

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.

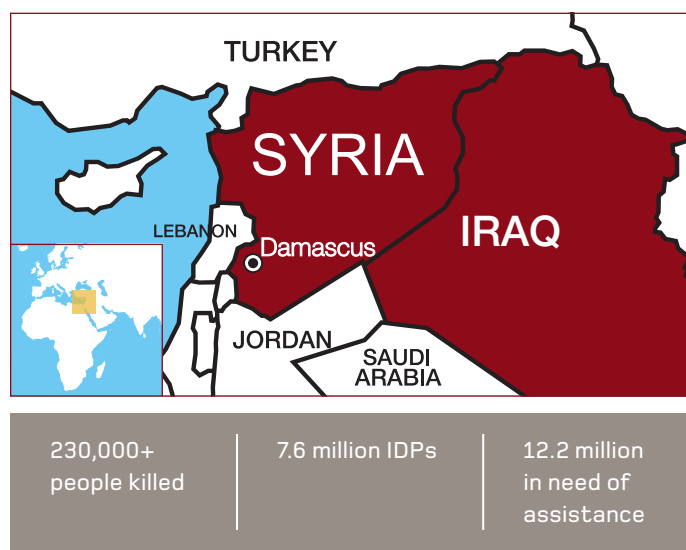
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CURRENT CRISIS

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.



SYRIA

The ongoing civil war in Syria leaves populations facing mass atrocity crimes committed by state security forces and affiliated militias. Some armed opposition groups are also committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

After more than four years of conflict in Syria over 230,000 people have been killed. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported on 9 July that there were over 4 million Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, with at least 7.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) – the largest number of people displaced by any conflict in the world. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the crisis has left 12.2 million Syrians in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, 4.8 million of whom remain in inaccessible areas.

On 20 February the UN Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry (CoI) said the Syrian government has "manifestly failed to protect its citizens from mass atrocities," with war crimes and crimes against humanity being "committed on a massive scale." On 17 March the CoI reiterated the need for the UN Security Council (UNSC) to refer the Syria situation to the ICC. All parties to the conflict have impeded humanitarian access to vulnerable civilians, with an estimated 422,000 Syrians living under siege.

The government continues to conduct airstrikes in densely populated residential areas, contravening UNSC Resolution 2139 of 22 February 2014. On 30 May a government barrel bomb attack on the town of al-Bab, Aleppo, killed at least 70 civilians. On 8 June government airstrikes in the rebel-held village of al-Janudiya, Idlib, killed at least 49 civilians. The government also continues to obstruct the delivery of cross-border humanitarian aid, directly contravening UNSC Resolutions 2165 and 2191.

On 7 May the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons informed the UNSC that its inspectors had found traces of sarin and ricin at three military locations, despite the government's agreement to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile following an August 2013 sarin attack on areas of Ghouta, Damascus, that killed an estimated 1,400 people.

Syrian government forces and allied militias have committed large-scale massacres and perpetrated war crimes and gross violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) as a matter of state policy. The CoI has reported that pro-government forces have conducted "widespread attacks on the civilian population, committing murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances as crimes against humanity."

Several armed opposition groups have also committed mass atrocity crimes, violated IHL and targeted religious minorities for attack. On 28 May a coalition of rebel groups seized Ariha, the last city in Idlib still held by the government. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that on 10 June, in Idlib's Qalb Loze village, fighters from Jabat al-Nusra killed at least 20 Druze, a religious minority group. On 16 June a rebel bombardment of Aleppo killed 34 people, including 12 children, according to the SOHR. OCHA also reported that indiscriminate attacks on government-controlled areas of Aleppo killed at least 116 people during April and May, nearly half of whom were women and children.

The "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL), an extremist armed group operating on both sides of the Syria-Iraq border, poses a direct threat to civilians as its fighters have carried out mass executions and sexual enslavement in areas under their control. The CoI has reported that ISIL has committed crimes against humanity. According to the SOHR, ISIL killed at least 1,362 civilians in Syria between June 2014 and April 2015 and has recruited approximately 400 children since January 2015.

On 20 May ISIL began an assault on the historic city of Palmyra, overrunning government forces and causing an estimated 11,000 people to flee. By 25 May ISIL had reportedly summarily executed more than 217 soldiers and residents in Palmyra.

Since 23 September Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and United States have conducted airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. On 24 March Canada joined this military coalition. The SOHR reported on 23 April that at least 1,920 ISIL fighters and 66 civilians had been killed during the coalition's military operations.

International actors continue to vie for influence in shaping the outcome of the conflict. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are providing arms to some rebel groups. Meanwhile, Russia and Iran continue to provide crucial economic, military and political support to the Syrian government. Hezbollah has directly engaged in fighting against Syrian rebels on both sides of the Syria-Lebanon border

and is now essential to the government's military survival. Lebanon, which hosts nearly 1.2 million Syrian refugees, has also seen sporadic clashes between supporters and opponents of the Syrian government.

On 5 May the UN Special Envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, began bilateral meetings in Geneva with the Syrian government, several opposition groups and regional powers to assess whether there is potential for a new round of diplomatic negotiations. The "Geneva II" peace conference, aimed at ending the conflict in Syria, finished in February 2014 without any tangible progress. On 30 June, three years after the adoption of the original Geneva Communiqué, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the international community "cannot afford to waste any further time in ending the cycle of violence."

ANALYSIS

With all sides in Syria committed to an outright military victory, the lives of countless civilians are imperiled by the ongoing civil war. Nearly half of Syria's population has either been displaced or fled to neighboring countries.

The government continues to utilize its military resources to retain power at all costs and perpetrate crimes against humanity and war crimes. Under increasing military strain, the government has suffered serious territorial losses, and increasingly relies upon Iran and Hezbollah to fight the civil war. The Syrian government continues to use improvised chemical weapons and wage war on armed rebels and populations presumed to be supporting them, regardless of the consequences to civilians trapped or displaced by the fighting.

The fracturing and radicalization of the opposition has compounded the difficulty of achieving a negotiated political settlement. ISIL and several other armed extremist groups pose a direct threat to civilians, especially those from minority religious communities.

External political influence upon the Syrian government via the UN and regional actors remains weak. Despite adopting several resolutions concerning humanitarian access and chemical weapons, the UNSC has been unable to enforce their compliance, while long-standing divisions within the UNSC over Syria have allowed the situation to deteriorate to the point where few options for a peaceful political solution exist.

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 regime for its widespread violations of human rights. [For responses prior to May 2015, see [GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria](#).]

Between October 2011 and July 2012 Russia and China vetoed three UNSC resolutions aimed at holding the Syrian government and other perpetrators accountable for mass atrocity crimes. On 22 May 2014 Russia and China vetoed a fourth resolution that would have referred the situation in Syria to the ICC for investigation. However, since September 2013 the UNSC has also passed Resolutions 2118 and 2209, regarding the destruction of chemical weapons, and Resolutions 2139 and 2165, demanding increased humanitarian access. None of these resolutions have been fully implemented. Resolutions 2139 and 2165 reaffirmed the need for the government to uphold its primary responsibility to protect the Syrian population.

The UN Human Rights Council has adopted 15 resolutions condemning atrocities in Syria. The latest, passed on 29 June, emphasized the need for accountability for those responsible, noting an important potential role for the ICC.

On 30 May Special Envoy de Mistura condemned the attack on al-Bab, calling for an end to the use of barrel bombs and noting that "the overwhelming majority of the civilian victims in the Syrian conflict have been caused by the use of such indiscriminate aerial weapons."

NECESSARY ACTION

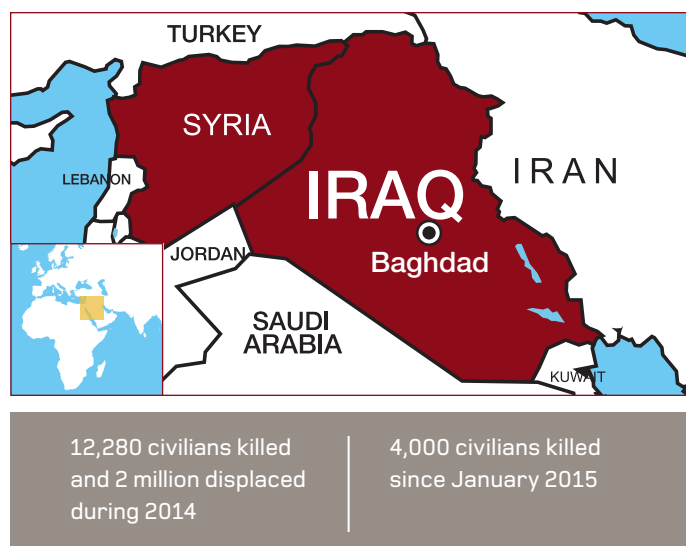
Syrian government forces and armed opposition groups must facilitate immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access to civilian populations trapped or displaced by fighting, in keeping with UNSC Resolutions 2139 and 2165. The international community must intensify efforts towards finding a potential political solution to the conflict and increasing humanitarian assistance to populations affected by the civil war.

The UNSC needs to take proximate steps to end atrocities in Syria, including imposing an arms embargo and referring the situation to the ICC. Those deemed responsible for mass atrocity crimes in Syria should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators, regardless of affiliation, brought to justice.

Russia, Iran and Hezbollah must cease enabling the crimes of the Syrian government. Countries opposed to the rule of President Bashar Al-Assad must withhold support to armed groups who commit war crimes or target minority communities for reprisals. States participating in airstrikes against ISIL must ensure all necessary precautions are taken to avoid civilian casualties and uphold IHL.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Resolution 2209 S/RES/2209](#), 6 March 2015
- » [Statement by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura](#), 30 May 2015
- » [UNSC Press Statement SC/11921](#), 5 June 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Syria](#)



IRAQ

The extremist armed group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is committing mass atrocities in Iraq. As the Iraqi Security Forces, Shia militias and Kurdish fighters confront ISIL, civilians remain at risk of further mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

The security situation in Iraq remains dire as a result of ongoing attacks by ISIL, which operates on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border and has declared a caliphate spanning both countries. Widespread fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and ISIL, as well as several other armed groups, has led to sectarian violence and gross human rights abuses.

ISIL continues to systematically attack ethnic and religious minority communities, including Christians, Shabak, Yazidis and Turkmen, causing the mass displacement of vulnerable civilian populations. ISIL is suspected of perpetrating a series of car bombings targeting mainly Shia neighborhoods of Baghdad that killed at least 35 people on 12 July. According to a 23 February report by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ISIL's violations, which include targeted killings, forced conversions, slavery and sexual abuse, "may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly genocide."

UNAMI reported that 2014 was the deadliest year in Iraq since 2008, with at least 12,280 civilians killed. Nearly 4,000 civilians have been killed during the first six months of 2015. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, reported on 9 June that since January 2014 more than 3 million Iraqis have been displaced and over 8 million people are in need of assistance.

Following several months of fighting, on 15 May ISIL declared that it had captured the strategic city of Ramadi, Anbar Province. By 18 May almost 25,000 people had fled Ramadi, according to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. Prime

Minister Haider al-Abadi deployed Shia militias to assist the ISF in a counter-offensive, heightening concern for the civilian population. After ISIL seized Ramadi the United States announced it would send an additional 500 troops to join the approximately 3,000 trainers, advisers and other personnel supporting Iraqi forces against ISIL.

Following an Iraqi government request, prompted by ISIL seizing the northern town of Sinjar, on 8 August 2014 the United States began airstrikes against ISIL forces "to prevent a potential act of genocide" against the minority Yazidi community, according to President Barack Obama. ISIL killed at least 500 Yazidis and abducted 1,500 women and girls. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Morocco, Netherlands and United Kingdom have all joined military operations against ISIL. On 19 December Kurdish forces, backed by allied airstrikes, broke ISIL's siege of the Sinjar region.

On 2 April the Iraqi government retook Tikrit from ISIL after a month-long battle during which the ISF and Shia militias were supported by coalition airstrikes. When ISIL seized Tikrit during June 2014 its forces executed at least 1,700 captured Shia members of the army. On 7 April the Iraqi government began exhuming 12 suspected mass graves presumed to contain the bodies of these murdered captives.

Responding to sectarian terrorist attacks and the rise of ISIL, Shia militias have carried out violent reprisals against Sunni civilians. On 28 January the government said it would investigate an attack by Shia militias and some ISF members that killed at least 70 unarmed Sunni civilians in Barwanah, Diyala province. On 10 June Amnesty International reported that a Yazidi militia killed 21 Sunni civilians and abducted another 40 in Jiri and Sibaya villages, Sinjar.

The ISF has also been accused of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, torture and other violations of IHL and human rights law. After expelling ISIL from Tikrit on 2 April, it was reported that the ISF and allied Shia militias summarily executed captured ISIL fighters and looted Sunni-owned property.

ANALYSIS

ISIL poses an existential threat to ethnic and religious minorities, who face the risk of further mass atrocities. ISIL also poses a direct threat to members of the majority Shia community.

Despite a November 2010 power-sharing agreement between political parties representing Shias, Sunnis and Kurds, many Sunnis felt marginalized under former President Nouri al-Maliki. The government's violent response to a Sunni protest movement that started in December 2012 further aggravated these divisions. ISIL exploited widespread disaffection in the minority Sunni community to build alliances with Sunni tribes and seize large swathes of territory and resources. Cultural identities and transnational loyalties continue to be manipulated by various political forces in Iraq.

There are grave fears for the fate of civilians who continue to be trapped by fighting between ISIL and the ISF and allied Shia militias. Human rights violations are routinely perpetrated by the ISF, who often commit abuses in the name of counter-terrorism. Some Shia militias, mobilized by the government to fight ISIL, also pose a direct threat to Sunni civilians. Meanwhile ISIL has consistently failed to protect civilians in areas under its control and is committed to the eradication of all religious communities and minority cultures that do not conform to its strict interpretation of Islam.

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

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 15 August 2014 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2170, condemning "gross, systematic and widespread abuses" by ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliated groups operating in Iraq and Syria.

In addition to United States support to the Iraqi government, nine European Union (EU) member states, as well as Albania and Canada, are currently providing assistance to Kurdish fighters battling ISIL.

On 25 March 2015 the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Flavia Pansieri, on a report by OHCHR documenting abuses committed by ISIL in Iraq.

NECESSARY ACTION

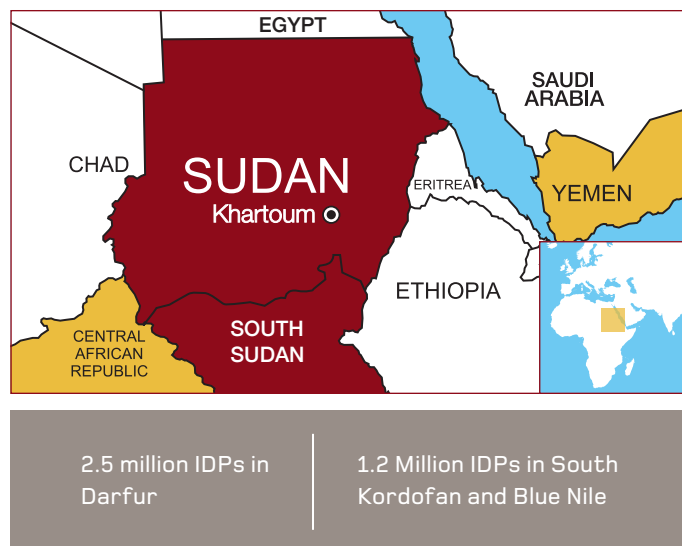
The international community should continue to provide support to the Iraqi government to combat the threat ISIL poses to vulnerable populations, especially religious and ethnic minorities. While confronting ISIL and other armed groups, the government must protect civilians and address the underlying sources of conflict between Sunnis, Shias and Kurds in Iraq. The government must actively prevent reprisals against Sunni civilians by the ISF and Shia militias. Displaced populations also require urgent humanitarian assistance.

Iraq's international supporters, especially the United States, must ensure that the ISF complies with its obligations under international human rights law. The Kurdistan Regional Government is also in need of international support to defend vulnerable populations from ISIL attacks.

Sunni, Shia and Kurdish political leaders should refrain from incendiary speech and work towards national reconciliation, including equal treatment and representation for all communities.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNAMI Website](#)
- » [Casualty Figures](#), UNAMI, 1 July 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Iraq](#)



SUDAN

Populations in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur continue to face mass atrocity crimes perpetrated by the Sudanese Armed Forces and affiliated armed groups.

BACKGROUND

More than three years since the UNSC adopted Resolution 2046, calling for a negotiated settlement to the conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and armed rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) continue to engage in hostilities and directly threaten vulnerable civilians. The government continues to prohibit access to South Kordofan and Blue Nile and is systematically preventing aid from reaching populations at risk of starvation. Since June 2011 the conflict has led to the internal displacement of over 1.2 million people, while more than 246,500 have fled to South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The SAF has committed war crimes, including extrajudicial killing, forced displacement and widespread sexual violence, against civilians in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and has engaged in "scorched earth" tactics, systematically targeting food sources and deliberately destroying civilian structures. The SPLM-N has also perpetrated war crimes, including indiscriminate attacks on civilian populated areas, alleged recruitment of children and attacks on UN personnel.

Ahead of the onset of the rainy season in June, the SAF intensified its offensive against the SPLM-N in both South Kordofan and Blue Nile. This included the reported shelling and aerial bombardment of civilian areas at least 56 times during May. The SAF has reportedly dropped illegal cluster munitions on civilian areas in Kauda, South Kordofan. During May there was also an upsurge in ground attacks causing widespread damage to civilian infrastructure as well as the displacement of approximately 7,000 people. During early May civilians were targeted in attacks on Kululu, Damam and Hadara.

Sudan has consistently failed to honor African Union (AU)-brokered agreements and UNSC resolutions calling for a cessation of hostilities. This includes the failure to end aerial bombardments, disarm pro-government militias and allow humanitarian access to conflict areas. The most recent talks between the government and the SPLM-N were held between 12 and 17 November under the auspices of the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan. Despite both parties endorsing an AUHIP-proposed draft framework agreement to resolve the conflict, fighting resumed shortly after.

The situation in Darfur also remains dire as civilians face ongoing inter-communal violence as well as attacks by the SAF and Rapid Support Forces, a pro-government militia with aerial and ground support from the SAF. Between 26 February and 15 May, UNAMID recorded 11 episodes of inter-communal violence, mainly between ethnic Rezeigat and Habaniya, resulting in 278 people killed. Meanwhile fighting between the SAF and rebel groups contributed to the displacement of more than 450,000 people during 2014 and an additional 78,000 so far this year. A total of 2.5 million people are now displaced in Darfur.

The AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur (UNAMID) has criticized the government for restricting its ability to uphold its civilian protection mandate. The UN Secretary-General has condemned the increase in attacks on UNAMID personnel and called upon the government to respect the status-of-forces agreement. UNAMID came under attack 60 times between 26 February and 15 May.

ANALYSIS

The government has a history of perpetrating atrocities in Darfur and during its civil war with the south. It has consistently defied external pressure to halt mass atrocity crimes. Such crimes are currently being committed in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where patterns of violence targeting civilians for their perceived support of the SPLM-N have been witnessed for four years.

Both the government and SPLM-N have continued attacks against populated areas despite negotiations. The UNSC and AU have failed to push the government and SPLM-N to honor past agreements on the cessation of hostilities and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Indiscriminate bombings of rebel-held areas by the SAF demonstrate an unwillingness to distinguish between combatants and civilians, actions that violate IHL and may amount to crimes against humanity. The SAF has systematically targeted hospitals and clinics, depriving the local population of life saving care. The government also continues to block UN agencies from access to South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Despite the presence of UNAMID, civilians have not been afforded adequate protection in Darfur. Ongoing inter-communal violence and SAF operations contribute to the risk of further mass atrocity crimes.

Not only is the government of Sudan manifestly failing to uphold its Responsibility to Protect, it is directly responsible for perpetrating mass atrocity crimes in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UNSC has adopted 60 resolutions on Sudan since 2004, most of which have not been fully implemented. Acting on behalf of the AUHIP, former South African President Thabo Mbeki has facilitated regular talks between the government of Sudan and the SPLM-N since 2011. [See also, [GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States.](#)]

Members of the current government, including President Omar al-Bashir, the Defence Minister, Abdel Raheem Muhammad Hussein, and the current governor of North Kordofan, Ahmad Haroun, were indicted by the ICC in 2007 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur. The ICC also issued a warrant for President Bashir in 2010 for perpetrating genocide in Darfur. The ICC issued an arrest warrant during September 2014 against rebel leader Abdallah Banda for war crimes resulting from his alleged role in an attack on AU peacekeepers during September 2007 in northern Darfur.

On 12 December the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC suspended the Court's Darfur investigation due to the failure of the UNSC to meaningfully assist in the arrest of indicted suspects. In her briefing to the UNSC on 29 June, the Chief Prosecutor noted that "innocent civilians continue to bear the brunt of insecurity and instability, in particular as a result of what appears to be an ongoing government campaign to target them." She called upon the UNSC to ensure that Sudan cooperates with the ICC.

On 29 June the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2228, which extended UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2016. The resolution emphasized that those responsible for violations of IHL and abuses of human rights "must be held accountable and that the Government of Sudan bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including protection from crimes against humanity and war crimes."

NECESSARY ACTION

After more than 10 years and 60 resolutions it is time for the UNSC to review its entire approach to endemic conflict and ongoing atrocities in Sudan. The UNSC should expand the arms embargo on Darfur to include South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The UNSC and AU must ensure the government and SPLM-N facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, as stipulated in the 2011 Framework Agreement and 2012 cooperation agreements.

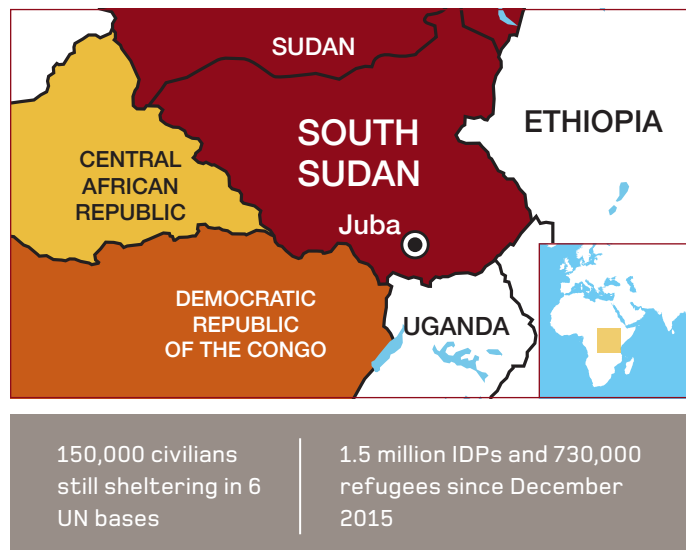
The UNSC should mandate the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry for South Kordofan and Blue Nile and actively support efforts to bring ICC indictees to justice.

States with major investments in Sudan, including China, Qatar, Iran and Saudi Arabia, should press the government to fulfill its commitments.

The government and SPLM-N, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2046, must cease armed hostilities and address the underlying causes of the conflict. The government must stop obstructing UNAMID and allow them to uphold their mandate, including investigating gross human rights violations. Mediation efforts should be facilitated between the government and armed groups operating in Darfur.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNISFA Website](#)
- » [UNAMID Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution S/RES/2228](#), 29 June 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Sudan](#)



SOUTH SUDAN

Renewed fighting in South Sudan's civil war has resulted in mass atrocity crimes against civilian populations.

BACKGROUND

Despite the signing of no less than eight peace agreements since January 2014, fighting in South Sudan between rebel forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) continues. The breakdown of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-sponsored peace talks on 6 March has emboldened both parties as they continue to pursue a military solution to the conflict. On 29 June UNMISS' Human Rights Division reported widespread extrajudicial killings, torture, child abductions and sexual violence associated with recent fighting. Over 150,000 people are currently taking refuge in six UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases across the country, the highest number since the start of the conflict. According to UNHCR the conflict has resulted in 1.5 million IDPs and 730,000 refugees in neighboring countries.

In early May the SPLA launched a major offensive against rebel positions in Unity state. The UN and humanitarian organizations have had to withdraw from the area, leaving at least 300,000 people without access to vital assistance. After an estimated 130 children were killed in Unity state over a period of three weeks, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement on 17 June noting that "violence against children in South Sudan has reached a new level of brutality." UNMISS' 29 June report included evidence of children subjected to castration, throat-slitting and being burned alive. UNICEF also estimates that 13,000 children have been forcibly recruited since the start of the conflict.

There has also been a dramatic increase in violence in Upper Nile state, where rebel forces loyal to Major-General Johnson Olonyi attacked SPLA positions in and around Malakal and seized control of the town on 15 May. The SPLA retook the town on 6 July. Fighting has also been reported in Western Equatoria state, where thousands of people have been displaced since 23 May.

The civil war is the result of a conflict that started on 15 December 2013 between soldiers from rival SPLA factions. Since then, tens of thousands of civilians have been killed. The civil war began after President Salva Kiir accused Riek Machar, the former Vice President who was removed from office during July 2013, of an attempted coup. The worst fighting continues to be between ethnic Dinka and Nuer soldiers loyal to President Kiir and Machar, respectively. At least two-dozen armed militias loosely aligned with either side are also operating in South Sudan, including the powerful Nuer White Army.

Following a February visit to South Sudan, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonovic, noted that atrocities continued to be perpetrated by both parties. UNMISS has similarly accused pro-government forces of attacks on civilians and found that rebels have committed abuses that "may amount to war crimes."

UNMISS has reported 39 violations of the status-of-forces agreement since 18 February, including harassment, assault and detention of UN personnel, mostly by government security forces. SPLA officers have threatened to fire on UNMISS bases, which they claimed were harboring rebel fighters. An artillery shell landed inside the UNMISS base in Bentiu on 17 March, halting humanitarian operations. On 1 July rebel forces attacked an UNMISS base in Malakal, resulting in one death.

The civil war has been characterized by repeated failed peace agreements. Both sides violated the 23 January 2014 Cessation of Hostilities (COH) agreement almost immediately after it was signed. On 21 January 2015 President Kiir and Machar signed a seventh peace agreement in Arusha, Tanzania. Despite recommitment to the COH, fighting continued in several parts of the country. Another ceasefire agreement was signed on 2 February under the auspices of IGAD. Amid ongoing fighting, dialogue resumed on 23 February with the goal of reaching a final power-sharing agreement by 5 March, but talks were then extended.

ANALYSIS

Since December 2013 both sides have perpetrated human rights violations that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including ethnic targeting of civilians, extrajudicial killings, widespread sexual violence and child recruitment, as well as large-scale destruction of civilian property. Neither the government nor opposition have consistently held perpetrators within their own ranks accountable for atrocities committed during the civil war.

The failure to uphold multiple ceasefire agreements reveals a lack of commitment to a political solution. In the absence of a meaningful peace process, both sides are likely to use the June–November rainy season to rearm and recruit in preparation for renewed military offensives.

UNMISS' Human Rights Division has expressed concern that recent human rights violations indicate increasing ethnic divisions within the conflict, demonstrated by the proliferation of armed militias aligned with specific communities. These poorly trained and largely unaccountable forces are likely to perpetrate further mass atrocity crimes.

South Sudan requires international assistance to end the civil war and ensure accountability for mass atrocity crimes. With ongoing resource deficits and a hostile operating environment, UNMISS is struggling to uphold its protective mandate.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

In order to support UNMISS' efforts to implement its protection of civilians mandate, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2132 on 24 December 2013, temporarily enlarging UNMISS by an additional 5,500 troops and 440 police.

During March 2014 the AU established a Commission of Inquiry (AU-Col) to investigate human rights violations committed since December 2013 and make recommendations on appropriate accountability and reconciliation measures. The AU-Col has yet to release its report. [For responses prior to April 2015, [see GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation in South Sudan](#).]

On 3 March the UNSC adopted Resolution 2206, establishing a sanctions regime for South Sudan. On 1 July the Sanctions Committee approved the designation of six senior military figures, three from each side, for sanctions.

On 14 May the UNSC issued a Press Statement condemning violence in Unity and Upper Nile states and demanding "an immediate end to all human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law."

On 28 May the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2223, which extended the mandate of UNMISS until 30 November 2015 and emphasized that the "Government of South Sudan bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including from potential crimes against humanity and war crimes."

The UN Secretary-General issued a statement on 1 June, condemning the government's decision to expel the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan.

The UNSC issued a Press Release on 9 July, marking four years since South Sudan's independence, but expressing "profound disappointment" that President Kiir and Machar put "personal ambitions" ahead of the good of their people and noting that their failure "has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians."

Speaking to the media on 13 July, the UN Secretary-General urged Uganda and Sudan to "use their influence on the parties to help end the conflict."

NECESSARY ACTION

After 18 months of war, IGAD and the UNSC must encourage parties to the conflict to end the cycle of meaningless peace agreements accompanied by ongoing armed hostilities. Both the government and rebels must refrain from attacks on civilians, abide by previous commitments made under the COH and meaningfully engage to resolve the crisis.

The UNSC and IGAD should immediately impose an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions on all political and military leaders, regardless of rank or affiliation, deemed responsible for the continuation of armed hostilities and the perpetration of mass atrocity crimes.

UNMISS must robustly implement its civilian protection mandate. The international community should continue to enhance UNMISS' capabilities through the provision of additional troops and aviation assets. The government must ensure that UNMISS has the ability to move freely to all parts of the country without hindrance or threats to its personnel.

UNMISS' Human Rights Division and the AU-Col must continue their investigations into mass atrocities and expeditiously publish their findings. The government must hold all perpetrators of atrocities accountable, regardless of affiliation or position. A referral to the ICC or the establishment of a hybrid court should be considered if the government is unable to end impunity. The government of South Sudan should initiate a comprehensive strategy aimed at ethnic and political reconciliation.

MORE INFORMATION:

- » [UNMISS Website](#)
- » [UN Secretary-General's Report on South Sudan S/2015/296](#), 29 April 2015
- » [UNSC Resolution 2223 S/RES/2223](#), 28 May 2015
- » ["Flash Human Rights Report on the Escalation of Fighting in Greater Upper Nile"](#), UNMISS, 29 June 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: South Sudan](#)

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.



1.4 million IDPs

4,000+ killed so far during 2015

775,000 children forced to flee

NIGERIA

The extremist Islamist group Boko Haram continues to pose an imminent threat to populations in northeast Nigeria. Excessive use of force by the security forces also contributes to the threat of further atrocities.

BACKGROUND

Despite recent military defeats, attacks by Boko Haram against civilians in Nigeria and neighboring countries continue. Many areas previously held by the group across northeast Nigeria remain unsafe for the return of refugees and IDPs.

The recent military offensive against Boko Haram by a coalition of troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger followed significant territorial seizures by Boko Haram beginning in July 2014. By January 2015 Boko Haram had expanded its control to include most of Borno state as well as significant territories in Adamawa and Yobe states and had begun perpetrating cross-border attacks. According to the Nigerian military, most of this territory has now been recaptured.

Muhammadu Buhari, who was inaugurated as Nigeria's president on 29 May, pledged to eradicate Boko Haram and traveled to Niger and Chad on 3 and 4 June to discuss a regional strategy to defeat the group. Multiple attacks have been carried out since then, resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths. There were at least 27 suicide bombings during the first five months of 2015, mostly carried out by women and children, compared with 26 attacks during 2014. On 1 July suspected Boko Haram militants killed up to 150 people in attacks on four mosques in Kukawa and two attacks on villages near Monguno, Borno state. On 5 June six people were killed in a church bombing in Potiskum,

Yobe state, and an additional 44 were killed in a mosque bombing in Jos, Plateau state.

Boko Haram has increased its attacks in neighboring countries, killing civilians in Chad, Cameroon and Niger. Boko Haram killed at least 27 people in two attacks in N'Djamena, Chad, on 15 June. They claimed responsibility for another attack in N'Djamena on 11 July, which killed at least 15 people. On 17 June the group was suspected of killing an estimated 38 people in the Diffa region of Niger. Five civilians were killed in Dagaya village, Niger, on 9 July. At least 12 civilians were killed in twin suicide bombings in Fotokol, Cameroon, on 12 July.

Over 10,000 people were reportedly killed in Boko Haram-related violence during 2014. According to OCHA, there are now 1.4 million IDPs in Nigeria, with the majority in the northeast. Niger, Cameroon and Chad host an estimated 200,000 Nigerian refugees and thousands of people in their own countries have also been displaced by Boko Haram. OCHA has also reported an estimated 775,000 children have been displaced by the conflict. On 12 June the World Food Programme stated that nearly half a million people "face an acute food security and livelihood crisis" due to the situation in northeastern Nigeria.

Amnesty International has reported that at least 2,000 women and girls have been kidnapped by Boko Haram since the beginning of 2014. According to the Nigerian military, it rescued hundreds of women and girls during April and May, many of whom had been raped while in captivity. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, called upon the Nigerian government as well as local and international organizations to provide necessary support to those rescued from what she called a "war on women's physical, sexual and reproductive autonomy and rights."

Nigerian security forces have often failed to provide sufficient protection from Boko Haram and there have been extensive reports of soldiers deserting during attacks. Security forces have also been accused of committing extrajudicial killings of suspected Boko Haram members. Civilian vigilante groups formed in response to Boko Haram have also been implicated in human rights abuses. On 3 June Amnesty International reported that more than 7,000 men and boys died in military detention and 1,200 had been extrajudicially executed by the Nigerian military since 2011. On 19 June the Nigerian military announced that it will investigate these allegations.

ANALYSIS

Although Boko Haram has been significantly weakened by combined military operations, it remains a regional security threat, imperiling the lives of civilians in Nigeria, Cameroon,

Chad and Niger. While the recent offensives have reportedly driven Boko Haram out of previously occupied towns and villages, continued attacks demonstrate the group's resilience and enduring threat.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram attacks exacerbate pre-existing social, ethnic and religious tensions. Displacement and insecurity have increased unemployment and poverty within Africa's largest economy. Destroyed civilian infrastructure across the northeast also makes it difficult for the return of refugees and IDPs, aggravating the humanitarian crisis.

The government's Soft Approach to Countering Violent Extremism program and reforms addressing poor governance and corruption are crucial to confronting the root causes of conflict. President Buhari has promised to defeat Boko Haram and tackle endemic corruption, but the new government's capacity to engage in structural reform of the security forces and government institutions remains unclear.

Nigerian authorities have previously failed to adequately investigate allegations of the security forces' torture and extrajudicial killing of suspected Boko Haram members. The government of Nigeria is struggling to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and needs ongoing support from the international community.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Nigeria is currently an elected member of the UNSC. On 19 January the UNSC issued a Presidential Statement condemning the escalation in Boko Haram attacks, expressing concern over the humanitarian crisis and reiterating "the primary responsibility of Member States to protect civilian populations on their territories." The UNSC has also issued four Press Statements since February regarding Boko Haram atrocities.

On 29 January the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) authorized deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprised of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, for an initial period of 12 months. The mandate of the force includes "the protection of civilians under immediate threat" of attack from Boko Haram. During a high-level meeting in Cameroon convened between 5 and 7 February, the five governments produced a Concept of Operations for the MNJTF and announced contributions of 8,700 military, police and civilian personnel, which was later increased to 10,000. The MNJTF headquarters in N'Djamena were inaugurated on 25 May. On 11 June the five governments agreed to operationalize the MNJTF by 30 July. On 25 June the AU PSC reiterated its appeal to the international community to provide assistance for the operationalization of the MNJTF.

On 16 February members of Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) pledged to create an \$87 million emergency fund to fight Boko Haram.

On 1 April the Human Rights Council adopted a consensus resolution requesting OHCHR "document human rights

violations and atrocities committed by Boko Haram, with a view towards accountability."

On 1 July the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged Nigeria to ease abortion restrictions for women and girls sexually abused by Boko Haram.

NECESSARY ACTION

Regional and international cooperation is crucial to defeating Boko Haram and holding perpetrators of mass atrocities accountable. Governments involved in military operations against Boko Haram need to ensure they mitigate the risk to civilians during anti-Boko Haram operations and strictly adhere to IHL and international human rights law. Families of Boko Haram members, as well as captives living in Boko Haram camps and child soldiers, need to be adequately protected and carefully reintegrated into Nigerian society.

The UN, AU, Economic Community of West African States, ECCAS and states with significant bilateral ties to Nigeria, should assist the government in meeting humanitarian needs of affected communities and provide technical and military expertise. Captured Boko Haram leaders should be held accountable for crimes against humanity committed in areas under the group's command and control.

With international support, the government needs to urgently undertake security sector reform to ensure that the army and police are trained to protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities while respecting human rights. The government should conduct thorough investigations into all abuses, including alleged extrajudicial killings committed by the military.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [Press Statement of the 518th meeting of the AU PSC on the issue of the Boko Haram terrorist group](#), 5 July 2015
- » ["Stars on their Shoulders. Blood on their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military,"](#) Amnesty International, 3 June 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Nigeria](#)



2.9 million IDPs

350+ civilians killed by the ADF since October 2014

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain at imminent risk of mass atrocity crimes perpetrated by armed groups.

BACKGROUND

Pervasive insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has allowed armed groups to perpetrate mass atrocity crimes against civilians. Armed groups – such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and various Mayi-Mayi militias – have been operating in the DRC for more than 20 years and continue to attack vulnerable populations. Since defeating the March 23 (M23) militia in November 2013, the government's armed forces (FARDC) have conducted offensives against other armed groups with assistance from the UN mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and its force intervention brigade.

In advance of offensive operations, the government and MONUSCO encouraged militias to participate in Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement (DDRRR) programs. Following an announcement by the FDLR that the group would voluntarily disband, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) established a final 2 January 2015 deadline. Despite this, only an estimated 300 combatants disarmed and surrendered.

On 10 February MONUSCO suspended its support for impending anti-FDLR operations following the government's appointment of two generals accused of serious human rights violations to lead the operation. Although the FARDC has reportedly liberated 35 localities previously occupied by the group, the FDLR continues to threaten civilians. Mayi-Mayi militias have also reportedly engaged in clashes with the FDLR as the group flees from the FARDC.

Patterns of violence committed by armed groups, including mass killings and abductions, continue throughout all regions of eastern DRC. Populations in Maniema, Katanga and North Kivu have been particularly affected by recent fighting between various Mayi-Mayi groups and the FARDC. The FARDC and MONUSCO also engaged in military operations directed at the Ituri Patriotic Resistance Force (FRPI) following attacks on villages and reported mass rapes in Ituri during May and failed peace talks with the group in early June.

Despite the FARDC and MONUSCO making significant progress against the ADF in early 2014, the group attacked several villages in North Kivu between October and December, massacring civilians, many of whom were killed with machetes. On 13 May the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC released a report on the October–December attacks, noting that the ADF was responsible for more than 250 civilian deaths during that period and had perpetrated possible crimes against humanity. The ADF has continued its assaults on villages, killing an additional 100 people since January and reportedly attacking MONUSCO helicopters and convoys.

ANALYSIS

While military measures are taken against the FDLR, ADF, FRPI and other armed groups, civilians remain at risk of reprisal violence. A country that is already home to 2.9 million IDPs may endure further displacement. During earlier offensives against rebel groups the FARDC and MONUSCO have struggled to adequately protect civilians. The FARDC has also been implicated in previous attacks on civilians, including widespread sexual violence.

The weakness of government structures undermines attempts to prevent atrocities. This is particularly evident in the eastern DRC, where the government has previously lost control of areas to various rebel groups. While the government has undertaken important reforms, impunity for crimes committed against civilians remains rampant. The FARDC has often failed to hold its members accountable for atrocities and continues to put populations at risk by allowing individuals accused of grave human rights abuses to lead strategic operations.

Competition for control of minerals, as well as underlying conflict between communities that consider themselves indigenous and those with alleged Rwandan ancestry, contribute to the pervasiveness of violence. The failure to adequately address the root causes of conflict has enabled the proliferation of armed groups, which will continue to emerge and threaten populations even after the eradication of the ADF and FDLR if these issues are not resolved.

The government of the DRC has struggled to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and its own forces have been complicit in some previous mass atrocity crimes. The DRC needs ongoing international support to prevent recurring atrocities.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The international community has responded to violence in the eastern DRC by taking measures to confront various armed groups. [For responses prior to January 2015, [see GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation in the DRC.](#)]

On 29 January the UNSC extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until August 2016, stressing the importance of accountability for mass atrocities. The UNSC subjects 10 entities and 31 individuals in the DRC to sanctions.

On 26 March the UNSC extended MONUSCO's mandate for an additional year, emphasizing that the government of the DRC "bears the primary responsibility to protect civilians within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including protection from crimes against humanity and war crimes."

NECESSARY ACTION

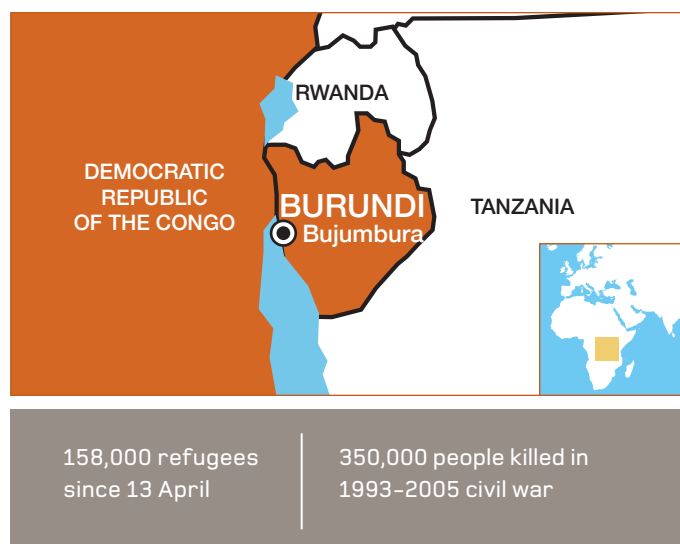
The DRC government and MONUSCO must ensure that the protection of civilians remains their primary priority as they address the threat posed by armed groups. The FARDC and MONUSCO must increase their capacity to respond to early warning of attacks by these groups. MONUSCO should also support the government in facilitating local peacebuilding initiatives and encourage civil society to help facilitate DDRRR.

The FARDC must not permit individuals who have previously committed atrocities to join its forces and should train all recruits in the protection of civilians, respect for human rights and IHL. The government should adopt legislation establishing specialized mixed chambers in the national judicial system and remove all FARDC members accused of serious human rights violations from leadership positions.

Together with the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the AU, ICGLR and SADC should ensure that all signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework continue to fulfill their commitments. Perpetrators of mass atrocities, including leaders of M23, ADF and FDLR, must be held accountable.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [MONUSCO Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution 2211 S/RES/2211](#), 26 March 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: DRC](#)



BURUNDI

Civilians in Burundi face an imminent risk of mass atrocity crimes as a constitutional crisis has led to political violence and threatens to further destabilize the country.

BACKGROUND

Civil unrest erupted in Burundi following the 26 April announcement by the ruling Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD) that President Pierre Nkurunziza would seek a third term in the upcoming elections.

At least 58 people have been killed in protests and related violence since 26 April. On 13 May Major General Godefroid Niyombare and elements of the armed forces launched an unsuccessful coup against the government. Since the failed coup human rights defenders and journalists have been targeted for arrest and independent media outlets have been shut down. On 24 May opposition politician Zedi Feruzi was assassinated in Bujumbura.

According to UNHCR over 158,000 Burundians, including a number of high-ranking government officials, have fled the country since 13 April. Refugees have reported harassment, enforced disappearances and murder, including by the Imbonerakure, the CNDD-FDD's paramilitary youth movement. Reports of hate speech and incitement to violence by the government and some opposition protesters are increasing.

Elections, initially scheduled to be held for legislative and commune positions on 6 June and for the Presidency on 26 June, were delayed until 29 June and 21 July. On 26 June opposition parties announced a general boycott of the elections. Despite international mediation under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC), AU and UN that sought an additional delay, legislative elections were held on 29 June. At least seven civilians were killed on 1 July following police raids in Bujumbura. On 3 July the UN Electoral Mission in Burundi concluded that the environment was not conducive to free, credible and inclusive

elections. On 7 July the electoral commission announced that the CNDD-FDD had won the election with 60.2 percent of the vote.

Since 10 July there have been reports of armed clashes in northern Burundi, near the Rwanda border, between unidentified armed men and Burundi's armed forces. The Burundi military reportedly killed 31 "suspected rebels" in resulting military operations.

President Nkurunziza's candidacy is regarded by the political opposition and many civil society groups as being in violation of the constitution and the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. The Arusha Peace Agreement brought an end to a civil war that was mainly fought on an ethnic basis, claimed the lives of over 350,000 people and led to the displacement of more than 1 million civilians between 1993 and 2005.

ANALYSIS

Despite a sustained period of stability since the end of the civil war in 2005, recurring political and ethnic conflict have previously caused mass atrocities in the country. While the current conflict is primarily political in nature, there is a risk of it reigniting pre-existing cleavages.

In particular, there is a serious concern that mass atrocity crimes may be committed during and after the upcoming Presidential election. Previous unconstitutional changes in government in Burundi have been triggering events for widespread violence. Tensions between the Army, traditionally dominated by the ethnic Tutsi minority, and ethnic Hutu political organizations have also been a perennial source of conflict in the past.

The resumption of widespread conflict in Burundi could destabilize the entire Great Lakes Region. In particular, neighboring Rwanda has already expressed its extreme concern and willingness to act in response to possible targeted violence against civilians inside Burundi.

The Burundian government must uphold its primary Responsibility to Protect and consolidate peacebuilding gains made since the Arusha Peace Agreement more than a decade ago.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The UN Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi, responsible for monitoring the upcoming elections, was established by the UNSC on 1 January 2015.

Following a two-day visit to the country, on 31 May the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide recalled the Burundian government's primary Responsibility to Protect populations from atrocity crimes.

On 14 June the AU PSC called for the deployment of human rights observers and military experts to verify the disarmament of militias.

On 21 June the UN appointed Abdoulaye Bathily, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa, to facilitate dialogue. On 6 July the Burundi government called for Bathily to resign. The previous UN mediator, Said Djinnit, Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, resigned on 11 June.

The EAC has convened three emergency summits since 31 May. At the third summit on 6 July, the EAC appointed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to facilitate dialogue. The EAC also called for a delay in Presidential elections until 30 July and expressed its intent to send an electoral observer mission.

The UNSC has held six briefings on Burundi since 1 May.

NECESSARY ACTION

The Presidential elections should immediately be postponed until the political environment is conducive for free, credible and inclusive polls.

Immediate steps must be taken by the government to de-escalate tensions and avoid any further deterioration or militarization of the current conflict.

All political organizations must refrain from using inflammatory language or inciting violence. All paramilitary groups and militias, including the Imbonerakure, should be immediately demobilized and disbanded. The AU should urgently deploy human rights observers and military experts to verify disarmament.

The AU PSC and UNSC should consider imposing sanctions on any individuals deemed responsible for inciting violence or breaching the Arusha Peace Agreement.

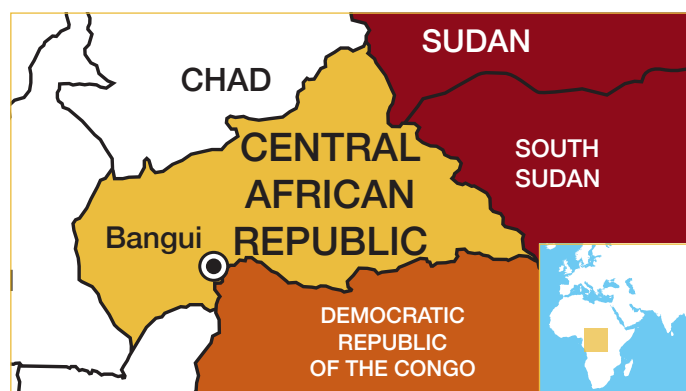
The EAC, AU and UN should coordinate mediation efforts between the Burundian government and the political opposition in order to resolve the current crisis and consolidate the last decade of peacebuilding.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [MENUB Website](#)
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Burundi](#)

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.



3,000+ killed
since December
2013

36,000 besieged
Muslims

458,000
refugees

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Civilians in the Central African Republic remain at risk of mass atrocity crimes committed by "anti-balaka" militias, ex-Séléka rebels and other armed groups.

BACKGROUND

Sporadic violence against civilians continues throughout the Central African Republic (CAR) despite the deployment of French forces, a UN peacekeeping operation (MINUSCA) and an EU military assistance mission (EUMAM-RCA).

The Muslim population of CAR has been systematically targeted by predominantly Christian and animist "anti-balaka" militias. Formed largely in response to abuses by the Séléka rebel alliance, the predominantly Muslim armed group who overthrew former President François Bozizé on 24 March 2013, anti-balaka militias have conducted widespread attacks against Muslim civilians for nearly two years.

According to the UN there are still approximately 36,000 Muslim civilians trapped in seven besieged communities throughout the country. These enclaves have been systematically encircled, predominantly by the anti-balaka, subjected to attack and cut off from food and medical supplies.

A 19 December 2014 report of the UN Commission of Inquiry into the situation in CAR stated that 99 percent of the Muslim population of Bangui had been forcibly displaced or killed. The report estimated at least 80 percent of CAR's total Muslim population had been driven out of the country. The Commission concluded that crimes committed by the anti-balaka constitute a "policy of ethnic cleansing" against CAR's Muslims.

Despite some improvement of the security situation in Bangui, sporadic violence continues. The situation in the interior of the country is marked by widespread insecurity and ongoing human rights violations despite the Bangui National Forum, held from 4 to 11 May, during which ten armed groups agreed to lay down their weapons. On 15 May at least ten people were killed in attacks near Kaga Bandoro, leading to the displacement of 1,900 people and a further 2,500 residents taking refuge in a church.

There are currently more than 399,000 IDPs in CAR and over 458,000 refugees in neighboring countries. An estimated 2.7 million people remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

The transitional government, led by interim President Catherine Samba-Panza, is struggling to manage the ongoing crisis. The UN Secretary-General has warned that the permanent "de-facto partition" of the country remains a possibility.

ANALYSIS

After March 2013 the state effectively collapsed. More than two years later, national security forces remain unable to prevent attacks by various armed groups without the assistance of international forces. A lack of capacity also continues to hinder MINUSCA's ability to protect civilians throughout CAR. The scaling down of the French force poses additional operational challenges for MINUSCA.

Sporadic fighting between the anti-balaka, armed Muslim self-defense groups and other armed groups, as well as between international peacekeepers and these groups, continues to pose a risk to civilians.

Clashes are ongoing along a line of control that splits CAR between North and South and East and West. The country remains effectively partitioned, with anti-balaka controlling territory in western CAR and ex-Séléka factions establishing control in the east. Violence between nomadic pastoralists and settled agriculturalist communities also continues and some armed groups continue to exploit natural resources to fund their activities.

On 22 April the National Transition Council of CAR adopted a law to establish a Special Criminal Court (SCC), which will be responsible for investigating crimes committed since 2003. Despite this, sporadic attacks on civilians continue to be conducted openly and with little fear of sanction.

Representatives of various armed groups and political parties have already challenged the outcome of the National Forum. The fragmentation of the ex-Séléka and anti-balaka will prove challenging for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

agreements. Preparing to hold elections before the end of 2015 without significant improvements in security, accountability and political dialogue will only increase the risk of further mass atrocity crimes.

CAR's transitional government is unable to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and requires sustained international assistance.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following the deadly surge in violence during late 2013, the international community intensified its response to the crisis in CAR, including passing six UNSC resolutions since October 2013 that emphasized the interim government's responsibility to protect the civilian population. [For response prior to March 2015, see [GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation in CAR](#).]

On 15 March the EU ended the mandate of its peacekeeping force and withdrew from Bangui. A smaller EU-led Military Advisory Mission, or EUMAM-RCA, became operational on 16 March and is assisting with security sector reform.

The UNSC passed Resolution 2212 on 26 March, authorizing an increase of 1,030 personnel for MINUSCA. On 28 April the UNSC passed Resolution 2217, which renewed MINUSCA's mandate for one year and recalled the primary responsibility of the CAR authorities to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

On 26 May ECCAS endorsed an extension of the transitional government, with legislative and presidential elections expected to be held on 18 October.

On 22 June the UN Secretary-General appointed an independent expert panel to review how the UN handled allegations of sexual abuse against children by French and African peacekeepers.

NECESSARY ACTION

French and UN forces must forcibly disarm all armed groups that threaten civilians. MINUSCA must ensure it deploys in adequate numbers to all areas where vulnerable populations lack sufficient protection.

Urgent resources are needed to establish the SCC and ensure accountability for mass atrocity crimes. MINUSCA should prioritize the arrest of individuals responsible for atrocities and other serious human rights violations. MINUSCA should also publicly report on the ongoing situation of human rights protection in CAR.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [MINUSCA Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution 2217 S/RES/2217](#), 28 April 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Central African Republic](#)



139,000 people remain displaced by ethnic violence in Arakan/Rakhine state

BURMA/MYANMAR

Ethnic and religious minorities in Burma/Myanmar, especially stateless Rohingya, continue to face the threat of mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Sporadic inter-communal violence in Burma/Myanmar, combined with discriminatory state policies, continues to put the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group, at risk of mass atrocity crimes. Rohingyas continue to be denied citizenship and other fundamental human rights by the government. On 29 September 2014 at the UN General Assembly, the government announced the "Rakhine Action Plan," which would require Rohingyas to accept ethnic reclassification as "Bengali" in order to obtain citizenship or be forced into detention camps. On 31 March 2015 the government invalidated the identification cards held by many Rohingyas, forcing them to apply for citizenship as "Bengalis." This follows the government denying Rohingyas the ability to self-identify on the national census of March 2014, the first since 1983.

The former UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, has said that previous violence against the Rohingya could amount to crimes against humanity and warned on 30 May 2014 that the government's failure to address the human rights situation in Arakan/Rakhine state "will ultimately mean the extermination of the Rohingyas."

Ongoing persecution has led tens of thousands of Rohingyas to flee to neighboring countries, where they are often subject to further abuse, human trafficking and refoulement. During May the governments of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia denied entry to thousands of Rohingyas, pushing their boats back to sea after Burma/Myanmar refused to take responsibility for them. Meanwhile, throughout May, mass graves containing the bodies of Rohingyas were discovered at human trafficking camps in Thailand and Malaysia.

Inter-communal violence and attacks against the minority Muslim community have recurred since June and October 2012, when clashes broke out in Arakan/Rakhine state, killing nearly 200 people. An estimated 139,000 people, mostly Rohingyas, remain segregated in IDP camps due to this violence. The government continues to block their access to healthcare and other vital humanitarian assistance.

The country's military forces (Tatmadaw), which have previously perpetrated atrocities against several ethnic minority groups, also pose an ongoing threat to civilians.

ANALYSIS

The government's refusal to grant the Rohingya access to citizenship or lift discriminatory state policies, as well as its failure to restrict hate speech, encourages ongoing violations of their fundamental human rights and reinforces the dangerous perception of the Rohingya as ethnic outsiders.

The country's constitution exempts the Tatmadaw from prosecution for any act carried out "in the execution of their respective duties." With a pervasive culture of impunity, the military has not been held accountable for previous mass atrocity crimes. On 25 June the military-dominated parliament voted against a bill that would abolish the military's veto power on constitutional amendments.

The government of Burma/Myanmar is failing to uphold its primary Responsibility to Protect with regard to the Rohingya and other vulnerable minorities.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following decades of military dictatorship, democratic reforms have contributed to rapprochement between Burma/Myanmar and the international community, including the lifting of sanctions by a number of countries. [For responses prior to March 2015, see [GCR2P's Timeline of International Response to the Situation of the Rohingya and Anti-Muslim Violence in Burma/Myanmar](#).]

On 22 April the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Parliamentarians for Human Rights warned of the "growing risk of atrocity crimes in Myanmar" and urged ASEAN leaders to respond to the "escalating crisis situation" for Rohingyas and other vulnerable minorities.

Speaking to his Partnership Group on Myanmar on 24 April, the UN Secretary-General said the government must comprehensively address the issue of status and citizenship for the Rohingya.

On 19 May UNHCR, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Organization for Migration and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration and Development released a joint statement calling upon regional governments to protect and assist Rohingya asylum seekers stranded at sea. The following day Indonesia

and Malaysia agreed to accommodate 7,000 asylum seekers until they can be resettled.

On 29 May Thailand hosted a "Regional Summit on Irregular Migration" to address the recent crisis. Burma/Myanmar refused to attend until it was assured that the term "Rohingya" would not be used during the meeting. On 2 July ASEAN held a ministerial meeting concerning the trafficking of asylum seekers in Southeast Asia, resolving to establish a fund aimed at supporting "humanitarian and relief efforts."

The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on 1 July, condemning the systematic gross violations of human rights and abuses committed against Rohingyas and urging the government of Burma/Myanmar to grant the Rohingya citizenship and address the spread of discrimination and prejudice against Muslims.

NECESSARY ACTION

The government of Burma/Myanmar must uphold its Responsibility to Protect all populations, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. The government should abolish the Rakhine Action Plan and end institutionalized discrimination against the Rohingya, including the denial of citizenship. It must hold accountable all those who commit abuses, including inciting ethnic and religious intolerance and violence.

In Arakan/Rakhine state the government must facilitate the safe, voluntary return of IDPs to their communities. Neighboring countries should offer protection and assistance to Rohingya asylum seekers.

The international community must urge the government to develop a comprehensive reconciliation plan. Remaining sanctions should only be lifted following a demonstrable improvement in the welfare of ethnic and religious minorities.

A central component of the government's reform process must include constitutional reform that addresses the needs of ethnic minorities, as well as the development of an independent judiciary as a means of safeguarding human rights and tackling the culture of impunity regarding mass atrocity crimes.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [Secretary-General's remarks to Partnership Group on Myanmar](#), 24 April 2015
- » [Joint Statement](#), UN Agencies and IOM, 19 May 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Burma/Myanmar](#)



Over 550,000 IDPs and 150,000 refugees displaced by ongoing violence

LIBYA

Civilians in Libya are at risk of war crimes as a result of fighting between various armed groups allied to the country's two rival governments.

BACKGROUND

Populations in Libya are at risk of mass atrocity crimes due to ongoing fighting between armed groups affiliated with either the internationally-recognized government, based in Tobruk, or the former transitional government, the General National Congress (GNC), based in Tripoli. While the conflict has been presented as a battle between secular moderate forces and their extremist Islamist rivals, in reality it is dominated by shifting personal, tribal and regional enmities and alliances.

During May 2014 retired General Khalifa Haftar initiated a military campaign known as "Operation Dignity" against Islamist militias in Benghazi and Tripoli. Fighting among rival armed groups increased in the aftermath of June 2014 elections to the House of Representatives, which would replace the GNC, with several Islamist militias and their political allies refusing to accept the new government. These militias, which recognize only the defunct GNC as the legitimate political authority, launched Operation "Libya Dawn" during July to counter Operation Dignity and secure political and military control of the country. On 2 March 2015 the House of Representatives in Tobruk appointed General Haftar as commander of the Libyan National Army.

The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has reported ongoing abductions of civilians, torture, unlawful killing and executions committed by various armed groups. UNSMIL has emphasized that such acts are war crimes and those responsible are criminally liable, including at the ICC. Rival armed groups also continue to indiscriminately shell civilian areas. According to the Libyan Red Crescent, there are currently more than 550,000 IDPs in Libya, with over 150,000 refugees in neighboring countries. On 30 June UNHCR stated that the number of IDPs

in Libya has more than doubled since the upsurge in fighting in September 2014.

ISIL also threatens civilians in Libya and currently controls the cities of Sirte and Nofilia. Since 9 June armed clashes between ISIL and Islamist groups in Derna have taken place within civilian populated areas. Libya Dawn forces continue to attack ISIL positions in Sirte and Nofilia while ongoing clashes also continue between ISIL and various armed groups in Benghazi.

ANALYSIS

Civilians remain at risk of war crimes due to indiscriminate shelling of population centers and a failure to distinguish between combatants and civilians. The persecution, detention and extrajudicial killing of people on the basis of tribal affiliation and presumed political loyalties continues. While the growing presence of ISIL fighters has added a new dynamic to the conflict, armed groups on all sides continue to violate international human rights law and IHL.

The government's lack of control over the country has allowed arms and foreign fighters to travel freely across borders, further destabilizing Libya and the surrounding region. There is also evidence of competing regional powers providing arms or air support to either Operation Dignity or Libya Dawn.

The growth of ISIL's influence poses a direct threat to vulnerable populations in Libya, including the minority Christian population.

Both rival governments are failing to uphold their Responsibility to Protect.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

On 26 February 2011 the UNSC passed Resolution 1970, calling upon the former Libyan government to cease attacks on civilians and uphold its responsibility to protect. Resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011 called upon UN member states to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and led to an international military intervention. Following the end of Libya's 2011 civil war, international engagement to assist in rebuilding government institutions waned.

UNSMIL was established in September 2011, but has significantly reduced personnel inside Libya due to pervasive insecurity. On 27 March the UNSC extended UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September, stating the mission should undertake human rights monitoring, support key Libyan institutions, reinforce arms control and provide humanitarian assistance.

On 1 July the UNSC released a Press Statement urging the formation of a national unity government. On 11 July UNSMIL facilitated the initialing of a preliminary peace agreement, but officials from the GNC did not attend the signing.

NECESSARY ACTION

All armed groups need to immediately cease targeting civilians and carrying out military operations in population centers. Regional powers need to act in accordance with the arms

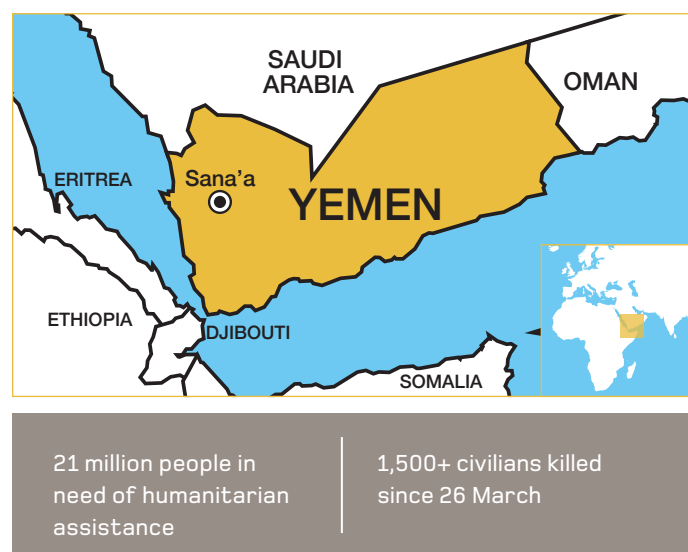
embargo reaffirmed under UNSC Resolution 2213. The UNSC should impose sanctions against those who reject or actively subvert the peace negotiations.

The Libyan government needs to ensure that all those responsible for mass atrocities during the 2011 civil war, as well as those responsible for violations of IHL committed during the current conflict, are held accountable.

Breaking the culture of impunity, demobilizing and disarming armed groups, as well as establishing a national unity government and strengthening the rule of law, remain essential. UNSMIL and the international community should continue supporting all efforts aimed at securing a negotiated solution to the conflict and meeting these objectives.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSMIL Website](#)
- » [UNSC Resolution 2213 S/RES/2213](#), 27 March 2015
- » [UNSC Press Statement SC/11957](#), 1 June 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk: Libya](#)



YEMEN

Civilians in Yemen are at risk of mass atrocity crimes as a regional military coalition fights against Houthi rebels, who have taken control of most of the country.

BACKGROUND

During 2014, amid a UN-facilitated political transition process, the Houthis, a Shia militia from northeast Yemen, and allied militias loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, took control of the governorates of Saada, Hodeida, Dhamar, Omran and Sana'a. Growing violence and renewed political pressure from the Houthis resulted in President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi fleeing to the southern city of Aden on 21 February 2015 and denouncing the Houthi takeover as a coup. With the Houthis advancing towards Aden and President Hadi relocating to

Riyadh, on 26 March Saudi Arabia and a coalition of nine other countries responded to a government request for regional military intervention. Houthis and pro-Saleh forces now control most of Yemen, including the capital, Sana'a.

Ongoing violence between Houthis and various pro-Hadi forces, as well as months of sustained coalition airstrikes, have resulted in more than 3,000 people killed, half of whom are civilians. More than 1 million people have been displaced. An estimated 21 million people, more than 85 percent of Yemen's population, are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance as the ongoing armed conflict has halted the delivery of desperately needed aid.

In addition to military targets, the airstrikes have caused extensive damage to civilian infrastructure. Saudi-led airstrikes have also reportedly included banned cluster munitions. The Houthis, meanwhile, have been accused of indiscriminately shelling civilian areas. During June Houthis fired several Scud-missiles into Saudi Arabia. Houthi and Hadi-allied forces have both targeted civilian infrastructure and international humanitarian workers, reportedly attacking more than 50 health facilities.

The UN, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and United States have attempted to broker talks between the parties since mid-May. Despite a five-day "humanitarian pause" that started on 12 May, airstrikes and armed conflict resumed. UN-sponsored consultations were held in Geneva between 15 and 19 June, though the parties were unable to reach agreement on a ceasefire. A new humanitarian pause commenced on 10 July, but more than 45 people were killed in continuing violence and airstrikes on 12 and 13 July.

Other armed groups are taking advantage of the current instability to perpetrate violence against civilians. Since 17 June ISIL has perpetrated a series of terrorist attacks on Shia mosques and detonated car bombs throughout Sana'a.

ANALYSIS

The collapse of government control and escalation of armed conflict leaves civilians in Yemen at ongoing risk of mass atrocity crimes. Indiscriminate attacks on vulnerable populations and targeting civilian infrastructure violates IHL and international human rights law. As the security situation deteriorates civilians are at serious risk of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The country also risks becoming another proxy battlefield between Saudi Arabia and Iran. While Saudi Arabia remains the main force behind the regional military coalition, Iran has been widely accused of providing military assistance to the Houthis. In addition, the role of Sudan and Egypt in the regional military coalition is disturbing given their past history of committing possible war crimes and/or crimes against humanity in their own countries.

Fighting between Shia Houthi rebels and mainly Sunni forces loyal to the government of President Hadi threatens to further fracture Yemeni society along tribal and sectarian lines. Growing

tensions between Shia and Sunni populations and the collapse of government has also enabled terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL to increase their presence.

Ongoing fighting and attempts to subvert the political transition are in violation of UNSC resolutions and the UN-brokered peace process. The Yemeni government is unable to uphold its Responsibility to Protect and requires international support.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

In 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 Ali Abdullah Saleh and Houthi leaders in November 2014. The UNSC has since extended the mandate of the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen until 25 March 2016. On 15 February the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2201, condemning the takeover of the capital and demanding the Houthis withdraw.

On 9 April the UN Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect expressed alarm regarding coalition airstrikes and growing sectarian tensions within Yemen, expressing shock that protected groups and civilian objects have been indiscriminately attacked and reminding all parties that such acts "could constitute war crimes."

On 14 April the UNSC passed Resolution 2216 establishing an arms embargo against Houthi leaders and some supporters of former President Saleh, demanding an end to the violence and full implementation of previous resolutions.

The EU imposed sanctions against parties to the conflict, including former President Saleh's son and the Houthis leader, on 7 June.

The UNSC issued a 10 July Press Statement on the humanitarian pause, encouraging parties to agree to an ongoing ceasefire.

NECESSARY ACTION

The distinction between military and civilian targets is central to IHL and must be adhered to. All parties to the conflict must refrain from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure and uphold their responsibility to protect vulnerable populations regardless of their tribal, religious or political affiliations.

All parties to the conflict must respect the humanitarian pause in order to ensure immediate access to vulnerable civilians in desperate need of food, water and medical supplies. All parties to the conflict should help negotiate a permanent ceasefire.

The UNSC, GCC and those with strong ties to political forces within Yemen, including Saudi Arabia and Iran, need to ensure that Resolutions 2201 and 2216 are fully implemented and that all parties return to the previously agreed political transition

process. All perpetrators of sectarian attacks and potential war crimes in Yemen should be held accountable for their actions.

MORE INFORMATION

- » [UNSC Resolution S/RES/2204](#), 24 February 2015
- » [UNSC Resolution S/RES/2216](#), 14 April 2015
- » [UNSC Press Statement SC/11966](#), 10 July 2015
- » [GCR2P Populations at Risk Page: Yemen](#)



Shia Muslims, who comprise 20% of the population, continue to face sectarian attacks.

PAKISTAN

Ongoing sectarian attacks in Pakistan leave civilians at risk of potential mass atrocity crimes.

BACKGROUND

Thousands of civilians from ethnic and religious minority groups have been killed in targeted attacks in Pakistan over the past decade. Shia Muslims, who comprise approximately 20 percent of the population of Pakistan, continue to be the focus of most sectarian violence, although other minority groups have also been targeted, including Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus.

Sectarian killings are mainly perpetrated by extremist Sunni Muslim groups, such as the Pakistan Taliban (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and their affiliates. TTP and affiliated groups have perpetrated targeted terrorist attacks on Shia mosques and government buildings, including a December 2014 attack on a government school in Peshawar that killed more than 130 students.

TTP and its affiliates have perpetrated multiple attacks on Shia Muslims across Pakistan during 2015. TTP militants attacked worshippers at Shia mosques in Peshawar and Rawalpindi during February while an unidentified group attacked a Shia mosque in Karachi. On 13 May at least 45 Ismaili Shia Muslims were killed when they were targeted on a bus outside Karachi by gunmen from the TTP-affiliated Jundullah.

Human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, continue in Pakistan's Balochistan province. In May former Balochistan minister Kachkol Ali sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General, stating that crimes against humanity had been perpetrated against the "Baloch nation" and that the government had failed to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

Retaliation attacks also take place. On 29 May at least 22 ethnic Pashtu, traveling from Quetta to Karachi, were targeted and killed by gunmen. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but similar attacks have been carried out by Baloch separatists in the past.

During May and June a renewed wave of sectarian attacks on the Hazara Shia minority in Quetta, Balochistan's capital, also resulted in 11 civilian deaths.

ANALYSIS

While the majority of Pakistan's international partners have focused on the issue of terrorism perpetrated by TTP and other Islamic extremists against Pakistan's security establishment, sectarian attacks against civilians are a growing threat, particularly for the Shia community.

The current government faces myriad security and economic challenges, but must make upholding its Responsibility to Protect populations from targeted violence an urgent priority.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The response of the international community to sectarian violence in Pakistan has been inadequate and is routinely overshadowed by concerns regarding regional security and counter-terrorism.

The UN Secretary-General has repeatedly condemned sectarian attacks in Pakistan and issued numerous statements regarding violence against Shia and other minorities.

NECESSARY ACTION

The government must provide enhanced protection to vulnerable communities at risk across Pakistan. The government should intensify efforts to promote religious and ethnic tolerance. Pakistan's federal and local governments must work closely with religious leaders to prevent hate speech aimed at members of other religious communities. Formal investigations must be conducted into sectarian killings and those responsible must be held accountable.

The UN and major donors, including the United States and United Kingdom, should actively assist Pakistan in upholding its Responsibility to Protect through supporting programs aimed at strengthening the rule of law and promoting inter-faith and inter-communal dialogue.

MORE INFORMATION

» [GCR2P Populations at Risk Page: Pakistan](#)



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