

Secretary General Appoints New UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect

On 23 June 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that Ivan Šimonović has been appointed as the new UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. Mr. Šimonović will be the third individual to assume the post, following Dr. Edward Luck and Dr. Jennifer Welsh. He will take up the post on 1 October 2016.

Mr. Šimonović is currently the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, a post through which he has shown his dedication to preventing gross and systematic abuses of human rights. In his six-year tenure at the United Nations, Mr. Šimonović has underscored that RtoP is a “human rights friendly” concept, including as a panelist at the 2012 General Assembly Dialogue on RtoP, at which he stated that RtoP is “the idea that people are entitled to be protected from the worst forms of human rights violations, from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes.”

As UN Special Adviser on RtoP, Mr. Šimonović will be responsible for the conceptual, political, and institutional development of RtoP, as well as for building consensus to assist the General Assembly to continue considering the norm. Such a mandate entails, among other duties, engaging with UN actors, Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society to implement and mainstream the norm; as well as conceptualizing the UN Secretary-General’s annual reports on RtoP.

The ICRtoP looks forward to working with Mr. Šimonović, as well as the entire Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, to continue consolidating support for RtoP and advocating for early action to prevent and respond to the threat of atrocity crimes. In this regard, the ICRtoP will continue efforts with the Office to enhance the relationship between civil society and the UN system to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and information sharing on atrocities prevention and response.

See statement [here](#) .

See the UN News announcement [here](#) .

Read more about the [mandate](#) of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and the [work](#) of the Joint Office. For more information, see the ICRtoP’s [page](#) on the Joint Office.

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Burma/Myanmar:

— The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, will make an official [visit](#) to the country from 20 June until 1 July. Ms. Lee will monitor the situation of human rights and assess the work of the new government during its first 100-days in office. A report on the visit will be presented to the UN General Assembly in October. On 20 June, following the Special Rapporteur’s meeting with State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, the government of Myanmar [decided](#) to no longer use the term “Rohingya” or “Bengali” to describe the Muslim community of the Rakhine state. The [ethnic](#)

term has been a point of contention in the conflict between nationalist Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar. The terms were also avoided in the Special Rapporteur's [meeting](#) on 22 June with the Arakan State Chief Minister Nyi Pu.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, issued a report [urging](#) the Burmese government to take concrete action against the systematic violations of human rights of the minority groups in Myanmar. The [report](#), released on 20 June, documented widespread human rights abuses, including denial of healthcare and education, forced labor, restrictions on freedom of movement, and more, that could possibly amount to crimes against humanity. The Rohingya Muslim community was noted to receive the worst treatment. High Commissioner Hussein acknowledged the work of the new democratic government in signing a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement last year as well as establishing a Central Committee on the Implementation of Peace, Stability, and Development of Rakhine State. However, the Commissioner's report urged for more concrete steps to be taken by the government to facilitate the transition to peace. The government has [criticized](#) the report, stating it is biased.

A [report](#) by the UN Refugee Agency stated Burmese citizens [made up](#) the eighth-largest population of refugees in 2015. More than 451,000 people fled Myanmar last year as a result of ethnic violence between multiple armed groups.

Nearly 1,000 people in the Kachin State [protested](#) against the killing of a teen by a Burmese Army soldier on 21 June. The unarmed 19-year-old student was "mistakenly shot" by the soldier during a fight between two soldiers and a group of Kachin University students on the night of 20 June. The events leading up to the shooting are unclear, but they are said involve the soldiers escorting female university students claiming to be harassed by their male peers.

Burundi:

Following their second visit to Burundi last week, the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB) [called for](#) concrete action to be taken to end the violence in the country. While the number of executions has decreased since last year, the UNIIB noted that mass arrests are still occurring, including the recent detainment of 11 children for defacing pictures of the President. "For Burundi to move away from violence and conflict, it needs a truly inclusive political dialogue that will address the roots of the political crises," said one expert from the UNIIB.

Burundi is [reconsidering](#) its membership to the International Criminal Court (ICC), claiming the ICC did not take into account the principle of complementarity, which provides that the court can only investigate crimes if national courts cannot do so, when conducting preliminary

investigations into post-electoral killings in Burundi.

Central African Republic:

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, Marie-Therese Keita Bocoum, has [urged](#) the Central African Republic's government to take robust measures to stop violence and ensure the protection for civilians. Ms. Keita Bocoum met with several government representatives and civil society members on her seventh visit to the country and she stressed the need for enhanced security and justice reform, particularly with the establishment of the Special Criminal Court. She also [expressed concern](#) over the allegations of sexual abuse within the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and will address the Human Rights Council about the issue on 28 June. Her final report on the Central African Republic will be submitted in September.

A new wave of [violence](#) in the northwest has left 10 people dead and forced thousands to flee. Armed attackers entered the city of Ngaoundaye on 16 June, [shooting](#) at residents and torching homes. The attack, carried out by Fulani herdsmen and ex-Seleka militiamen, is the [worst](#) bout of violence in the country since the political election in February. MINUSCA has strengthened security measures in response to the attacks and [reaffirmed](#) its mission to promote peace and security in the CAR.

A driver for Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) was [shot](#) and killed while driving to transport medicine and fuel from Bangui to Bangassou on 17 June. The Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Dr. Michel Yao, strongly [condemned](#) the attack and reminded all parties that "violence against humanitarian workers and humanitarian assets is a violation of International Humanitarian Law and must stop." Dr. Yao also called for the attack to be investigated and for the perpetrators to be held accountable.

On 19 June, ex-Seleka rebels [abducted](#) six policeman in the capital city of Bangui. Security Minister Jean Serge Bokassa [stated](#), "We demand the liberation of the officers who were taken hostage. The government will do everything possible to free them."

Democratic People's Republic of Korea:

— The field-based office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, located in Seoul, has [begun](#) stepping up its investigation into the country's human rights violations ahead of the one year anniversary of the office's establishment on 23 June. The UN opened the office in line with recommendations from the UN Commission of Inquiry report on the human rights record and has been conducting interviews with defectors.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

— Clashes between former rebels in a camp for demobilized militia groups and government soldiers preventing them from leaving the camp [resulted](#) in nine deaths, including six of the former rebels and three soldiers. A government official admitted the clashes took place, but denied that soldiers had killed anyone. A former rebel claimed that soldiers had killed 10 of his fellow ex-fighters and claimed that their protests demanding to be returned home were peaceful. The former rebels held in the camp are ex-M23 fighters belonging to the minority Tutsi group in Rwanda.

Gaza/West Bank:

— Israeli troops [shot](#) two Palestinians on 21 June, leaving a 15-year-old Palestinian boy dead when the car he was in came under gunfire by the Israeli army after several Palestinians threw rocks and firebombs at Israeli cars on a highway in the West Bank.

The West Bank is in “[full crisis mode](#)” due to Israel's water cuts reducing the water supply to Palestinians in the northern West Bank. Residents have been receiving 30 to 40 percent of their normal water allowance. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Palestinians in the West Bank have access to just 73 litres of water a day, compared to the World Health Organization (WHO) minimum of 100 litres. The water crisis has left some Palestinians without water for almost a week.

Iraq:

On 17 June, Iraqi forces [surged](#) into the ISIL-held city of Fallujah. Several hours later, Prime Minister Al-Abadi declared victory over ISIL in Fallujah. This comes after several months of tightening the knot on the city, which has led to tens of thousands of civilians being trapped in an ever growing humanitarian crisis. However, [declarations](#) of complete victory have been premature, as a week later Iraqi forces still have only gained control of roughly 80% of the city. When Iraqi forces began their assault, ISIL forces retreated to the edges of the city, forming “a defensive belt” which the Iraqi armed forces continued to [pick](#) apart throughout the week.

ISIL fighters have [killed](#) fifteen members of the local security forces in an assault on several villages east of the town of Tuz Khurmatu. The town is 160 kilometers north of Baghdad and, while technically falling under the purview of the central government, has recently been under the control of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, who claim it as part of Kurdistan. The following day, a car bomb, [planted](#) by ISIL, killed four people in Tuz Khurmatu.

On 20 June, [attacks](#) across Iraq left nine people dead. Three soldiers died in a suicide bombing in Ramadi, while six civilians died in several separate attacks in Baghdad. The next day, a suicide-bombing [killed](#) five Shia militia members and wounded over 35 in the northern town of Al-Dor.

An Iraqi tribal leader has [accused](#) a Shia militia of recently executing fifty Sunni prisoners in northern Iraq. The massacre allegedly took place at the Amerlin prison in Saladin province as revenge for the killing of a senior police officer in the fighting with ISIL near Amerli the previous week.

In order to provide aid to the thousands of people fleeing the fighting in Fallujah, the UN had to [withdraw](#) \$15 million from its emergency fund this week. In one month, more than 85,000 people have been driven out of the city by fighting. The UN has warned that its supplies are nearly empty, as the emergency fund to provide aid to vulnerable Iraqis has not received two-thirds of its needed funding and projects have been shuttered. In light of this, the US State Department has [released](#) \$20 million in aid to the Iraqi government. The UNHCR [released](#) a statement detailing the needs of the UN in aiding those Iraqis displaced from Fallujah.

Senior Pentagon officials are [preparing](#) to give approval to submit a request for a larger US military presence in Iraq to President Obama. Currently, the US has 4,100 troops in Iraq, including 217 that were recently deployed in April. At that time, it was stated that the military would request more if the current number of troops failed to aid the Iraqis in retaking Mosul.

Kenya:

— Early this week, Human Rights Watch (HRW) [published](#) a brief reporting that police gunfire killed at least five people and wounded 60 others as Kenyan police used live ammunition and excessive force to attempt to break up two recent protests on 23 May and 6 June. The brief includes allegations that police used unnecessary lethal force and even shot or seriously injured uninvolved bystanders and passersby, including students. According to HRW, one witness also claimed to have seen police shoot a man leaving a bank and then take his money. HRW has called for Kenyan authorities to investigate these actions, which appear to violate both Kenyan law and international protocols for law enforcement officers' use of force.

One person [died](#) on Monday after an ambulance hit a landmine while en route to pick up a patient in northeastern Kenya. The incident, which also seriously injured two others, took place in Garissa county, which has recently been the target of attacks by suspected al-Shabaab militants. The same day in nearby Mandera county, suspected al-Shabaab militants [attacked](#) a convoy, killing five Kenyan police officers escorting a passenger bus.

Libya:

— A [blast](#) at an ammunition depot in the Libyan city of Garabulli left 30 people dead and 30 more wounded on 21 June. It is not clear what triggered the explosion, but a dispute between locals and protestors from an armed group occurred beforehand. Meanwhile, east of Garabulli in the former ISIL-stronghold of Sirte, [fighting](#) between ISIL and government-backed Libyan fighters also left 30 people dead, resulting in a [total](#) of 60 people killed in just one day. The fighting also wounded around 140 militants.

Mali:

— At a UN Security Council meeting discussing the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Malian Prime Minister Modibo Keita, [called](#) on the Council to strengthen the peacekeeping mission in the country and to impose sanctions against those impeding the peace deal. The head of MINUSMA and UN envoy for Mali, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, presenting the UN Secretary-General's [report](#) on the developments in the country since March, also called for better training and better equipment for peacekeepers and

said “losses could have been avoided” if these had been provided earlier. He also [added](#) that, despite the slow process and the skepticism surrounding the Agreement, the situation has improved since 2012 and noted that the successful establishment of eight cantonment sites allowed for the disarmament process to begin.

On the one year anniversary of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [released](#) a statement commending Malian President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita and the government for their commitment to peace. Mr. Ban also welcomed the signing of the new Protocole d'Entente on the interim authorities and other arrangements by the government and other signatory parties. He called this and the government's appointment of Mr. Mahamadou Diagouraga as the High Representative tasked with following up on the Agreement “important steps forward”.

Nigeria:

— Late last week Boko Haram fighters shot and [killed](#) at least 18 women and may have captured others who were attending a funeral in the village of Kuda in Nigeria's restive northeast. According to witnesses, the militants rampaged through the village shooting randomly at will and setting houses on fire. Witnesses counted 18 women's bodies after the attack, but some women are currently still missing.

The Nigeria Air Force (NAF) recently launched “Operation Gama-Aiki”, under which the NAF [completed](#) its first major air campaign, killing 15 Boko Haram militants in Borno state.

On 21 June, Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) [visited](#) the town of Bama in Borno state for the first time since its liberation from Boko Haram's control by the army in March 2015. MSF found 24,000 people living in a camp on a hospital compound in the town, including 15,000 children (of which 4,500 are under five years old). According to MSF, over 1,200 people have [starved](#) to death or died of illness at the camp and of the 800 children examined, around one in five were acutely malnourished. The group also reported that they had found around 1,233 graves dug in the last year near the camp and at least 188 people have died in the camp since 23 May – amounting to almost six people each day.

In the southeastern Niger Delta Region, Nigerian officials [reported](#) late last week that the government has reached a 30-day truce with militants, including the Niger Delta Avengers, who have carried out devastating attacks on oil pipelines and facilities in the region in recent months. Another official added that although a truce had been reached, talks working towards a final resolution are still on-going. However, the Niger Delta Avengers issued a statement on Twitter on Tuesday, stating that they had never

[agreed](#)

to a ceasefire with the government. A security expert based in Nigeria has said that he believes that the government may have been holding talks with the wrong people.

South Sudan:

On Tuesday, the UN completed an [investigation](#) into violence that occurred at a UN compound housing 50,000 civilians in Malakal. Over the course of 16-18 February, fighting between ethnic groups killed 30 civilians and 130 others. On 18 February, armed men, including members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), burst into the camp and began shooting civilians and burning down housing complexes. Meanwhile, UN peacekeepers, mandated to use force to protect civilians, stood by, taking over 16 hours to react to the incursion into the compound. The report, obtained by several news agencies, but unlikely to be made public, details how the UN [response](#) was one beset by confusion, with peacekeepers fleeing their posts. Some, like Human Rights Watch, have [pressured](#) the UN to release the findings to the public, follow the investigation's recommendations, and hold those responsible to account. In response, the UN has announced that it will be sending home peacekeepers that were found to have not [appropriately](#) responded during the situation. Meanwhile, a [report](#) by Doctors without Borders noted that, in addition to the UN failing in its duty to protect civilians, UN security rules interfered with efforts by humanitarian actors to respond to the needs of those affected by the crisis.

UNICEF has released a [report](#) highlighting the continuing use of child soldiers in South Sudan. The report, aided by the work of the UN mission in South Sudan, states that there are still over 16,000 child soldiers in South Sudan. This figure is in spite of the government's 2008 South Sudan Child Act, which sets a minimum age of 18 for any conscription or voluntary recruitment into armed forces or groups. Furthermore, the release of all child soldiers is a stipulation of the peace agreement in South Sudan.

On 20 June, fighting [erupted](#) once again in the South Sudanese town of Raja, which saw clashes last week when armed men stormed and temporarily seized the town. Dozens of civilians have been killed in the fighting, with the International Committee of the Red Cross sending in two planes to evacuate the wounded.

Sri Lanka:

— Newly uncovered evidence seems to [confirm](#) reports that the Sri Lankan armed forces may have used cluster munitions against civilians in the end stages of the country's 26-year civil war. Testimonies from de-mining groups working in Sri Lanka have also claimed that they have discovered munitions in government-declared "no fire zones", where authorities had told around 300,000 people during the war to gather for safety until the war's resolution.

According to a former asylum seeker now living permanently in Australia, the group of 44 stranded Tamil asylum seekers in Indonesia, who [arrived](#) by boat on the island of Aceh on their way to Australia, were previously tortured in Sri Lanka and would certainly be persecuted once again if they return. Their compatriot in Australia identified several of the asylum seekers in Indonesia from photos as those who were allegedly tortured alongside him during his time in prison in Sri Lanka.

Sudan/Darfur:

— On 17 June, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir [declared](#) a 4-month ceasefire in the Blue Nile and South Kordufan areas, which went into effect over the weekend. Rebel fighters with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) and government forces have been engaged in fighting that has left both sides in a perpetual stalemate since 2011. The SPLM-N is the northern counterpart of the movement that brought South Sudan forward into independence and they have been fighting against their region's continued inclusion in Sudan. Fighting has recently intensified in the area as a truce, negotiated at the end of 2015, has broken down. The SPLM-N has conditionally agreed to the ceasefire and is

[calling](#) for negotiations to immediately start in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. This is the third ceasefire declaration by the Sudanese government in the past year.

After a three-day meeting in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, Sudan Call (the umbrella representation of the Sudanese opposition) [stated](#) on Sunday that they will propose a supplemental document to the Roadmap Agreement for peace in Sudan. As of yet, only the Sudanese government has signed the Roadmap crafted by the African Union High level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). The opposition has declined, stating the document only deals with a ceasefire and humanitarian access. The supplemental document, they allege, would ensure the Roadmap leads to fruitful political dialogue. The opposition currently recognizes the government-controlled dialogue process as a basis for the national constitutional dialogue and claims it lacks trust-building measures.

On 19 June, Sudan [requested](#) a meeting with Martin Uhomoibh, the head of the international peacekeeping force in Darfur (UNAMID), after the UN recommended a one-year extension of the mission's mandate in the region. The joint AU-UN mission currently has 20,000 troops and policemen in the region. The report, presented to the UNSC last week, stated their presence is still needed due to an overall lack of progress in the peace process and continued violence, which the Sudanese government has publicly contended and disagreed with.

On 20-21 June, attacks in central Darfur [killed](#) and injured 18 people. Eyewitness reports allege that the attacks were carried out by members of the government-sponsored Janjaweed militia, which has already made several attacks looting the area's major market and torching a multitude of shops and homes.

The following day, six student activists were [released](#) by the Sudanese security forces after being detained for a month without charges. The arrest and detention of the students, who were arrested for leading protests against government policy, sparked a wave of demonstrations and clashes with security forces.

Syria:

— Developments in the fighting

On 18 June, Turkish border guards [allegedly](#) killed 11 Syrian refugees as they fled across the border into Turkey. The incident is alleged to have taken place near the village of Khirbet al-Joz in Idlib province. This is not the first time accusations of Turkish soldiers shooting fleeing Syrians have appeared, with [HRW](#) releasing a scathing report earlier this year.

On 20 June, an ISIL suicide-bomber [killed](#) three people in Qamishli. The bomber was attempting to sneak into a ceremony commemorating the victims of the Armenian genocide.

Despite earlier [gains](#) against ISIL this week, the extremist group has managed to force Syrian government troops into retreat from Raqqa, ISIL's de-facto capital. The Syrian government had advanced as close as six miles to the town of al-Tabqa, which lies to the west of Raqqa, but has now been [pushed](#) back over [40 kilometers](#) from Tabqa.

On 21 June, the SDF [entered](#) the ISIL-held city of Manjib in northern Aleppo after having successfully repelled an [attempt](#) by ISIL to break the siege earlier in the week. This has allowed the first humanitarian corridor into the city to be [opened](#), allowing hundreds to flee.

Later the same day, a car-bomb [killed](#) six Jordanian soldiers near a Syrian refugee camp on

the northeastern Syrian-Jordanian border. The attack is the first of its kind since the start of the Syrian civil war. More than 50,000 Syrians are living in the refugee camp there in deplorable conditions, with Jordan citing security concerns for not allowing them out the camps. Jordan has [responded](#) by announcing that there will be no new refugee camps built in the country.

On 22 June, 25 civilians are reported to have been killed in air raids in Raqqa. The strikes also injured dozens more, with the death toll expected to rise. As of yet, no party has [claimed](#) responsibility.

Delivering Aid

The UN was able to deliver [deliver](#) aid into the besieged areas of Ein Tarma, Hamouria, Hazeh, Beit Sawa and Eftreis in rural Damascus on Monday for the first time since April. This brings the total number of besieged areas reached up to 16 out of the 18 the UN has requested. However, the UN is still facing difficulties as the Syrian government continues to [deny](#) unfettered access and, in many cases, the amount of aid delivered has been restricted.

International Developments

On 16 June, the New York Times [received](#) a draft version of an internal dissent memo from the US State Department, signed by fifty-one individuals, that called for US airstrikes against the Assad regime. The memo is exceptionally critical of the Obama administration's handling of the situation in Syria, particularly detailing the continued use of barrel bombs by the Assad regime in a campaign that is both in violation of the ceasefire and mainly targeting civilians. According to the memo, continued military pressure by the United States is the only way to stop the gross injustices being committed in Syria and force Assad to the negotiating table.

Late last week, Russia's state-run RT network [accidentally](#) ran a segment on the Russian campaign in Syria that showed Russian planes in Syria armed with cluster bombs. While Russia has not signed the international treaty banning the use of cluster bombs, they have consistently denied using such indiscriminate bombs in Syria.

The Russian Defense Ministry has [denied](#) accusations that it bombed the US-backed New Syrian Army rebel group in southern Syria. US and Russian officials held a video-conference over the weekend to discuss the airstrikes, which are believed to include cluster munitions and which killed several rebels near Jordanian border.

On 21 June, several countries [debated](#) the issue of prosecuting alleged perpetrators of serious crimes in Syria as a UN panel, called First Cracks in the Syria Impunity Wall. The panel discussed whether or not third party countries should prosecute persons accused of committing atrocities in Syria. The push for prosecution is being made by several European countries, particularly Germany, France, Sweden and Finland. The panel follows the vetoing, by Russia and China, of a UNSC resolution that would have referred Syria to the ICC.

Norway's parliament [gave](#) approval for the deployment of Norwegian troops to Syria on Wednesday, including the nation's special forces. The troops will join the forces from the US and other members of the anti-ISIL coalition on the ground in training the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Yemen:

— Developments in the fighting

On 18 June, reversing reports of the United Arab Emirates [pulling](#) out of the war in Yemen, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, stated that remarks to that end have been taken out of context and that the UAE will continue to take part in the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen.

The U.S. military has [announced](#) that it is planning on continuing its ongoing mission in Yemen against al-Qaeda. The U.S. now plans on keeping a small, twelve-man, Special-Operations team in Yemen to assist Gulf State forces on the ground. The team was originally sent in April for a limited operation. The U.S. had previously established such a team in Yemen but withdrew it in 2014 in light of the deteriorating situation.

On 21 June, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen [claimed](#) to have intercepted a ballistic missile fired at the city of Marib, which is controlled by the coalition. Separately, a coalition airstrike in the mountainous area of Lahj province is said to have killed eight civilians. The airstrike is [alleged](#) to have taken place during a three-day battle for the mountain range that overlooks Yemen's [largest](#) airbase, which has apparently left 45 dead and the Houthi rebels in control and overlooking the base.

On 22 June, 13 people [died](#) in renewed clashes, in the central city of Taiz, between the Houthi rebels and Yemeni government forces. Both civilians and fighters have been counted amongst the dead in the fighting, which has continued despite an agreed upon by ceasefire by both sides. The next day Houthi rebels allegedly killed seven civilians while in [pursuit](#) of a pro-government militia leader. The Houthi's have claimed that the raid, which took place in central Yemen, was in pursuit of a "terrorist cell" and that they had killed eight members of al-Qaeda. While reports have been increasing of al-Qaeda militants fighting alongside the Yemeni government in central Yemen, the Houthis commonly characterize all the militias that oppose them as al-Qaeda. On the same day, local residents in the south of the country [reported](#) the return of al-Qaeda to their towns after an absence of a month. Al-Qaeda had previously retreated from many major population centers in the area following tribal negotiations.

Developments in the peace process

On 18-19 June, the largest [prisoner](#) swap yet in the conflict in Yemen took place, with 224 prisoners being exchanged by the Houthi rebels and forces loyal to Yemen's internationally recognized government in the city of Ta'ez.

[Highlighting](#) the contention at the peace talks in Kuwait, the Houthi delegation announced on 22 June that they would refuse to sign onto any peace agreement which did not include an agreement on a consensus President to lead Yemen through its [transition](#) period. Concurrently, the Yemeni delegation has demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all territory captured since 2014 and give over control of political institutions to the Yemeni government before negotiations. The demands are in light of the submission of a Roadmap for Peace for Yemen by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

What else is new?

Responding to worrying developments such as the revocation of citizenship for over 250 individuals since July 2014, including most recently Sheikh Issa Qassem, among other human rights violations, the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, released a statement on 22 June expressing concern for the situation and calling in the government to recommit to national dialogue. See full statement [here](#).

Monday, 20 June marked World Refugee Day, with a report released by the UN Refugee Agency entitled [Global Trends](#) showing that a record high of 65.3 million people were displaced from their homes due to conflict and violence in 2015. The Global Trends report shared staggering [findings](#), including that 1 in every 113 people in the world is an asylum-seeker, internally displaced person, or refugee, with 24 people displaced per minute in 2015. To put the vast numbers of displaced persons in perspective, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect has produced a new infographic showing what displacement in countries experiencing atrocity crimes means in other terms. View the infographic [here](#).

On Sunday 19 June, the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [declared](#) that the time of impunity for the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is over. He cited several landmark court rulings convicting and sentencing former political and military leaders for their involvement in conflict-related sexual violence, including in the convictions of two former Guatemalan military officers in a national court in Guatemala, the International Criminal Court's first sexual and gender-based crimes conviction of Jean-Pierre Bemba, and the conviction of former Chadian President Hissène Habré in the Senegalese judicial system for rape and sexual slavery earlier this year. The latter is the first time in history that a former Head of State has been convicted and held

personally accountable for the commission of rape as an international crime. The ICC also [sentenced](#)

Bemba on 21 June to 18 years in prison for crimes against humanity and war crimes, including rape. A summary of the ICC's decision in the Bemba case can be read

[here](#)