

## Independent report finds UN mission in South Sudan failed to protect civilians during July violence in Juba

On 1 November, an independent inquiry released its [report](#) on the July violence in Juba and the actions the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The inquiry, established by UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon in August, [found](#) that UNMISS had failed to uphold its mandate to protect civilians. During the three-day outbreak of violence in the capital, armed government forces killed and assaulted civilians and humanitarian workers, committing sexual assaults and other atrocity crimes. The report found that, at the time, there were about 12,000 UNMISS peacekeepers [deployed](#) in the country, but the forces abandoned their posts and failed to respond to pleas for help from people under attack. The clashes [resulted](#) in the killing of at least 272 people during the first three days of the conflict.

In response to the report, UN Secretary-General [dismissed](#) UNMISS Force Commander Lieutenant General Johnson Mogoia Kimani Ondieki of Kenya as the findings indicated that a lack of leadership was behind the “chaotic and ineffective” response to the crisis. Ban urged for a prompt replacement of the force commander and pledged to present measures to strengthen UNMISS’ capacity for the protection of civilians, such as greater accountability for both civilian and uniformed personnel. The next step for the UN is to ensure that those responsible for the security failings during the crisis are identified and held accountable. Expressing dismay over the Secretary-General’s decision to dismiss the Kenyan commander, Kenya [announced](#) that the country will withdraw its troops from UNMISS..

In discussing the dismissal, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has [said](#) that, “The firing of one commander won’t be a panacea to the mission’s shortcoming” and stressed that UNMISS needs to take steps towards improving their early warning capacities. Furthermore, HRW underscored that if UNMISS is unable to prevent atrocities, the mission must ensure to fulfill the mandate to use lethal force, if necessary, to protect civilians and halt atrocities. HRW has called for the UN to learn from past mistakes and make sure that the protection of civilians is the top priority.

*Source for above photo: UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein*

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**Burma/Myanmar:**

On Monday, Human Rights Watch (HRW) renewed its call for a UN-assisted inquiry into violence in Rakhine State. HRW has released new satellite images showing extensive fire-related destruction in three villages and is calling on the Burmese government to allow the UN to investigate the alleged destruction of villages in the area. Since the attacks on border outposts on 9 October, security forces have been accused of a campaign of violence in the area against the Rohingya minority group.

Burmese soldiers are facing fresh allegations of raping and sexually assaulting Rohingya women and girls during the security operation in Rakhine State, ongoing since 9 October. Breaking the story on Friday, Reuters [conducted](#) first-hand interviews with three of the several dozen women victimized by the incident.

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## **Burundi:**

Human Rights Watch has [argued](#) that the Burundian withdrawal from the International Criminal Court (ICC) is a confirmation of Burundi's disregard for human rights and shows how little the country cares about justice for victims of war crimes and human rights violations. The organization called on other African countries, who are still members of the ICC, to distance themselves from Burundi's withdrawal.

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## **Central African Republic:**

On 28 October, clashes between two rival militia groups in the central town of Bambari [killed](#) 25 people. This, and further fighting in the north around the town of Kaga Bandero, has forced over 20,000 people to flee to UN bases in [the](#) past week. Humanitarian efforts have been suspended in some areas due to growing instability.

Following deadly raids in camps for displaced people in October, Human Rights Watch has [called](#) for increased protection by UN peacekeepers. Rebels killed at least 37 civilians and wounded another 57 as they razed a camp in mid-October as peacekeepers surrounding the camp failed to halt the attack. The UN mission in CAR, MINUSCA, released a [report](#) on Monday documenting the deaths of civilians and assigned the primary responsibility for the attacks to Seleka forces.

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## **Iraq:**

### *Security developments*

ISIL [executed](#) at least 232 people in Mosul last week, including 190 former Iraqi security forces and 42 civilians. Tens of thousands of civilians are thought to have been forcefully displaced from their homes by the extremist group to be used as human shields against bombardments by US-led coalition and Iraqi armed forces. The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, [released](#) a statement Tuesday condemning the recent violations of human rights and ongoing violence perpetrated by ISIL throughout the ongoing armed conflict in and around Mosul. Mr. Dieng pointed to the forced

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displacement of at least 25,000 civilians and the potential use of chemical weapons as crimes that demand accountability while urging Iraqi government forces to conduct their operations with full respect for international law.

The Iraqi army [resumed](#) its offensive on Monday to retake the city of Mosul from the Islamic State. The advance was paused last week as some ground units had made gains quicker than forces on other fronts. The operation, undertaken predominantly by special forces units, will now focus on taking back territory on the east bank of the Tigris River. The offensive continues to encounter strong opposition from ISIL, who persistently use suicide bombings and car bombs to drive forces back.

Iraqi government forces, supported by coalition special forces units and Kurdish paramilitaries, officially [breached](#) eastern districts of Mosul on Monday. US-led coalition airstrikes and artillery has [allowed](#) forces to continue to advance toward the center of the city despite a violent resistance from thousands of ISIL fighters. There are approximately two million civilians still living in Mosul.

US airstrikes last month allegedly [killed](#) eight members of one family, including three children, in a village just outside the city of Mosul. The US has confirmed that they conducted aerial strikes in the Fadhiliya village area on 22 October and are further investigating these allegations. The deaths highlight the ongoing concerns voiced by officials and aid agencies about the protection of civilians in Iraq as government and coalition forces work to oust ISIL from the northern regions of the country.

#### *The humanitarian situation*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has [released](#) a Flash Update regarding the current situation in Iraq. The report notes that there are now 15,804 internally displaced persons (IDPs), including 2,634 families, as a result of the enduring offensive taking place in Mosul, bringing the country total to 3.3 million IDPs.

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#### **Libya:**

On Wednesday, Human Rights Watch (HRW) [called](#) on all parties to allow humanitarian access into Benghazi neighborhoods where civilians are trapped by fighting. Furthermore, HRW also urged the parties to grant safe passage for civilians to leave those areas. However, conditions have been set by both sides regarding the evacuation of residents, including that no males between 15 and 65 will be allowed safe passage out of the area.

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### **Mali:**

On Monday, al Qaeda linked Ansar Dine [declared](#) a unilateral ceasefire in Mali. Despite having been pushed out of most territory in 2013, the terrorist organization had recently intensified its attacks over the course of the past year, killing dozens of people.

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### **Nigeria:**

On Monday, Human Rights Watch (HRW) [accused](#) Nigerian government officials of sexually exploiting and raping women and girls displaced by Boko Haram. The report is a result of firsthand accounts given in the form of interviews to HRW, as well as a July 2016 assessment of internally displaced persons (IDPs), in which 66% of respondents stated that camp officials had sexually abused displaced women and girls. Responding to the report, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari [announced](#) the start of an investigation into the allegations, which was [welcomed](#) by HRW as a positive step “taken in defense of Boko Haram victims”.

UNICEF, on Monday, negotiated the release of 876 children [held](#) by the Nigerian military for suspected links to Boko Haram. UNICEF estimates that roughly 20,000 children have been separated from their parents due to the conflict with Boko Haram.

President Muhammadu Buhari [met](#) with representatives from the Niger River Delta from both the local communities and several of the prominent rebel groups on Tuesday. The purpose of the meeting was to find a political solution to the continuing militancy issues in the region related to the oil industry, as well as to discuss issues of economic and human development and security. However, the region’s most prominent militant group, the Niger Delta Avengers, [refused](#) to join the talks and threatened attacks to derail the peace process if an ongoing army offensive did not cease.

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### **South Sudan:**

Last week, an army rebel group loyal to former First Vice President Riek Machar [reportedly](#) attacked two schools in South Sudan and abducted at least 30 children. The children are thought to have been recruited as soldiers in the rebel army.

President Salva Kiir [promised](#) that he is fully committed to the implementation of the 2015 peace deal. He called for a united nation to rebuild itself and said that progress has been made since the appointment of Taban Deng Gai as First Vice President.

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### **Sudan/Darfur:**

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has [released](#) a report for October 2016 regarding the crisis in the Jebel Marra region of Sudan. The report notes that between 160,000 and 195,000 civilians have been displaced since the beginning of 2016 resulting from persistent armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Abdul Wahid branch of the Sudan Liberation Army (AW-SLA).

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### **Syria:**

#### *Security developments*

At least 15 people were [killed](#) and an additional 100 were injured in mortar attacks in residential areas of western Aleppo on Friday. The attacks occurred as part of a new rebel offensive to retake regime-held parts of the city.

At least 41 civilians, including 17 children, were [killed](#) over the weekend in continued violent clashes between regime and opposition forces on the western outskirts of Aleppo. Opposition forces have leveraged car bombs, rockets, and mortar shells in an attempt to break the Assad government's siege on the city. Unverified claims that opposition forces used chemical weapons were reported by Syrian state media sources on Sunday. At least 35 people allegedly complained of shortness of breath, numbness, and muscle spasms caused by "toxic gases".

### *Political developments*

The United Nations Security Council unanimously [agreed](#) on Monday to extend for 18 days the international inquiry into the use of chemical weapons by both the Syrian government and ISIL. The investigation, which was set to expire on Monday, has found that the Assad regime is responsible for at least three chlorine gas attacks while also confirming ISIL's use of mustard gas.

Russia and the Syrian government have [called](#) for both rebel opposition members and civilians to evacuate Aleppo through exit corridors during a ceasefire scheduled for Friday. Two corridors have been specifically set up for rebel fighters while an additional six have been created for sick and wounded civilians. Rebels have rejected the appeal for evacuation stating that the exit corridors do not actually exist.

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## **Yemen:**

### *The security situation*

Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on a security facility [killed](#) several people, including prisoners, on Sunday. According to a security official, there were three strikes on the facilities, which killed 48 people. However, a Houthi-controlled news agency has contested the report, claiming that the death toll was closer to 60 people.

On Monday, armed Houthi rebels [forced](#) more than 150 families to flee their homes in areas

around Taiz, by threatening them at gunpoint, according to human rights groups and local sources. Most of the displaced people are very poor and this incident will only add to the already gruesome situation for civilians in Yemen.

#### *Developments in the peace process*

The UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, [briefed](#) the UN Security Council (UNSC) on Monday, informing them of the details of the proposed peace plan to resolve the dire conflict in Yemen. Amongst other things, the plan included a new vice-president and a national unity government to lead the country during a transitional period until new elections would be possible. An aide to the president

[reported](#) that the president will not accept the UN proposal before the Houthi rebels go along with the conditions previously stated by the Yemeni government. Thousands of Yemenis

[took](#) to the streets on Thursday to protest the peace proposal submitted by the UN Special Envoy, claiming that the plan would legitimize the Houthi rebels' coup to overthrow the Yemeni government.

At the same briefing, the United States [called](#) for an end to airstrikes and said that there cannot be a military solution to the conflict. After the statement, critics quickly responded by pointing out that the US is supporting the war by providing Saudi Arabia the weapons which are being used on civilians in the conflict.

The United Kingdom has [drafted](#) a UNSC resolution demanding that all parties immediately resume the April ceasefire and proceed with peace negotiations. The draft resolution also calls for transparency, accountability and swiftness when it comes to investigations into alleged crimes against humanity and international humanitarian law.

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### **What else is new?**

This week, several non-governmental organizations [signed](#) an open letter to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) regarding the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. The letter contains suggestions on how the AUC should move forward with the Court, where the main ideas are the preparation of a draft statute and the establishing of an evidence preservation mechanism.

On Tuesday, the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) released a brief, entitled "[Challenges and Conditions for Deploying an Effective Regional Protection Force \(RPF\) to South Sudan](#)"

". The brief examines the role of the RPF in enhancing the protection of civilians, and potential concerns. It also presents suggestions to make the RPF as effective as possible in carrying out its mission.

On Wednesday, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) [released](#) a new report entitled "A Necessary Good: U.S Leadership on Preventing Mass Atrocities". The report details what should be done to strengthen existing atrocity prevention initiatives, as well as new measures which should be developed and how to ensure that the issue is institutionalized within the national security bureaucracy in the United States.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) has [released](#) a statement in response to the recent decisions of Burundi, South Africa, and Gambia to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC). GCR2P expressed regret about the declarations, which "undermine progress made in establishing that any person, regardless of rank or high office, can be held accountable for perpetrating mass atrocity crimes committed anywhere in the world."