwhile, Russia and China have jointly vetoed six draft resolutions and Russia has independently vetoed a further six resolutions. On 13 December the UNSC adopted Resolution 2449, renewing authorization of the delivery of humanitarian supplies across borders and lines of conflict until 10 January 2020.

On 21 December 2016 the UN General Assembly voted to establish an International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of atrocities in Syria. The HRC has adopted 27 resolutions condemning atrocities in Syria, the majority of which reiterate the demand that the Syrian authorities uphold their responsibility to protect the population.

On 8 January Geir Pedersen of Norway began in his role as the new UN Special Envoy for Syria.

On 12 February three former Syrian secret service officers were arrested in Germany and France on allegations of torture and crimes against humanity, marking the first major arrests in Europe of members of the Syrian government under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

## NECESSARY ACTION

In keeping with various UNSC resolutions, Syrian government forces, armed opposition groups and all international parties to the conflict must facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to civilians trapped or displaced by fighting. All parties to the conflict should respect the Idlib “demilitarized zone.” The governments of Syria, Turkey and Russia should immediately allow for the establishment of an OHCHR field presence in Idlib.

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

UN member states should fully cooperate with the IIIM and facilitate its work. The IIIM should be incorporated into the UN's regular budget. States should continue to pursue accountability for alleged perpetrators of atrocities under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [UN Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Syria](#), 30 October 2018
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2449](#), 13 December 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Syria](#)



16,000+ civilians killed  
since March 2015

24 million people in  
need of humanitarian  
assistance

## 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 Yemen's four-year war, populations remain at risk of war crimes and are experiencing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Fighting between Houthi rebels, members of the General People's Congress and various pro-government forces, as well as airstrikes by a Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led international

coalition, has resulted in the deaths of at least 16,000 civilians in Yemen, including over 1,250 children, since March 2015. The actual death toll is considered to be much higher.

Between 6-13 December the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, hosted the first consultations between the government of Yemen and Houthi representatives since previous talks were suspended in 2016. During the consultations in Sweden parties to the conflict agreed to the establishment of a ceasefire in Hodeidah Governorate and the withdrawal of all forces from the city of Hodeidah; an exchange of prisoners; and a statement of understanding on the besieged city of Taiz. Despite an initial decrease in violence, on 10 March intense fighting in Hodeidah threatened the future of the "Stockholm Agreement."

Hostilities have also intensified elsewhere. In response to increased Houthi attacks utilizing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles the Saudi/UAE-led military coalition carried out dozens of airstrikes on Sana'a city on 20 January. Fighting has also escalated in Hajjah Governorate since late January. Increased airstrikes, shelling and armed confrontations have resulted in a significant increase in civilian casualties, including the deaths of eight civilians on 26 January due to suspected Houthi shelling of an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Haradh District.

In their 25 January report the UNSC-mandated Panel of Experts on Yemen documented widespread violations of IHL and IHRL by all parties involved in the conflict. The report noted the disproportionate effect on civilians of Saudi/UAE-led Coalition airstrikes and the use of explosive ordnance by Houthi forces. The HRC-mandated Group of Independent Eminent Experts on Yemen has also reported that grave human rights violations have been perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, possibly amounting to war crimes. Throughout the conflict Houthi and government-allied forces have targeted civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and water and sanitation facilities. The UN, media and human rights organizations have also documented the widespread use of torture and sexual violence within both Houthi and government-allied detention centers.

The conflict has been characterized by the obstruction of humanitarian aid by all parties, including the temporary closure of all air and sea ports in November 2017 by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition. On 31 December 2018 the World Food Programme demanded that Houthi forces immediately halt the practice of seizing food aid in territories under their control. At least 24 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and, according to the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) system, as of December an estimated 15.9 million people – over half the population – are severely food insecure. An estimated 240,000 people are in IPC Phase 5, or “catastrophe” level. On 21 November Save the Children reported that 85,000 children under five may have died of starvation since April 2015.

Other armed groups continue to take advantage of the conflict to perpetrate violence against civilians, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL. The conflict has also

resulted in increased religious persecution of the country's Bahá'í population.

## ANALYSIS

All parties to the conflict have perpetrated indiscriminate attacks and targeted civilian infrastructure, amounting to possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. A climate of impunity has enabled the continued and widespread violation of IHL and IHRL.

The dire humanitarian situation in Yemen is a direct result of the ongoing armed conflict and requires a political solution. If the ceasefire in Hodeidah Governorate is not maintained, resumed hostilities would threaten vital civilian infrastructure and leave millions of Yemenis at increased risk of famine. Yemen imports 90 percent of its staple food supplies and Hodeidah serves as the entry point for 80 percent of the country's food and fuel imports.

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

Political disputes amongst pro-government forces and coalition members threaten to further fracture Yemeni society. The exclusion of some parties to the conflict, including the Southern Transitional Council, from political consultations could increase the difficulty of establishing a lasting peace.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

During 2011 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2014, which condemned human rights violations by the government of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and affirmed Yemen's primary responsibility to protect its population. The UNSC imposed sanctions on former President Saleh and Houthi leaders in November 2014. On 14 April 2015 the UNSC passed Resolution 2216, establishing an arms embargo against Houthi leaders and some supporters of Saleh, and demanding the Houthis withdraw from all areas they had militarily seized. On 26 February 2019 the UNSC renewed sanctions for an additional year and extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 28 March 2020.

On 30 September 2018 the HRC voted to extend the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts authorized to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen, but the government has refused entry to the Group.

On 25 October the European Parliament passed a resolution calling upon EU member states to halt weapons exports to Saudi Arabia. On 9 November the United States announced it would stop refueling Saudi/UAE-led coalition aircraft. The United States Senate also adopted a resolution on 13 December

calling for an end to United States military support for the Saudi/UAE-led coalition in Yemen. On 13 February the United States House of Representatives also voted to end military assistance in Yemen.

On 21 December 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 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2452, establishing the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for an initial period of six months.

## NECESSARY ACTION

All parties to the conflict should uphold the ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate and immediately implement the terms of the Stockholm Agreement. The UNSC should facilitate the immediate deployment and operationalization of UNMHA. The Council should also adopt targeted sanctions against all those responsible for potential atrocities, including the deliberate obstruction of vital humanitarian assistance to vulnerable civilians.

The government of Yemen should allow access to the Group of Eminent Experts and facilitate their work. The UNSC should request to be formally briefed on the Group's findings.

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.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [Stockholm Agreement](#), 13 December 2018
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2451](#), 21 December 2018
- » [Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen](#), 25 January 2019
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Yemen](#)



## IMMINENT RISK

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



435,000+ people internally displaced by conflict in the north-west and south-west regions

## CAMEROON

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

### BACKGROUND

Populations in Cameroon are at imminent risk of potential atrocity crimes due to the ongoing crisis in the Anglophone regions and military operations against the armed extremist group, Boko Haram. According to OCHA, eight out of ten regions in Cameroon are currently affected by political violence.

Political tensions over cultural rights and identity have been growing in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2016 when English-speaking lawyers, students and teachers began protesting against their under-representation and cultural marginalization by the Francophone-dominated government. Violent repression by the security forces resulted in arbitrary arrests, sexual violence and the killing of protesters in the north-west and south-west regions. The crisis deepened after October 2017 when Anglophone separatists symbolically proclaimed independence, declaring a new state of "Ambazonia."

As the conflict has intensified, there has been growing evidence of government security forces perpetrating extrajudicial killings and torture, as well as burning Anglophone villages. Armed separatist forces have also perpetrated abuses, including kidnappings and killings.

On 12-13 November 2018 at least 30 people were killed and hundreds displaced as result of military raids on separatist strongholds. Since 5 February at least 47 armed separatists,

6 military personnel and 16 civilians have reportedly been killed in armed violence in Beua, the capital of the south-west region. According to OCHA, 435,000 people are currently displaced in the Anglophone regions, while UNHCR estimates that as of 10 November 2018 more than 32,600 people have sought refuge across the border in Nigeria.

Political tensions across Cameroon have also increased since January when the main opposition party, the Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon, organized demonstrations in Douala, Yaoundé, Dschang, Bafoussam and Bafang to protest alleged irregularities during the October 2018 elections. Cameroonian security forces used tear gas and live ammunition against protesters. On 5 February the Cameroonian National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms expressed deep concern regarding growing political violence and the use of deadly force by the security forces.

Military operations against the armed extremist group Boko Haram also continue in the north of Cameroon, where there have been widespread allegations of security forces perpetrating extrajudicial killings.

### ANALYSIS

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.

The targeting of individuals based upon their cultural identity poses a direct threat to both Anglophone and Francophone civilians. Any further escalation of violence could result in greater internal displacement and further refugee flows. The government has consistently failed to address the root causes of the Anglophone conflict and provide a political means for peacefully resolving it.

Cameroonian security forces appear to be committing systematic or widespread attacks on civilians, potentially amounting to crimes against humanity. Widespread allegations of extrajudicial killings have been bolstered by leaked video evidence of security forces summarily executing unarmed civilians.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

During 2017 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for the government of Cameroon to conduct impartial investigations into violence in the Anglophone regions. On 17 November 2017 six UN Special Rapporteurs issued a joint statement urging the government to engage in meaningful dialogue and halt violence in the north-west and south-west.

Despite the government's failure to protect populations from violations and abuses of human rights or to hold security forces accountable, on 12 October 2018 Cameroon was elected to the HRC for the 2019–2021 term.

On 21 November the UN Resident Coordinator for Cameroon called for dialogue between the government and Anglophone separatists.

## NECESSARY ACTION

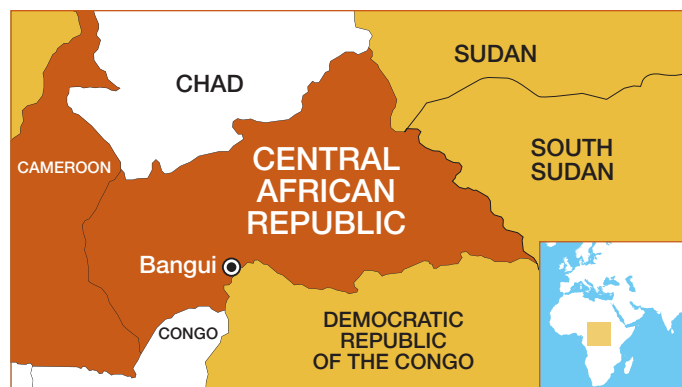
The security forces must cease the use of disproportionate and deadly force against unarmed civilians and ensure that the human rights of all Cameroonians are protected, regardless of language, cultural identity or political affiliation.

All persons responsible for extrajudicial killings must be held accountable. The government of Cameroon should grant OHCHR access to the north-west and south-west regions to investigate potential human rights violations and abuses. Individual governments and regional organizations should suspend all military aid and training programs with Cameroon.

The government of Cameroon should also immediately initiate a dialogue with Anglophone community leaders and constructively address the historic grievances of the English-speaking minority. The African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Central African States should engage with Cameroon's government in order to prevent any further deterioration of the conflict in the Anglophone regions.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2018/17](#), 10 August 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Cameroon](#)



70 percent of CAR remains under control of various armed groups

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

*Populations in the Central African Republic are at risk of mass atrocity crimes due to ongoing attacks committed by various armed groups.*

### BACKGROUND

On 6 February the national government and 14 armed groups, including the Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) and Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), signed a peace deal to bring an end to years of armed hostilities in the Central African Republic (CAR). Despite this historic agreement, fighting amongst armed groups leaves civilian populations at ongoing risk of attack and continues to cause widespread displacement.

Endemic violence in CAR is fueled by shifting alliances between predatory armed groups, including factions of the ex-Séléka rebel alliance and anti-balaka militias. Despite the groups' expressed commitment to the peace process, intense clashes over the past months have particularly affected the south and east of the country. Violence is primarily driven by anti-balaka militias and three former members of the Séléka rebel alliance – the FPRC, UPC and MPC. These groups have intentionally targeted civilians and humanitarian workers, committed sexual violence and perpetrated attacks on IDP camps, medical facilities and places of worship. The conflict has also sharpened divisions between Muslim and Christian communities, with reports of hate speech and incitement to ethnic and religious-based violence. The increasingly dangerous environment also threatens the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid for an estimated 2.9 million people.

The February agreement, which was negotiated in Khartoum, Sudan, under the AU-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, highlights the need to address the root causes of the conflict. It also contains provisions on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former fighters and the establishment of a Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation

Commission. The agreement also called for the establishment of an inclusive government. However, following the government's announcement of a new cabinet on 3 March, several signatories expressed frustration over a lack of representation, threatening to withdraw from the agreement.

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 anti-balaka and ex-Séléka forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity between 2013-2015.

More than a quarter of the country's population has fled their homes since 2013, with an estimated 648,000 Central Africans still internally displaced and more than 575,000 refugees. A hybrid judicial mechanism – the Special Criminal Court (SCC) for CAR – was created during 2015 and opened its first session on 22 October 2018.

## ANALYSIS

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

In many parts of the country MINUSCA remains the only force capable of maintaining security, but it continues to face critical capacity gaps that impede its ability to consistently uphold its civilian protection mandate.

While the Khartoum agreement constituted a potentially historic step towards peace, growing frustration and threats of withdrawal by several armed groups jeopardizes the process. In addition, the agreement does not adequately address post-conflict justice, including the role of the SCC.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has passed 12 resolutions since October 2013 that emphasize the government's responsibility to protect all populations in CAR, including Resolution 2448 from 13 December 2018, which extended MINUSCA's mandate until 15 November 2019. On 31 January 2019 the UNSC extended the sanctions regime that has been in place since 2013, including the imposition of travel bans and asset freezes on those who incite ethnic or religious violence.

During May 2014 the government referred the situation in CAR to the ICC, which opened an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity by both Séléka and anti-

balaka forces. On 17 November 2018 Alfred Yekatom, former commander of an anti-balaka group and a Member of Parliament, was transferred to the ICC and will face charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On 23 January French authorities transferred Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, an anti-balaka leader accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, to the ICC.

## NECESSARY ACTION

In addition to focusing on emerging threats against the civilian population, MINUSCA must strengthen its preventive capacity by bolstering local disarmament and reintegration efforts.

Notwithstanding its numerous reconstruction, reconciliation and security challenges, the government should prioritize accountability for mass atrocity crimes and continue its cooperation with the ICC. National authorities should also ensure the SCC can fulfill its mandate with a victim-centered justice strategy.

As outlined in the Khartoum agreement, a follow-up mechanism should be rapidly established. The UNSC and AU should closely monitor implementation of the peace agreement and impose targeted sanctions on any individuals who breach its key provisions.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [MINUSCA Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2448](#), 13 December 2018
- » [Report of the UN Secretary-General, S/2019/147](#), 15 February 2019
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: CAR](#)

## SERIOUS CONCERN

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



More than 1,200 people killed and 10,000 arbitrarily detained since April 2015

347,000 refugees in neighboring countries

## BURUNDI

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

### BACKGROUND

Ongoing violations and abuses of human rights perpetrated by state forces in Burundi leave populations at risk of mass atrocity crimes. The HRC-mandated Col on Burundi has found that potential crimes against humanity have been committed since April 2015. More than 1,200 people have been killed in politically inspired violence since then and 10,000 Burundians have been arbitrarily detained. More than 347,000 refugees remain in neighboring countries.

Violations and abuses of human rights, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture of suspected dissidents, have primarily been carried out by the National Intelligence Service and police. The Col's August 2018 report highlighted the personal role of President Pierre Nkurunziza in fomenting serious human rights violations. The Col also raised concern regarding the role played by the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party, in human rights abuses.

During December 2018 the BBC published a special investigation regarding the existence of at least 22 secret government detention facilities across the country where dissidents are tortured as part of what witnesses call an "orchestrated program to eliminate opposition." According to former national intelligence officers, the disappearance and death of alleged government opponents has been approved by the highest state authorities.

The crisis in Burundi developed following the April 2015 announcement that President Nkurunziza would seek a third presidential term. This was regarded by many as violating the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement, which ended a civil war that claimed over 350,000 lives between 1993–2005. Following a failed coup, widespread protests and violence, President Nkurunziza was re-elected during July 2015. The East African Community (EAC) has attempted to mediate between the government and opposition parties, but with little success.

### ANALYSIS

While international attention on the crisis has decreased since the May 2018 constitutional referendum, the police, National Intelligence Service and Imbonerakure continue to commit widespread human rights abuses and violations that may amount to crimes against humanity. Despite President Nkurunziza's announcement that he would not run for an additional term in 2020, the current political environment is not conducive to holding free and fair elections.

The ongoing hostility directed towards UN mechanisms, institutions and experts is a disturbing indication of the government's unwillingness to engage with the international community. The government has refused to cooperate with the OHCHR, HRC and ICC. In addition to public threats directed at members of the Col, in April 2018 the government also expelled a team of UN experts. On 28 February 2019 the government announced the permanent closure of the UN human rights office in Bujumbura. The government has also banned most independent non-governmental organizations and curtailed independent media.

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 29 July 2016 the UNSC passed Resolution 2303, authorizing UN police to monitor the security and human rights situation. Despite the government's refusal to accept the monitors and the Council announcing its intention to pursue targeted measures against those who threaten the peace and security of Burundi, there has been no subsequent diplomatic action.

On 30 September 2016 the HRC created the Col to investigate human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. During 2018

the Col compiled a list of alleged perpetrators of crimes against humanity and called upon the government to ensure accountability. On 27 September 2018 the HRC extended the mandate of the Col despite the refusal of the government to allow the Commissioners to enter Burundi.

On 25 October the EU renewed travel bans and asset freezes on four Burundians for serious human rights violations, obstruction of democracy and inciting violence.

### NECESSARY ACTION

It remains essential that Burundi's government ends the violent targeting of political opponents, civil society organizations and independent media. The HRC-mandated Col on Burundi should be granted immediate access to investigate alleged violations and abuses of human rights.

The government should engage constructively with the mediation efforts led by the EAC and fully commit to an inclusive dialogue to end the political crisis. The EAC, together with other international and regional stakeholders, should support measures to ensure safe, peaceful and transparent elections in 2020.

The UNSC should impose targeted sanctions against all those who continue to threaten peace and security in Burundi, including the list of suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity supplied by the Col.

### MORE INFORMATION

- » [Report of the Commission of Inquiry, A/HRC/39/63](#), 8 August 2018
- » [Report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi, S/2018/1028](#), 20 November 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Burundi](#)



535+ people massacred in Yumbi during December

4.5 million IDPs and 825,000 refugees in neighboring countries

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

*Populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain at risk of mass atrocity crimes committed by the security forces and various militias.*

### BACKGROUND

After two years of unconstitutional delays, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held elections on 30 December. Despite widespread irregularities, including vote tampering and voter suppression, opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as president on 24 January 2019. Throughout the delayed election process Congolese security forces were widely accused of using disproportionate and deadly force against protesters and arbitrarily arresting opposition supporters.

The elections took place amidst increasing violence and instability as various armed groups have exploited the weakness of state authority in various parts of the country. Despite military offensives conducted by the government's armed forces (FARDC) with assistance from the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade, attacks by armed groups and inter-communal violence continue. According to UNHCR, over 4.5 million Congolese are internally displaced while more than 825,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries.

Several provinces in eastern DRC - notably North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika - have been plagued by a rise in inter-communal violence and attacks by armed groups. Suspected attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces and other militias in North Kivu have hampered efforts to confront an Ebola outbreak since August 2018. Ebola treatment centers have been subjected to arson attacks and forced to close due to kidnapping and the targeting of health workers.

Deadly clashes erupted between the Batende and Banunu communities in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe province, from



16-18 December 2018. The UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO), which investigated 59 burial sites in the area, reported that at least 535 civilians were massacred in a series of attacks on four villages. According to the UNJHRO, “the attacks were conducted in an organized and planned manner, and were extremely violent and fast.” At least 967 homes and other properties, including churches and schools, were also looted or destroyed in the violence, and UNHCR reported that at least 16,000 people fled to the Republic of Congo.

## ANALYSIS

Government repression of the opposition over the past two years has exacerbated political tensions throughout the DRC. The new government needs to demonstrate a commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and reestablish trust between the population and the security sector.

Widespread violence in the east is indicative of the enduring challenge of building effective governance and political stability in the DRC. Competition for control of profitable minerals, as well as unresolved inter-communal conflicts, have enabled the proliferation of militias and other armed groups. Attacks on health centers and waves of displacement caused by militia violence threatens to exacerbate the Ebola epidemic.

The government of the DRC has struggled to uphold its Responsibility to Protect 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. Several governments and regional organizations, including the United States and EU, have also imposed sanctions on government officials who impeded the election process or were deemed responsible for deadly attacks on peaceful demonstrators.

On 30 October the UNSC adopted Resolution 2439 condemning attacks by armed groups that have hampered the response to the Ebola outbreak. 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.”

Regional organizations, including the Southern African Development Community and the AU, deployed observer missions to the DRC during the election.

## NECESSARY ACTION

The security forces must refrain from using disproportionate force against civilians and respect the universal human rights of all Congolese, including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The new government should undertake measures to hold all those who used lethal force against unarmed protesters prior to the 2018 election accountable.

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 protection of civilians and health centers in North Kivu must remain an integral part of any strategy to combat the Ebola epidemic. The government and MONUSCO should implement measures to mediate inter-communal tensions in eastern DRC, the Kasai region and Mai-Ndombe province. The government should conduct a thorough investigation of the massacres in Yumbi and hold the perpetrators accountable.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [MONUSCO Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2439](#), 30 October 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: DRC](#)



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.

Between 30 March 2018 and 11 February 2019 at least 189 Palestinians were killed – including 35 children – and over 25,252 wounded by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) along the border between Gaza and Israel during a series of mass demonstrations. The demonstrations were initially organized in the lead up to the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel and the Palestinian “Nakba” (Catastrophe) on 14 and 15 May, respectively. At least 40 Israeli soldiers were also injured during the demonstrations. On 28 February the HRC-mandated Col on the 2018 Gaza protests reported that Israeli security forces used excessive and disproportionate force in response to

civilian protests, targeted journalists and medical personnel, and used live ammunition against unarmed protesters. The Col indicated that these violations of IHL may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.

Between August–November Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups fired hundreds of rockets and mortar rounds towards Israel, including over 400 on 12 November. In retaliation Israel carried out airstrikes on targets within Gaza. Palestinian armed groups have continued to intermittently fire rockets towards Israel, including 18 between 22 January and 20 February. Hamas security forces in Gaza have also committed grave human rights abuses against Palestinian civilians, including arbitrary arrests, summary executions and torture.

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

Since 2014 the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza has been exacerbated by an ongoing air, sea and land blockade by Israel. According to the UN's 2019 humanitarian needs overview, 1.7 million people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are food insecure, including 68 percent of households in Gaza. Negotiations between Israel and Palestinian representatives regarding a lasting peace agreement have been suspended since April 2014, although the UN and Egypt are currently mediating discussions between Israel and Hamas.

Illegal Israeli settlements, prohibited under international law, also continue to expand in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. According to OCHA, over 460 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized by Israeli government authorities during 2018 and a further 67 have been demolished so far this year. Violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers also escalated during December, with three Israelis and five Palestinians killed in clashes across the West Bank.

## ANALYSIS

In the absence of a meaningful peace process, conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups is likely to result in recurring armed hostilities. Frequent exchanges of fire between Israel and Hamas in recent months threatens to escalate into another war in Gaza. 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. Israel's military blockade of Gaza, in force since 2007, is also a potentially illegal form of collective punishment of Gaza's 1.8 million inhabitants. Recent shortages in funding for UN humanitarian operations and

tightened restrictions on movement of goods into Gaza have exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation.

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its civilian population into occupied territory. Illegal Israeli settlements have contributed to the volatile situation in the West Bank. Increased anti-Semitic and anti-Arab rhetoric has also heightened tensions between communities across Israel and the OPT.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute in January 2015, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC announced the opening of a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine. On 22 May 2018 the Palestinian Authority referred the situation in Gaza to the ICC.

On 24 June 2015 the Col on the Gaza conflict reported on violations of IHL and violations and abuses of IHRL that may amount to war crimes. On 18 May 2018 the HRC established a new Col mandated to investigate all such violations in the context of large-scale civilian protests on the Gaza border.

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 13 June 2018 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by the IDF against Palestinian civilians. On 6 December the 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.

Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza, cease illegal settlement-related activity, and end the use of disproportionate and deadly force against Palestinian protesters. The Palestinian Authority must help end indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians and rigorously prosecute those responsible. The Hamas de-facto administration in Gaza must permanently halt indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel. The government of Israel should swiftly and impartially investigate the violations of international law reported by the Col and hold all perpetrators accountable. All parties should condemn anti-Semitic and anti-Arab hate speech and incitement to violence and cooperate fully with the preliminary examination of the ICC.

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

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNGA Resolution, A/RES/ES-10/20](#), 13 June 2018
- » [Report of the UN Secretary-General on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population](#), 14 August 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Israel and the OPT](#)



Over 3,600 people killed in inter-communal clashes since January 2016

## NIGERIA

*Inter-communal violence in Nigeria's "Middle Belt" region, attacks by Boko Haram, and human rights abuses committed by the Nigerian security forces all constitute an ongoing threat to civilians.*

### BACKGROUND

On 23 February Nigerian voters elected President Muhammadu Buhari for a second term. Following the election at least 53 people were killed in 11 different states, including at least 17 people in an attack by the armed extremist group the so-called Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA). The new Nigerian government will have to confront multiple security threats that place civilians at risk of mass atrocity crimes, including recurring inter-communal violence in the "Middle Belt" region and ongoing attacks by the armed extremist group Boko Haram.

According to the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, during 2018 outbreaks of violence between farmers and semi-nomadic herders were recorded across Nigeria, particularly in the "Middle Belt" and Adamawa and Taraba states. According to Amnesty International, 3,641 people were killed in clashes between herders and farming communities between January 2016 and October 2018, with 57 percent of deaths occurring during 2018. Such violence continues to escalate with at least

98 people, including 22 children, killed in attacks in Kajuru, Kaduna State, during February.

The north-east is also experiencing an intensification of violence by Boko Haram and ISWA. Since December Boko Haram has temporarily seized several towns and attacked military bases, including the headquarters of the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). On 28 January at least 60 people were killed during an attack on the town of Rann, Borno State. According to OCHA, 1.8 million people remain internally displaced in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states as a result of insecurity caused by Boko Haram since 2009. The International Organization for Migration reported an additional 60,000 people have fled violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and other armed extremists since December.

Nigerian security forces have also been implicated in human rights abuses during operations against Boko Haram, ISWA and other groups.

### ANALYSIS

Recurring conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt region is rooted in historical grievances over land use and resource allocation. Growing desertification and the loss of grazing land in the north of Nigeria has driven many ethnic Fulani herdsman, who are mainly Muslim, southward into areas traditionally farmed by settled communities that are predominately Christian. The competition for resources has resulted in herder-farmer violence and has also exacerbated religious and ethnic divisions.

Ongoing human rights abuses by Nigeria's security forces demonstrate the need for security sector reform and human rights training. Meanwhile, the ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram and ISWA leaves civilians at continued risk of terrorist attacks and identity-based violence.

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 the UN Secretary-General condemned attacks in Borno State and called for "the international community to increase support to regional efforts in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin." During February the MNJTF launched a new offensive against Boko Haram.

### NECESSARY ACTION

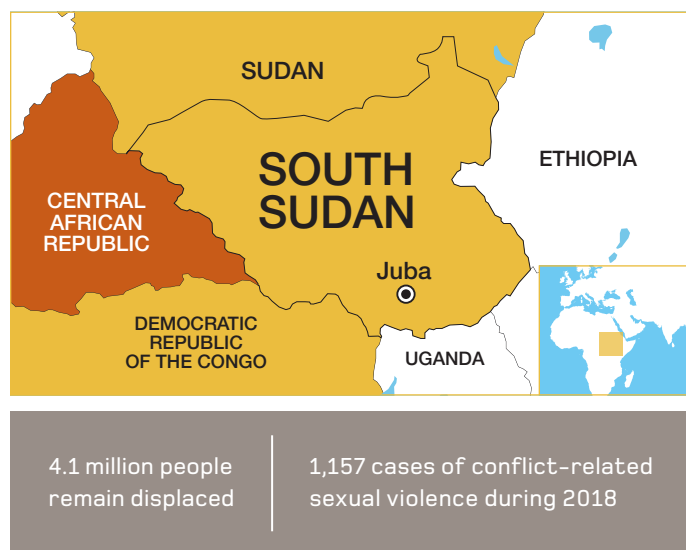
It is essential that the new government of Nigeria addresses the root causes of inter-communal violence in the Middle Belt through socio-economic initiatives and political reforms that tackle land rights and poor governance. Utilizing the Early Warning System of the Economic Community of West African States, the Nigerian government should work with local civil society to ameliorate long-standing grievances between herding and settled communities. The government should

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

The Nigerian government should continue to support programs that strengthen local security and bolster the rule of law in areas where 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 should also investigate all alleged human rights abuses perpetrated by the security forces.

## MORE INFORMATION

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



## SOUTH SUDAN

*Despite a September 2018 peace agreement, the risk of recurring armed conflict between government forces and armed rebel groups continues to pose a threat to civilians in South Sudan.*

### BACKGROUND

On 12 September 2018 a Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed by the parties to the conflict – including President Salva Kiir and former Vice President and rebel leader Riek Machar – formally ending the civil war that started during December 2013. Since then a ceasefire has largely been maintained and armed violence has reduced throughout South Sudan. Despite the failure of numerous past agreements, the R-ARCSS represents a significant diplomatic attempt to permanently end armed conflict and re-establish a power-sharing government.

Despite the signing of the R-ARCSS, conflict-related sexual violence remains rampant in South Sudan. Between 19 November

and 1 December at least 157 women – including girls under the age of 10 and women over the age of 65 – were raped, sexually assaulted and beaten as they traveled to a food distribution site in Bentiu. In Unity State 175 women and girls were also victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and gang-rape, between September–December. This follows reports that more than 505 women and 63 girls were abducted in Western Equatoria for the purpose of recruitment into armed groups and sexual slavery between April–August. In total, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reported 1,157 cases of sexual violence during 2018 as compared to 196 cases during 2017.

Since the beginning of February renewed fighting has taken place between the National Salvation Front, the largest rebel group that refused to sign the R-ARCSS, and government forces in Central Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal states. According to UNHCR, an estimated 5,000 people fled to the DRC and local authorities reported the registration of 14,000 IDPs.

Between December 2013 and August 2015 at least 50,000 people in South Sudan were killed as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (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. Both sides targeted civilians as part of their military tactics. Despite the signing of a peace agreement in August 2015, the HRC-mandated Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan has identified dozens of senior officials and groups responsible for atrocities committed during 2016–2018.

Since December 2013 an estimated 4.1 million South Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes, with 2.3 million refugees spread across neighboring countries. According to OCHA, 5.2 million people remain severely food insecure, including nearly 36,000 in famine-like conditions.

### ANALYSIS

Political instability and armed conflict have been pervasive in South Sudan for the majority of its seven and a half years of independence. Despite numerous previous failed peace agreements, the considerable political investment in the R-ARCSS by the entire region – most notably Uganda, Sudan and Kenya – is cause for cautious optimism.

According to the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, sexual violence has been used as “a strategy to degrade, shame and humiliate victims and communities, often along ethnic or political lines.” While sexual violence has been used as a tactic of war by all parties to the conflict, over the past year there has been an alarming increase in the number of reported cases.

Despite an August 2015 agreement calling for the establishment of an independent Hybrid Court for South Sudan to investigate atrocities committed during the conflict, the government has repeatedly delayed its formation. While negotiating the R-ARCSS, President Salva Kiir granted amnesty to “those who

waged war against the government.” There is a risk that this amnesty will include alleged perpetrators of past atrocities.

The government of South Sudan must uphold its Responsibility to Protect, including by fully implementing the R-ARCSS.

### INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 18 December 2017 the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched the High-Level Revitalization Forum aimed at reinvigorating the 2015 Peace Agreement. After several unsuccessful attempts, the presidents of Kenya, Sudan and Uganda brokered the R-ARCSS.

On 20 March 2018 the HRC extended the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights for South Sudan for another year, emphasizing that the government has “the responsibility to protect all of its population in the country from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”

On 13 July the UNSC imposed an arms embargo on South Sudan. The UNSC also subjected two additional senior officials to targeted sanctions, bringing the total number of rebel leaders or government officials on the sanctions list to eight.

On 7 December the UNSC released a Press Statement emphasizing the government's responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes and condemning ongoing sexual violence in South Sudan.

### NECESSARY ACTION

Pending the full implementation of the R-ARCSS, the AU, IGAD and neighboring countries should actively assist in imposing and monitoring the arms embargo.

The SPLA, SPLA-IO and all affiliated militias must ensure that UNMISS is able to move freely and without threats to its personnel.

The AU and the government should expeditiously establish the Hybrid Court and ensure that it has the resources to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for mass atrocities, including sexual violence. All perpetrators of such crimes should be held accountable, regardless of their affiliation or position.

Comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support services should be provided to victims and witnesses of sexual violence. The signatories to the R-ARCSS must ensure that addressing sexual violence is a central aspect of the implementation of the agreement.

### MORE INFORMATION:

- » [UNMISS Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2428](#), 13 July 2018
- » [Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan](#), 12 September 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: South Sudan](#)



Approximately 50 people killed in anti-government demonstrations since December

## SUDAN

*Populations in Sudan face a risk of mass atrocity crimes due to violence against civilians committed by the security forces, affiliated militias and armed rebel groups.*

### BACKGROUND

On 19 December demonstrations erupted in the northern town of Atbara regarding the removal of bread subsidies, fuel and cash shortages, and high inflation in Sudan. Protests were initially organized by teachers, students, lawyers and doctors, but have spread across the country and involve a broad cross-section of Sudanese society. In response, the security forces have used excessive force against protesters. Approximately 50 people have been killed and thousands arrested.

In an attempt to curb the protests, on 22 February President Omar al-Bashir declared a state of emergency. The emergency measures include a ban on demonstrations, the establishment of emergency courts, the dissolution of central and state governments, and the appointment of military officers to government positions. President Bashir also announced the delegation of his powers as leader of the National Congress Party to Ahmad Harun, the former governor of South Kordofan.

Recurring armed conflict also poses a threat to civilians in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur. Between 2011-2016 the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and armed rebels from the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) engaged in armed hostilities in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. OCHA estimated that between 90,000-545,000 IDPs were spread across the two states, while nearly 690,000 people fled to neighboring countries. Meanwhile, in Darfur clashes between the government and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) in the Jebel Marra area have resulted in rising levels of sexual and gender-based violence as well as villages being burnt down.

During 2016 the Sudanese government and some armed groups signed the AU High Level Implementation Panel's Roadmap agreement aimed at ending the conflicts in South Kordofan, Blue



Nile and Darfur, but failed to agree on a permanent cessation of hostilities.

The government also continues to obstruct the AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur (UNAMID) from carrying out human rights monitoring. Since 2008 more than 70 UNAMID peacekeepers have been killed by armed groups.

## ANALYSIS

The state of emergency and the return to military rule endanger the human rights of all populations in Sudan.

Despite the current ceasefires in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the Sudanese government and SPLA-N have a history of perpetrating acts that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The government and SPLA-N have consistently defied external pressure to hold perpetrators accountable. While the overall level of violence in Darfur has decreased since 2016, several areas, especially Jebel Marra, still require a robust peacekeeping presence.

International pressure is necessary to ensure that the government of Sudan upholds its Responsibility to Protect and is held accountable for past atrocity crimes.

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has adopted at least 58 resolutions on Sudan since 2004, most of which have not been fully implemented. On 29 June the UNSC adopted Resolution 2429, which extended UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019 and mandated the continuation of a phased reduction of UNAMID.

Following a UNSC referral, between 2007-2014 the ICC issued arrest warrants for three Sudanese government officials, including multiple warrants for President Omar al-Bashir and Ahmad Harun, and two anti-government militia leaders, for atrocities perpetrated in Darfur, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. All suspects remain at large.

The UNSC has imposed an arms embargo on Darfur since 2004 and travel ban and asset freeze against six individuals since 2006. During October 2017 the United States lifted sanctions against Sudan.

## NECESSARY ACTION

The government of Sudan must end the use of disproportionate and deadly force against unarmed protesters. It should also immediately release all individuals detained for peacefully demonstrating.

All signatories to the AUHIP Roadmap should fully implement the agreement and permanently end armed hostilities in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Following the reconfiguration of UNAMID, the UNSC must closely monitor the precarious security situation in Darfur.

The UNSC should also actively support efforts to bring ICC indictees to justice. States parties to the Rome Statute of

the ICC should deny President Bashir entry to their country or should comply with ICC warrants and arrest him.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNAMID Website](#)
- » [International Criminal Court: Situation in Darfur, Sudan](#)
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Sudan](#)



8,292 extrajudicial killings  
and 12,000 people arbitrarily  
detained since 2014

3 million Venezuelans in  
neighboring countries

## VENEZUELA

*Ongoing political conflict and systematic human rights violations and abuses in Venezuela leave populations at risk of potential crimes against humanity.*

## BACKGROUND

Since President Nicolas Maduro took office during 2013, popular discontent with the government's policies has resulted in widespread protests. Government mismanagement and a catastrophic economic crisis have resulted in hyper-inflation, acute food shortages and the collapse of essential services. The government has routinely responded to protests with disproportionate and deadly force.

During 2018 a panel of independent experts mandated by the Organization of American States (OAS) accused the government of crimes against humanity, including 8,292 extrajudicial killings and the arbitrary detention of more than 12,000 people since 2014. According to the OAS, security forces engaged in "widespread and systematic targeting of opponents of the regime or suspected 'enemies of the state'" during a violent crackdown on protests during April-June 2017 that resulted in more than 100 people being killed.

Despite an opposition boycott and allegations of electoral fraud, President Maduro was re-elected during May 2018. Mass demonstrations were held in opposition to his inauguration in January 2019. The start of his second term sparked a diplomatic crisis as dozens of governments, including the United States and many Latin American and European countries, recognized

the leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim President. Anti-government protests during January resulted in at least 40 people being killed and an estimated 850 detained. At the time of publication, a crippling blackout had left the country without electricity for days, adding to the developing sense of crisis.

On 23 February conflict also escalated along Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil when the security forces used tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition to disperse protests against the government's blockade of mostly United States-sponsored humanitarian aid.

## ANALYSIS

In the midst of mass protests and an intense political struggle between Maduro and Guaidó for control of the state, Venezuelans face a risk of potential atrocity crimes. With the leadership of the armed forces remaining loyal to Maduro, Guaidó's call for ongoing mass protests may set the stage for a major confrontation between the government and opposition.

The government has also taken steps to isolate itself from international scrutiny, including withdrawing from the OAS. Threats by senior politicians in the United States regarding the possibility of an invasion of Venezuela have complicated attempts to negotiate an end to the political crisis. Such an invasion would be illegal under international law.

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

## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Various governments, including OAS member states, have publicly criticized systematic human rights violations and abuses in Venezuela. More than 50 governments now recognize Guaidó as interim President of Venezuela.

During November 2017 the EU imposed an arms embargo and other sanctions on Venezuela. The EU has also imposed travel bans and asset freezes on 18 senior government officials. The United States has imposed extensive sanctions on Maduro and his family.

On 26 September 2018 six states referred the situation in Venezuela to the ICC. By requesting the Chief Prosecutor open a formal investigation into possible crimes against humanity, Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru became the first countries to refer a situation to the ICC for crimes that took place in the territory of another state party.

## NECESSARY ACTION

The government must immediately end systematic human rights violations and abuses, demobilize auxiliary militias – including “colectivos” – and ensure the security forces refrain from the disproportionate and deadly use of force against protesters.

UN member states should impose targeted sanctions on all government officials responsible for systematic violations and abuses of human rights in Venezuela, including the torture of political detainees. The UN, with the support of Latin American states and the OAS, should help negotiate an end to the crisis.

Humanitarian relief efforts should be strictly guided by the principles of independence and impartiality, and aid deliveries should be coordinated with UN agencies.

## MORE INFORMATION

- » [Report of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and the Panel of Independent International Experts](#), 29 May 2018
- » [Report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), 22 June 2018
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Venezuela](#)



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