

UN Special Adviser warns of risk for ethnic war and genocide in South Sudan

On 11 November, the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, [briefed](#) the media with a statement on the situation in South Sudan following a five-day visit to the country last week. Mr. Dieng's visit was largely in response to the growing amount of reports of ethnic-based violence that have emerged in the wake of the deterioration of the peace process between the government and opposition groups in July. During the visit, through meetings with government representatives, UN mission officials, civil society groups, and community members, Dieng tried to better understand the situation and the threats posed by the recent developments in the capital city, Juba, and throughout South Sudan.

Since the [fighting](#) resurfaced in July between President Salva Kiir's predominantly Dinka soldiers and former First Vice President Riek Machar's predominantly Nuer army, the extreme polarization of the groups along ethnic lines has increased. Over the last month there [has](#) also been an excessive escalation in ethnic hate speech, threatening letters, targeted killings, rape of members of certain ethnic groups, and attacks on individuals due to their perceived political affiliation. The media has also been used as a tool to help spread the hatred and encourage the segregation between the ethnic groups.

In his statement, Mr. Dieng [argued](#) that what he saw and heard during his visit confirmed his fears of the potential for genocide in South Sudan, of which the escalating violence along ethnic lines is a strong indicator. While assessing the risk of atrocity crimes in the country, the Special Adviser concluded that all the criteria for an outright ethnic war and genocide are already in place and called on the South Sudanese leaders to take immediate measures to end the violence. He urged them to remember that the State has the primary responsibility to protect its population regardless of their ethnic, national, or political affiliations. Mr. Dieng finished the media briefing by, once again, stressing the importance of finding a solution for peace in South Sudan.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a report to the Security Council [released](#) on Wednesday, has called for an arms embargo to be imposed on South Sudan as he warned of the risk of mass atrocities. He also noted that the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) lacks the means to stop such acts should they occur. Both the Secretary-General and Special Adviser Dieng agree that South Sudanese leaders must work hard for peace in the country, before things escalate further.

At the time of publishing the RtoPWeekly, Mr. Dieng was briefing the UN Security Council on the situation in South Sudan.

Source for above photo: [UN Photo/Manuel Elias](#)

**** Please note that there will be no RtoPWeekly next week, 21 – 25 November due to the holiday, but we will resume publication with the latest RtoP news and updates on crisis situations around the world the following week, 28 November – 2 December. Thank you.*

Catch up on developments in...

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Burma/Myanmar:

On Saturday, the Burmese army [killed](#) 25 Rohingya villagers as the army started “clearance operations” that they allege are targeting armed militants in Rakhine state. The army reported that all of those killed had been carrying machetes or other weapons. However, photos and videos have proven contradictory to this claim. Hundreds of villagers fled from their villages over the weekend to escape the violence. The operation comes in the wake of Human Rights Watch (HRW) releasing new satellite [images](#) showing the

extent of Rohingya buildings and villages burned down over the past [month](#) by the Burmese army.

Refugees International [released](#) a report this week containing recommendations for ways in which governments and institutions can protect Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing the latest unrest in Myanmar. The report specifically calls on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Malaysia, Thailand, and the United States to implement strategies such as appointing officers as first points of contact for asylum seekers, assessing screening policies in annual reports, and convening previously announced joint task forces on refugee registration.

Burundi:

Following an order from the Senate for the government to carry out a census of every civil servant based on their ethnicity and region of origin, people in Burundi have [voiced](#) their concerns for a possible genocide as the round-up reminds them of the conditions leading up to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. There are more than 100,000 people working for the state, making it the largest employer in the country.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Burundian Human Rights League (ITEKA) [released](#) a [report](#) on Tuesday warning of crimes against humanity being committed in Burundi. The Human rights groups urged the international community to send a civilian protection force to the country as they believe there is a possibility of ethnic civil war and genocide. They also pointed out that all criteria for a possible genocide are already in place, including ideology, intent, and identification of possible populations to be eliminated. On Wednesday, amid the warnings of the threat of genocide and the continuing mass exodus of refugees fleeing to neighboring countries, international humanitarian group Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) [stated](#) Burundi is becoming one of the biggest refugee crises in Africa.

On Monday, a letter from Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [surfaced](#), asking for the appointment of a new UN Envoy to the country. Jamal Benomar, the current envoy returned empty-handed from talks with the government on the situation in Burundi. UN spokesman, Farha Haq, responded by saying that there is no search for a new envoy at the moment.

International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda [published](#) a report on Monday, stating that the preliminary inquiry into the situation in Burundi will continue in spite of the country's withdrawal from the court. Bensouda said that Burundi is still obliged to cooperate with the court when it comes to proceedings initiated prior to the withdrawal becomes official in

October 2017, one year after notification to the UN Secretary-General.

Central African Republic:

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) [reported](#) on Wednesday that more than 850,000 people, of which around 50 percent are children, are either internally displaced in CAR or are refugees in neighboring countries. The organization called for donors to put the children first as the efforts to reach them in CAR are restricted due to a significant lack of funds.

A UN human rights expert [said](#) on Wednesday that the justice system in CAR must be strengthened immediately for peace to be achieved and stressed that a Special Criminal Court should be established in 2017. ICRtoP member Human Rights Watch and other NGOs [urged](#) donor countries to support the Special Criminal Court and its mandate to end impunity for crimes under international law.

During a meeting on Thursday, the UN Security Council [welcomed](#) the signing of the National Strategy on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, the National Security Policy, the Internal Security Forces Development Plan and the National Reconciliation Strategy by the Central African Republic. In a statement, the Council expressed its concern about the continued instability in the country and condemned the recent uptick in violence, especially against civilians, humanitarian personnel, and UN peacekeepers. The Security Council also recalled "the State's primary responsibility to protect all populations in the CAR in particular from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity," and emphasized the importance of a political solution to the conflict.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court (ICC) have [accused](#) former Congolese rebel leader Bosco Ntaganda of witness tampering in his trial for allegedly keeping sex slaves, using child soldiers, and murders in the DRC in 2002 and 2003. Former Congolese Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba was found guilty last month of bribing witnesses in his trial.

Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo [resigned](#) from his position on Monday, fulfilling a requirement of the recent political deal that will keep Joseph Kabila as President beyond the constitutional mandate. Mr. Kabila, whose second term comes to an end next month, has cited

the government's present inability to conduct fair elections as the main reason for the extension of his presidency through 2018. The move by Mr. Ponyo now frees up the position of Prime Minister for a member of the opposition that has agreed to the deal to let Mr. Kabila remain in office. However, the main opposition group, Rassemblement, still

[rejects](#)
any such agreement while

[warning](#)
of the possibility of civil war. The UN Security Council, during their recent visit to the DRC, called for a peaceful transition of power and stressed the need for a permanent dialogue.

Iraq:

The Islamic State (ISIL) [continues](#) to perpetrate systematic killings of civilians, including women and children, in and around Mosul. The Sunni terror group has reportedly used child soldiers, aged anywhere from 10 to 14 years old, to carry out executions of detained members of the Iraqi Security Forces. At least 48,000 civilians have been displaced from their homes as a result of the enduring offensive by government forces, backed by US-led coalition forces and Kurdish militias to retake the city of Mosul from the Islamic State.

An ISIL suicide bomber [killed](#) at least 6 people and injured several others on Monday in the Iraqi town of Ain Al-Tamur on Monday. Iraqi Security Forces were able to apprehend an additional five suicide bombers before they could detonate their vests. However, a sixth bomber was able to evade custody and detonate his vest in a nearby house. An additional nine people were killed and up to 25 were wounded in two suicide bombings in Fallujah.

Human Rights Watch [released](#) a report on Monday detailing several incidents in which forces representing the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) demolished Arab houses, leaving Kurdish houses untouched and intact in towns and villages throughout the country retaken from ISIL. The report, which documented incidents between late 2014 and mid-2016, was compiled through on-the-ground visits to both Nineveh and Kirkuk governorates, as well as through examining satellite imagery.

At least 700 civilians living in areas retaken by Iraqi Security forces from ISIL have [taken](#) to the streets in search of food and water. Soldiers have been handing out the few remaining rations they have to civilians while they wait for a resupply of resources from the government to arrive.

A new Human Rights Watch reports states that the mass grave found on the outskirts of Mosul earlier this month is [believed](#) to contain the remains of at least 300 former local Iraqi police officers. The policemen were allegedly held captive and then executed by ISIL late last month as government forces began advancing on the city.

Nigeria:

Late last week, Nigerian soldiers [shot](#) and killed three female suicide bombers as they attempted to infiltrate into the northeastern city of Maiduguri, the birthplace of Boko Haram.

On Saturday, officials from Chad and the UN [reported](#) that several hundred Boko Haram fighters have surrendered in the country over the past month. Most of the fighters are originally from Chad and are currently being held in detention centers along with their families.

On Tuesday, the United Nations [warned](#) that about 75,000 children risk dying from starvation within months as the situation in the country is worsening. UN humanitarian coordinator Peter Lundberg said they have assessed that about 14 million people in Nigeria will be in need of humanitarian assistance by 2017, including about 400,000 children. Lundberg also added that they do not have enough money to handle the situation and are now in dire need of funding.

South Sudan:

The South Sudanese government has [accused](#) the opposition of kidnapping about 20 humanitarian workers over the weekend and has strongly condemned the incident while promising to safely bring back the abductees. However, the armed opposition has denied the allegations.

Sudan/Darfur:

President Omar al-Bashir has [said](#) that any peace deal with the opposition rebel group, Sudanese People's Liberation Army-North (SPLM-N), will not include the reintegration of the group's soldiers into regular Sudanese military forces. Previous discussions of peace deals included reintegration, however Bashir has since stated that "no single outlaw will be absorbed" as he views the rebels as surrogate members of South Sudan's military. Bashir has noted that Sudan is prepared for both war and peace with South Sudan.

Syria:

Russia and the Syrian National Council (SNC), the main opposition group fighting against Syrian government forces, continue to [trade](#) allegations over the use of chemical weapons in the besieged city of Aleppo. Russia has accused the opposition group of using shells containing chlorine and white phosphorus, while the SNC claims the weapons are similar to those used by regime forces and their allies in earlier attacks. The UN Security Council recently extended a mandate to further investigate the alleged use of chemical agents by the Syrian government on several occasions throughout the civil war.

Civilians still living in Aleppo were [instructed](#) via mass text message on Monday to flee the city before the onset of a “strategically planned assault using high precision weapons” began within 24 hours. The message likely came from the Syrian government as they are the only actor to have the capacity for a mass text transmission to the public.

Following the mass message, heavy airstrikes over Aleppo [resumed](#) on Tuesday after a nearly three week cessation of aerial assaults on rebel-held areas of the city. At least one civilian was killed and an additional five people were injured in a helicopter barrel bomb attack. Successive barrel bomb strikes by the Syrian government [killed](#) at least 27 civilians on Wednesday in Aleppo. Among the targets were a children’s hospital, the Central Blood Bank, and neighborhoods with nearby schools. Russian and Syrian officials have claimed that humanitarian corridors have been established to allow civilians to flee the city. However, many residents do not feel they are safe to use or have refused to flee out of principle.

Meanwhile, aerial assaults across Syria [targeted](#) eight hospitals in the past week amidst the regime's renewed offensive to retake rebel-held territory.

Yemen:

The Saudi-led coalition [said](#) on Friday that the Houthi rebels have blocked a total of 34 boats carrying humanitarian aid to Yemen in the last six months.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State John Kerry [announced](#) that the Houthi rebels and the

Saudi-led military coalition had agreed to renew the cessation of hostilities set to start on Thursday. Kerry claimed that the parties also agreed to work towards establishing a unity government in order for peace to be realized by the end of the year. However, [following](#) the statement from Kerry, the Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdel-Malek al Mekhlafi said the government is not interested in a ceasefire or any peace talks with the Houthi rebels.

What else is new?

Interested in interning with the ICRtoP in New York City? We are now seeking applications for Spring 2017. The ICRtoP Secretariat is looking for full-time (preferred) or part-time interns for a period of 3-4 months beginning in early 2017. Applications can be emailed to internship@responsibilitytoprotect.org

. The deadline for Spring 2017 applications is 1 December, 5:00pm EST. For more information, please click [here](#)

The Stanley Foundation [released](#) a policy memo this week, which provides insight on ways the private sector can work to prevent atrocities and promote the Responsibility to Protect. The memo captures the major discussion points and policy recommendations from a roundtable held last month amongst experts and policymakers from academia, governments, international organizations, and civil society. The roundtable focused on four key global issue areas: climate change, genocide prevention, nuclear security, and global governance.

The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law (55 5th Ave., Room 1008, New York, NY, 10003) will be holding an event on Thursday, 1 December from 5:30-7:30pm to celebrate the recent publishing of Dr. James Waller's new book, entitled *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide*. Attendees will be encouraged to engage with Dr. Waller in an interactive discussion on the new book, his work, and the field of mass atrocity prevention more broadly. Refreshments will be served and signed copies of the book will be made available. Please RSVP by 28 November to Cardozo.CLIHHR@yu.edu