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Watch



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AFRICA

NORTH AFRICA

Libya

Libya detention centres remain places of violations and abuse: experts (UN News)

March 28, 2022

Many of Libya's migrant detention centres remain places of terrible and systematic abuse, that may amount to crimes against humanity, top rights investigators said on Monday.

On the sidelines of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, head of the Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, Mohamed Auajjar, told journalists that investigators had uncovered further evidence of serious rights violations, which they first made public last October.

These abuses against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are detailed in a report which will be presented to the Council on Wednesday, Mr. Auajjar said.

His team's findings include new information on "20 detention facilities, official and unofficial...(and) secret prison networks that are allegedly controlled by armed militias".

Years of violent instability

The development comes amid a backdrop of ongoing violence and lawlessness in Libya linked to the country's protracted crisis that followed the overthrow of President Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

After years of volatility, the situation came to a head – and thousands died – after April 2019, when fighting erupted between factions of the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) commanded by Khalifa Haftar, based in the east, and the internationally-recognized government in the capital, Tripoli, located in the west.

The escalation prompted a ceasefire appeal from UN Secretary-General António Guterres to avoid the "bloody battle for Tripoli", amid fighting in and around the capital.

Today, tensions remain high after national elections were postponed last December, Mr Auajjar explained, with "two competing governments" still in place.

"Against this backdrop, violence and violations and abuses of international human rights law continued," he noted, adding that these "violations and abuses and crimes...can especially hamper Libya's transition to peace, democracy and the rule of law".

Democratic freedoms curtailed

Among the investigators' other findings, they also highlighted how people had been reportedly detained for expressing "views about the elections, or support for candidates".

Equally worrying was the "ongoing impunity for attacks against women politicians, which undermines women's meaningful political participation", Mr. Auajjar said, adding that there had been attacks on civil society organizations, on activists, on human rights defenders and on journalists".

In another incident indicative of the country's instability, the Mission's report detailed how "a group of armed men" had surrounded the Court of Appeal which had been due to hear an appeal by would-be presidential candidate Saif al-Islam Gaddafi – son of the country's toppled premier – against his exclusion from the December poll.

Child victims

Over the weekend, UN Children's Fund UNICEF in Libya reported that two children have been killed and another injured by explosive remnants of war.

The victims – who included two brothers – were six, seven and 16 years old and from Benghazi and Sirte.

Last year alone at least 26 children in Libya were killed or injured by explosive remnants of war, UNICEF said in a statement.

"UNICEF calls on all parties to spare no effort to clear Libya of land mines and unexploded ordnances and support children and families affected. Every child in Libya across the country has the right to live in a safe and a protective environment."

U.N. investigates reports of migrant mass graves in Libya (Reuters)

By Emma Farge

March 29, 2022

U.N. investigators are seeking to verify reports of mass graves thought to contain the corpses of migrants at a trafficking hub in Libya, they said in a report published on Monday that also documented incidents of rape, murder and torture.

Libya is a major transit point for Africans seeking to make the perilous journey to Europe across the Mediterranean but many instead find themselves enslaved by militias and traffickers or forced into prostitution. [read more](#)

Several migrants told the U.N. Fact-Finding Mission that there were "mass graves" in the desert city of Bani Walid, with one testifying that he had buried three people there in one of them.

Asked about the report on Tuesday, the mayor of Bani Walid Younis al-Azazi acknowledged there had been abuses of migrants in the past but said the situation had improved in recent years and he denied the existence of any mass graves.

"We deny what was stated in the report... No group or organisation has visited the city for a long time and we do not know from where this group got its information," he said by phone.

RIGHTS ABUSES

The report did not say how many bodies the graves might contain and mission member Chaloka Beyani said a newly appointed forensic expert would try to investigate further.

Several women from east Africa also testified that they had been raped and sexually abused.

"If migrants who were kept there heard the word Bani Walid, she or he would start crying. They set fire to and burn women's breasts and vaginas there," a female migrant told investigators this month in comments printed in the 18-page report that will be presented to Geneva's Human Rights Council this week.

Another Sudanese migrant in Sebha told the U.N. team that he was set alight after his family did not pay a ransom. He later died from his injuries.

The mission's report, the second of three based on some 120 interviews between October and March, also flagged violations affecting the country's democratic transition such as intimidation of activists and raised concerns about secret prisons allegedly run by rival armed militias.

Libya has been in turmoil for a decade following a 2011 NATO-backed uprising. A comparative lull in east-west fighting has set in since 2020 but U.N.-backed efforts to organise elections as part of a peace process collapsed in December, intensifying a political crisis. [read more](#)

Chaloka Beyani, one of the mission's three members, described the situation for migrants in Libya as "very, very dire" and called for technical assistance to help Libya hold the perpetrators accountable.

The mission is seeking a prolongation of its work beyond the end of June when its final report is due.

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CENTRAL AFRICA

Central African Republic

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Cases: Central African Republic**

UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the interactive dialogue on the human rights situation in the Central African Republic (Government of the United Kingdom)

March 30, 2022

The UK delivered this statement condemning the high levels of violence and the violations and abuses of human rights, including acts of sexual violence, forced displacement of civilians, and attacks against humanitarian personnel and UN

peacekeepers.

Thank you, Mr President.

The United Kingdom is concerned by the indiscriminate killings of civilians and continued violations and abuses of human rights in the Central African Republic, and by the presence of mercenaries from the Wagner Group. These mercenaries are responsible for multiple human rights abuses, including the targeting of Fulani populations. This undermines the work of UN Peacekeepers, and adds to the suffering that the people of CAR continue to experience as a result of this protracted and dire conflict.

Both the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and Non-State Armed Groups, in particular the Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement (CPC), have perpetrated widespread violations of international humanitarian law. We call for accountability for the victims and an end to the violence.

We condemn the high levels of violence and the violations and abuses of human rights, including acts of sexual violence, forced displacement of civilians, and attacks against humanitarian personnel and UN peacekeepers.

The UK will continue to work with international partners to urge the Government of CAR to make progress implementing the peace agreement and initiate dialogue between all political actors in CAR, in order to end violence, build stability and protect human rights.

High Commissioner,

What is your assessment of the opportunities and risks from the upcoming local elections on the peace process? Thank you.

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Sudan & South Sudan

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Darfur, Sudan**

Sudan orders use of military to stop Darfur tribal fighting (ABC News)

April 1, 2022

A top Sudanese general ordered Friday the use of military force to prevent further tribal violence in the province of South Darfur, after fighting there killed at least 45 people in recent days.

Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the country's second-in-command, said local authorities should "strike with an iron fist" any who violate the law. In a statement carried by state media, he authorized the implementation of emergency law and the dispersal of any tribal gatherings in the troubled region. However, his language also sparked fears of more fighting.

Sudan's Darfur region has seen bouts of deadly clashes between rival tribes in recent months as the country remains mired in a wider crisis following last year's coup, when top generals overthrew a civilian-led government.

The military takeover upended plans for a democratic transition, resulting in near-daily street protests in many Sudanese cities and towns.

According to South Darfur's security council, of the 45 killed in the past few days, 30 were civilians. A council statement, published by local media, said the fighting started in the province's Sarqila area after an attack last Saturday on a vehicle belonging to an officer with the Rapid Support Forces, a powerful paramilitary run by Dagalo.

The officer, of the Arab Rezagit tribe, was killed, and a subsequent raid on the suspected attackers' village, believed to be from the non-Arab Falata tribe, sparked deadly fighting. Since the 2019 overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government, Sudan has faced multiple challenges — including deteriorating security conditions in places such as the war-wrecked Darfur. In 2020, the United Nations closed its peacekeeping mission to Darfur, leading to fears that without a strong state presence, violence would return.

The yearslong Darfur conflict broke out when rebels from the territory's ethnic central and sub-Saharan African community launched an insurgency in 2003, complaining of oppression by the Arab-dominated government in the capital, Khartoum.

Al-Bashir's government responded with a campaign of aerial bombings and raids by the janjaweed militias, which have been accused of mass killings and rapes. Up to 300,000 people were killed and 2.7 million were driven from their homes in Darfur over the years.

Al-Bashir, who has been in prison in Khartoum since his ouster, also faces international charges of genocide and crimes against humanity related to the Darfur conflict.

Alleged militia leader on trial at ICC's first Darfur trial (The Associated Press)

By Mike Corder

April 5, 2022

An alleged leader of a Sudanese militia known as "devils on horseback" took a "strange glee" in his ruthless reputation during the Darfur conflict, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said Tuesday as the suspect's trial opened.

The 72-year-old defendant, Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as Ali Kushayb, pleaded innocent to all 31 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"I reject all of these charges," he told the court in the first ICC trial to deal with atrocities by Sudanese government-backed forces in the Darfur region nearly two decades ago.

The trial opened amid global condemnation of atrocities blamed on Russian forces in the Ukraine war and is a reminder that international courts can and do bring alleged perpetrators of crimes to justice, even if the painstaking process can be long and slow.

Prosecutor Karim Khan called the trial "an important moment in trying to wake peace from its slumber and try to move it, mobilize it, into action."

He noted that Russia voted for a United Nations Security Council mandate in 2005 that sought an ICC investigation in Darfur.

Prosecutors say Abd-Al-Rahman was a senior commander in the janjaweed militias during the Darfur conflict that erupted when rebels from the territory's ethnic central and sub-Saharan African community launched an insurgency in 2003, complaining of oppression by the Arab-dominated government in the capital, Khartoum.

President Omar al-Bashir's government responded with a scorched-earth campaign of aerial bombings and raids by the janjaweed, who often attacked at dawn, sweeping into villages on horseback or camelback.

The campaign included mass killings and rapes, torture and persecution. Up to 300,000 people were killed and 2.7 million were driven from their homes in Darfur over the years.

Khan said that Abd-Al-Rahman was "a willing and knowing participant in crimes" and "one of the key senior janjaweed militia leaders" who worked "hand-in-glove" with the Sudanese government.

"You will see that he took pride in the power that he thought he exerted and the authority that he had," Khan said. "And ... strange glee in a feared reputation."

He said witnesses will tell the three-judge trial panel about attacks, murders and rapes and describe the horrors inflicted on villages and the enduring consequences of the attacks.

"In my community, a girl who has been raped has no value," Khan cited one Darfuri as saying.

One witness was quoted by Khan in his opening statement as seeing an infant breastfeeding from its dead mother in the aftermath of an attack.

Prosecutors rejected Abd-Al-Rahman's defense that they have the wrong man.

"The evidence will show that it is Ali Kushayb in the courtroom, finally facing justice," senior trial lawyer Julian Nicholls told the court.

Al-Bashir, who has been in prison in Khartoum since he was ousted from power in 2019, also faces ICC charges of genocide and crimes against humanity related to the Darfur conflict.

Abd-Al-Rahman is suspected of crimes allegedly committed between August 2003 and at least April 2004 in Darfur, including murder, torture, rape, persecution and attacking civilians.

Khan told judges they would hear many chilling accounts of “beastly” violence by al-Rahman himself during the trial that is expected to last many months.

“There’s so many examples of abuse, not just using his ax, not just killing people or ordering the execution of children or men, allowing rapes and participating in all of the allegations that are charged and are before you,” he said.

Zuhal Ahmed, a Sudanese-American activist and head of the Darfur Community in Arizona, lauded the trial as “the beginning of victory” for the people of Darfur.

“To see Ali Kushayb standing before court after all those years, is (a) really big victory and we hope he gets the maximum penalty,” she said.

She called for international pressure on the Sudanese military to hand over other suspects wanted by the court including al-Bashir.

The trial opens amid a recent rise in violence in Darfur, which has seen deadly clashes between rival tribes in recent months as the country remains mired in a wider crisis following last year’s coup, when top generals overthrew a civilian-led government.

Omar Ismail, a former acting foreign minister with the transitional government that ruled Sudan after al-Bashir’s ouster, welcomed the trial.

“Today justice will be served to the victims and survivors of Darfur! Perpetrators of these heinous crimes shd take notice. Justice-even if delayed- will prevail,” he tweeted.

At least 45 people were killed last week in the latest bout of fighting between Arab and non-Arab tribes in South Darfur.

Khan said he hoped that by the end of the trial “the first drops of justice will land on what has hitherto been a desert of impunity in Darfur.”

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

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WEST AFRICA

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
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Lake Chad Region – Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon

Gunmen kill, abduct train passengers in attack near Nigerian capital (PBS)

By Chinedu Asadu

March 29, 2022

Gunmen attacked a train near Nigeria’s capital on Monday night with explosives and gunfire, killing an unspecified number of the nearly 1,000 passengers on board, authorities and survivors told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The attackers used explosives to first blow up the rail track before opening fire on the train near Abuja in northwest Nigeria, according to Fidat Okhiria, chief executive of the state-owned Nigerian Railway Corporation. Many people are also feared to have been abducted during the “unprecedented” attack, he said.

Authorities could not immediately confirm the number of passengers on the train but local media reported that nearly 1,000 were on board. “There were casualties but we have not been able to confirm the number,” said Okhiria, calling the attack a major setback. It is the latest in a series of other train attacks.

Abdulwadud Ahmad, a survivor, said he knew of nine passengers killed including someone sitting close to him.

“They bombed the track and started exchanging fire with the security inside the train,” he told the AP. “They subdued the security, then came into the train ... and kidnapped a lot of people. They killed some people intentionally while some (were killed) with stray bullets.”

The train service is a popular route for many in Nigeria’s capital and in the neighboring Kaduna state as travelers continue to stay away from roads notorious for kidnappings.

The attack occurred in Katari in Kaduna state, 90 kilometers (55 miles) from Nigeria’s capital, triggering fears and concerns over the safety of Abuja.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but suspicion quickly fell on the armed groups who have carried out thousands of abductions and killings in the northwest and central states of the West African nation.

The train service on the route has been suspended with immediate effect, the railway executive said, as the Nigerian military and the police continue to “comb through the areas” in search of passengers, many of whom are feared to have been abducted.

The state government in Kaduna — one of the states worst hit by the cycle of violence in Nigeria’s troubled northern region — said it has completed the evacuation of “trapped” passengers with help from the security forces.

“Passengers who sustained injuries and other fatalities have been moved to hospitals,” Samuel Aruwan, the state commissioner for security said in a statement.

He added that passengers were rescued from “different hard-to-reach areas in forests and rocky locations,” amid eyewitness accounts that some passengers escaped in the middle of the gunfire.

There have been at least three attacks reported on the Abuja-Kaduna train service in the last year, often carried out by the armed groups in Nigeria’s troubled north whom authorities have declared terrorist organizations.

Nigerian authorities are either under-assessing the declining security situation at hand or underrating the capability of the gunmen, said Oluwaseyi Adetayo, a security expert and former officer of the Nigerian secret police, the Department of State Services.

“We continue to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results,” he said. “We need to develop a bigger approach rather than a quick fix.”

20 drown fleeing attacks in Niger as terrorists again kill 23 in Kaduna (The Guardian)

By Odita Sunday (Abuja), Saxone Akhaine (Kaduna) and Msugh Ityokura (Abuja)

March 31, 2022

About 20 persons, including women and children, have lost their lives in a boat

mishap in River Shiroro, Niger State, while trying to escape attacks on their community by gunmen.

The incident occurred, yesterday, when the gunmen, said to be numbering over 200, invaded Shayita community in Munya Local Council and, in their usual manner, ransacked the place, looting foodstuff and other valuables.

Sources said the victims were crossing the river to the Zumba and Gwada Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps.

According to a source, about 10 boats took off from Shayita, heading to Zumba, when one of the boats capsized midway into the journey.

The boat was said to be carrying about 60 people, mostly women and children with their belongings. While some of the victims were rescued, many remain missing, fueling the possibility that the death toll could be more than the 20, whose bodies have been recovered by local divers.

ALSO, bandits, on Tuesday night, launched a fresh attack on two villages in Giwa Local Council of Kaduna State, killing 23 people, while several others sustained gunshot wounds.

The terrorists had earlier attacked nine villages in Giwa, killing 50 persons and abducting several others. THIS came as House of Representatives asked National Security Adviser (NSA), Chief of Defence Staff, service chiefs and Inspector General of Police (IGP) to appear before it today, to answer questions on worsening level of insecurity in the country.

Deputy Speaker, Idris Wase, refused to attend to representatives of the service chiefs and called off the meeting, insisting their superiors must appear in person.

He said: "This is a serious matter. We are not going to sit down, here, and listen to anybody beside the service chiefs themselves. They have questions to answer and they must appear, here, in person to answer Nigerians."

MEANWHILE, IGP Usman Alkali Baba has acquired five additional Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to improve surveillance operations and checkmate criminal activities in the country.

According to the police high command, this is in line with the IGP's vision and mission statements, which include technology-driven policing.

Police spokesman, Muyiwa Adejobi, said the acquisition is manifestation of the IGP's determination to integrate use of innovative technology in law enforcement duties and enhance intelligence gathering and operational capabilities.

BREAKING: Boko Haram attacks Damboa in Borno, burn down General hospital (Politics Nigeria)

By Adeola Bodunrin

April 6, 2022

Boko Haram insurgents on Wednesday morning attacked Damboa in Borno State in a bid to abduct some residents.

POLITICS NIGERIA learned that the terrorists set some buildings on fire, including Damboa General Hospital.

Subsequently, troops of Operation Hadin Kai engaged the them in a heavy gun battle. It is not yet clear if there are casualties on either or both sides.

Since the death of Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, last year, the terrorists have been trying to dominate locations around Lake Chad.

The Nigerian Army has repeatedly claimed that insurgency had been largely defeated and frequently underplays any losses.

The terror group has caused over 50,000 deaths and displaced millions of people mainly in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states.

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Nearly 600 civilians killed in Mali in 2021: UN (The EastAfrican)

March 24, 2022

Jihadists, armed militias and the armed forces in Mali killed close to 600 civilians in 2021, the UN said Thursday, with casualty numbers rising towards the end of the year.

In the last six months of 2021, civilian killings rose 16 percent, according to a report by the United Nation's peacekeeping mission in the troubled Sahel state, known as Minusma.

Mali, an impoverished nation of 21 million people, has over the past decade been wracked by a jihadist insurgency. Vast swathes of the country are in thrall to myriad rebel groups and militias.

Thousands of soldiers and civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes.

Mali's under-equipped army has also often been accused of committing abuses during the brutal conflict.

On Thursday, Minusma's human rights division said 318 civilians had been killed in the country in the second half of 2021, compared to 266 during the first six months.

Kidnappings, on the other hand, decreased from 425 during the first half of 2021 to 343 in the second half.

Jihadist groups had killed 206 civilians between July and December last year, and were responsible for abducting or disappearing 239 others, according to the Minusma report.

Other armed militias killed 70 civilians over the same period, while Malian armed forces killed 25.

In one incident in October in central Mali, the report said that Malian forces "arbitrarily executed at least seven civilians," including an eight-year-old boy.

Mali's army-dominated government has repeatedly denied accusations its military has committed abuses.

French troops and soldiers from neighbouring African states also operate in Mali.

The Minusma report said that foreign troops were responsible for killing five civilians during the second half of last year.

Human Rights Watch this month also released a report accusing Malian soldiers and jihadist groups of a wave of civilian killings.

Mali: New Wave Of Civilian Executions (The Organization for World Peace)

By Marilise de Buck

April 1, 2022

The Malian army and armed Islamist groups have allegedly killed at least 107 civilians in center and southwest Mali since December 2021, reported by Human Rights Watch. Executions of the elderly and children in particular have risen since 2012 as soldiers attempt to counter a growing Islamist insurgency. The Malian government denies involvement in the latest incident – a massacre in March of 2022 in which the charred bodies of 35 civilians were found in the Ségou region. This altercation comes after French forces, who had been in Mali since 2013, were withdrawn in February 2022 due to a failure in addressing the situation.

"There has been a dramatic spike in the number of civilians, including suspects, killed by the Malian army and armed Islamist groups," said Corinne Dufka, Sahel director at Human Rights Watch. "This complete disregard for human life, which includes apparent war crimes, should be investigated and those found to be implicated, appropriately punished."

The potential war crimes should be investigated, both of the Malian government forces and the armed Islamist groups. Both sides should end the atrocities immediately and respect the laws of war. The authorities need to facilitate independent inquiries by Mali's National Human Rights Commission and the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali. Both sides should urgently be held accountable for the deaths of civilians, and the people responsible for the human rights abuses should be suspended and investigated.

Mali has faced significant issues dating back to 2012 when jihadists took over a northern separatist uprising which the Malian

government sought to counter. Since then, armed Islamist groups, separatist rebels, ethnic militias, and government security forces have killed hundreds of civilians. Mali's former colonial power France sent troops to the country in 2013 aiming to clear jihadists, however this quickly turned into a prolonged conflict in which France had no capacity to win. Since then, the conflict only spread and the violence levels increased; this failure led to President Emmanuel Macron withdrawing all troops on February 17, 2022. Despite the presence of international troops and peacekeepers, all parties have allegedly committed war crimes over the decade of conflict. Several members of armed Islamist groups have been tried for criminal offenses, however almost no one from the government has been investigated. According to Human Rights Watch, the violence in Mali has displaced over 320,000 people.

Mali has been in ongoing conflict for a decade since the government commenced counter-terrorism operations. Both sides have committed serious human rights abuses which require investigation. The atrocities must end.

Mali massacre the worst in years of conflict (CAJ News)

By Rudd Konte
April 5, 2022

The alleged killing of an estimated 300 men, including suspected Islamists, by Malian armed forces and foreign soldiers is the worst single atrocity reported in the decade-long conflict.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the alleged executions in the central Malian town of Moura where a military operation began on March 27.

Over the course of several days, army forces and foreign soldiers reportedly executed in small groups several hundred people who had been rounded up in Moura.

"Abuses by armed Islamist groups is no justification at all for the military's deliberate slaughter of people in custody," said Corinne Dufka, Sahel director at HRW.

This was in response to a Malian defense ministry statement on April 1, stating that from March 23 to 31, the army had killed 203 "terrorists" and arrested 51 more.

The statement disclosed the army had acted on intelligence suggesting that armed Islamists were planning a "meeting with different Katibats [battalions]" in Moura.

Dufka said, "The Malian government is responsible for this atrocity, the worst in Mali in a decade, whether carried about by Malian forces or associated foreign soldiers."

HRW reported it gathered information from 27 people with knowledge of the killings.

These include witnesses from the Moura area and traders, community leaders, foreign diplomats and security analysts. Moura is a town of about 10 000 residents.

It is located in the Djenné administrative area.

Since 2015, it has been the epicentre of conflict-related violence, abuses and displacement.

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Liberia

'General Dragon Master' of Liberian Civil War Arrested in U.S. (Newsweek)

By Aila Slisco
March 28, 2022

A man accused of committing atrocities during the Second Liberian Civil War, when he was known as "General Dragon Master," has been arrested by federal authorities in Pennsylvania.

Laye Sekou Camara was charged with using a fraudulently obtained immigration document, according to a criminal complaint

filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania last week. While applying for a non-immigrant visa in 2011, Camara allegedly claimed he had "never been a member of or involved with a paramilitary unit, vigilante unit, rebel group, guerrilla group or insurgent organization."

However, according to an affidavit from a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) investigator included in the complaint, Camara was a leading member of the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, or LURD, which has been accused of committing atrocities, including the massacre of civilians, during the 1999-2003 war in Liberia.

"In fact, he was a high-ranking member of the LURD rebel group during Liberia's Second Civil War," the investigator said of Camara, according to a copy of the complaint given to Newsweek by Seamus Hughes, deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University.

The complaint cites a 2004 State Department report that asserts Camara was also known as "Sekou KAMARA" and "K1," in addition to "Dragon Master." At the time, Camara was "in hiding after he allegedly killed a fellow LURD General known as Black Marine," according to the report.

After allegedly falsely obtaining a visa to enter the country, Camara later received a green card on the same pretenses, which he went on to use on an application to Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation in 2017. Camara had been living in southwest Philadelphia before his arrest, according to The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Pennsylvania's Office of Attorney General, DHS, and other federal agencies launched an investigation into Camara in July of last year. He was not the first alleged former Liberian war criminal to be investigated on immigration fraud charges.

In 2017, Mohammed Jabbateh, also known as "Jungle Jabbateh," was convicted on charges of falsely obtaining immigration documents. He was a notorious warlord accused of atrocities committed during the First Liberian Civil War. Jabbateh, who had also been living in Pennsylvania, was later sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Liberia's First Civil War, from 1989 to 1997, left hundreds of thousands dead, including a large number of civilians. Forces led by Charles Taylor executed the former Liberian President Samuel Doe in 1990, before going to struggle for control of the country in a battle with several other rebel groups. The war ended when Taylor was elected Liberian president in 1997.

Rebel groups waging the Second Civil War hoped to remove Taylor, who resigned from office in August 2003 just before a peace agreement ended the war. Taylor was later convicted in international criminal court of multiple war crimes and sentenced to 50 years in prison.

Newsweek reached out to DHS and the Embassy of Liberia in Washington, D.C., for comment.

Liberia: Traditional Council Pledges to Fight FGM (Daily OBSERVER)

By Abednego Davis

March 30, 2022

The National Coordinator of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, Setta Fofana Saah, has broken silence on the position of her institution when it comes to the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM).

The council, according to its coordinator, is working on plans with civil society organizations, in making sure that the practices of FGM and other harmful traditional practices be laid to rest in the country.

"The position of the civil society organizations has been a wish for the council of chiefs and elders to get fully involved with the FGM campaign, and as traditional leaders of the country, we are interested in educating and protecting our youthful generation, so we will," disclosed Madam Saah.

The traditional council staff added that the country's youthful populations are future leaders, and their rights should not be infringed upon by any group of individuals.

The issue of FGM is heavily entrenched in Liberian culture, dating back many centuries. Strong taboos surrounding the practice and associated Sande secret societies make tackling the practice challenging. Liberia remains one of the three West African countries that do not have a law criminalizing FGM despite having signed and ratified regional and international human rights instruments condemning the practice as a human rights violation, including the Maputo Protocol.

Due to the lack of policy regarding female genital mutilation in Liberia, Marie Goreth Nizigama, of U.N. Women Liberia, said, "50% of women and girls aged between 15-49 years" have been mutilated. On the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation in 2012, Chief Zanzan Karwo who is the leader of Liberia's National Traditional Council expressed frustration, rebuking international groups that have sought to abolish female genital mutilation in Liberia.

He believes that FGM prepares young women to become good wives. Despite pushback, the pressure to end female genital mutilation in Liberia continues. Williametta E. Saydee Tarr, the gender, children, and social protection minister in Liberia, claims that plans are being pursued to make FGM permanently illegal, but since then, the practice is still ongoing.

On her last day in office in 2018, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed an executive order on the Domestic Violence bill to ban FGM on girls under 18 years old. However, the ban expired in February 2019. Additionally, the punishments included rehabilitation and fines which are determined on a case-by-case basis — none of which deterred practicing communities. Traditional leaders have significant power and influence over the Liberian community and often over policymakers. Once girls reach age 18, they will face immense pressure to undergo FGM in order to remain in the community.

The temporary ban on FGM was not as effective as initially anticipated during its one year of existence as a law. This was mainly due to a lack of knowledge on the existence of the ban and a lack of a coordinated multi-sectoral implementation by state agencies. Even with the existence of the Executive Order, the number of Sande bushes in Liberia has increased with the practice now extending to 11 counties from the previous 10.

Other than the temporary ban on FGM, there has never been any solid attempt at making FGM illegal in Liberia. In fact, the few cases that have gone through the justice system have been covered under Section 242 of the Penal Code which speaks to malicious and unlawful injuries towards another person by cutting off or otherwise depriving him or her of any of the members of his body, finding a person guilty of a felony. This is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Ruth Berry Peal's case

In July 2011, the members of the politically influential Sande secret society who had kidnapped and forcibly subjected Ruth to FGM were sentenced to three years imprisonment; however, they appealed the judgment and were released on bail. The appeal has been pending at the Supreme Court with no hearing date set and the perpetrators remain free.

Zaye Doe's case

In March 2017, 16-year-old Zaye Doe died in the Tappita area in the Sande bush during forced mutilation. The traditional leaders (Zoes) subjected Zaye and 25 more girls to FGM despite the government ban on Sande Secret Society operations, including FGM.

Madam Saah's assurance comes at the unveiling of a project entitled: "Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) by a consortium campaigning against FGM in Liberia. The consortium focuses on building a synopsis on messaging advocacy, and awareness-raising to pressure the government to comply with its international human rights commitments while protecting women and girls and marginalized groups.

FMG is a procedure that is performed on the genital tissue of a female ranging in age from infancy to adulthood. It can be as little as a small nick or as much as the removal of all the tissue. The practice is viewed by some as a traditional rite of passage and by others as an unnecessary, painful, and harmful procedure that can leave a female with physical and psychological problems and can even result in death.

The altering or removal of female genital tissue is usually done in nonmedical settings—with unhygienic conditions and without anesthesia. The cutting of the genital tissue may be performed with broken pieces of glass, razor blades, knives, scalpels, or scissors. In infibulation, the vaginal orifice is also sewn or otherwise sealed shut.

Madam Saah's commitment also comes in the midst of mixed reactions to a recent statement made by Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor, where she advocated for the construction of traditional schools to teach young girls and boys about traditional values.

"Liberia must continue to exist and if Liberians want their traditions to be transferred from one generation to another, a key strategy is to operate traditional schools across the country," the VP said. "If this strategy is implemented, it will leave a serious mark on all of the hope and aspirations that the FGM roadmap document carries."

The Vice President then expressed the hope that someday, when the FGM practices may have been abolished, she would love to see her daughter or granddaughter be admitted to traditional schools, where they will learn about their ancestral traditions.

Meanwhile, Naomi Nelly, Executive Director for the Community Health Initiative said, the intent of the consortium is to buttress the government's efforts in protecting citizens from the practices of the FGM and SRHR.

Madam Nelly said, in times past, there have been separate groups working towards the eradication of the FGM and the SRHR, but with the project, all of the FGM groupings now speak with one voice as a means of creating awareness against the practice. Other speakers, including Nelley Cooper, Executive director of the West Point Women for Health And Development

Organization (WPHDOA), expressed similar interest to collaborate with the civil society organizations in tackling the issue of FGM and the SRHR.

Tamba Johnson, executive director of HEforSHE Crusaders Liberia (HEFOSEL), said: “We have to come together to continue to raise a red flag against the practices of FGM and other related harmful practices, that continue to pose serious health problems to our young girls and women.

“It is time to provide support and education to them, young girls and women, that their bodies belong to them, and it is only themselves, who can make a decision on how to control it, and not anyone else to make it for them,” Mr. Johnson said.

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EAST AFRICA

Uganda

Official Website of the International Criminal Court ICC Public Documents - Situation in Uganda

Thousands escape to Uganda following violent clashes in DR Congo (UN News)

April 1, 2022

Recent violent clashes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have forced thousands to escape to neighbouring Uganda, the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, reported on Friday.

UNHCR, together with the Ugandan Government and partners, is assisting some 10,000 people who have found shelter in the southwest Kisoro district, after fleeing the violence which began on Monday.

They have arrived from the DRC's Rutchuru territory, located less than 10 kilometres from the Bunagana border crossing in Kisoro.

“As people arrived in Uganda on 28 and 29 March, artillery fire and gunshots could be heard from across the border, indicating that clashes were ongoing. Six people arrived with gunshot wounds and were taken for treatment,” said Joel Boutroue, UNHCR's Representative to Uganda.

Thousands displaced in DRC

Additionally, nearly 36,000 Congolese have been displaced within the DRC, most of whom are being accommodated by host families, or in markets and schools.

Although security conditions are making it difficult to reach them, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have established a joint task force to organize the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR and Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister, are responding to the emergency, in coordination with district and local authorities, as well as partners.

The agency has already relocated around 2,530 asylum seekers to the Nyakabande transit centre, located nearby.

Mr. Boutroue reported that heavy rains have made conditions even more difficult for people who have arrived with only the few belongings they could carry.

Many unaccompanied children

While Uganda has currently closed the Bunagana border to trade, it remains open to asylum seekers. Some are also entering the country through irregular border crossings.

“We have also observed many unaccompanied children, older people and wheelchair users among those fleeing the violence,”

he added.

"Most of the new arrivals are sheltering in and around the market and elsewhere in the community. As with many previous incidents, they want to stay close to the border so they can more easily get news of what is happening in their villages, in the hope that the violence stops, and they can return home."

UNHCR has also established a system for identifying and fast-tracking people who need emergency assistance.

Funding shortfall

The agency commended Uganda for again welcoming people uprooted by violence. The country hosts more refugees than any other nation on the continent.

This year, UNHCR will need more than \$343 million to support its operations in Uganda, but so far, less than 10 per cent of funding has been received.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian needs of more than 5.6 million internally displaced people in the DRC are also largely unmet due to lack of funding. Operations there, which total some \$224 million, are only eight per cent funded.

More than a dozen killed in eastern Congo attack (StarTribune)

By Al-Hadji Kudra Maliro

April 4, 2022

Suspected rebels attacked a village in eastern Congo with machetes and guns, killing at least a dozen civilians, Congo's army and a survivor said Monday.

Fighters believed to be part of the Allied Democratic Forces rebel group staged the attack Sunday night in Masambo, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) away from the city of Beni, army spokesman Capt. Anthony Mwalushayi told The Associated Press.

"Investigations are underway," he said. "We are in pursuit of the enemy towards the Uganda border near Mount Ruwenzori. I call on the population to remain calm and to collaborate with the Congolese army by giving any information on suspicious persons."

When Masambo was attacked residents fled, some finding refuge in Kasindi on the border with Uganda and others in Beni.

Deborah Mutangi, who spoke to the AP in Beni, said she and her children survived the attack and fled Monday morning.

"After hearing bullets, I went straight into the house to tell the children to lock the doors," she said. "In the morning, we woke up to see bodies everywhere." She said she counted at least 15 dead.

"Thank God that I arrived safely with my children," Mutangi said. She urged Congo's government to hunt down the rebels, warning that if not, "they will kill us all."

The attack by suspected ADF rebels based in Uganda, comes a few days after the start of the trials of about a dozen rebels who were captured in combat by Congo's army and were brought to Beni.

The Uganda-based ADF rebels have been active in eastern Congo for decades and have killed thousands in the region since they resurfaced in 2013. In December, Uganda sent more than 1,000 soldiers to fight with Congo's army against ADF rebels in the region.

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Kenya

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Republic of Kenya**

ICJ Kenya Calls For Speedy Probe Into Raila's Chopper Stoning Incident (Capital News)

By Davis Ayega

April 4, 2022

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Kenya has called for a speedy probe into last Friday's incident where former Prime Minister Raila Odinga's chopper was stoned in Uasin Gishu County.

Odinga's chopper came under attack when he traveled to Soy to attend the funeral of renowned businessman Jackson Kibor.

The Commission's Chairperson Protas Saende stated that the perpetrators behind the incident should be subjected to the full force of the law.

"The perpetrators of that incident need to be held accountable," he said adding that the August polls should not be a do or die contest.

He asked the offices of the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) and that of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to act accordingly and ensure Odinga gets justice.

"The two offices should continue executing their mandate as per the rule of law without fear or favor and be guided by the facts the evidence and the law as proper handling of the case will enhance public confidence," he said.

Soy lawmaker Caleb Kositany, Kapsaret's Oscar Sudi and Uasin Gishu Speaker David Kiplagat were questioned by the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) on Sunday in connection to the incident that saw the helicopters windshield damaged.

The DCI issued summons after Odinga and politicians who accompanied him singled out Kositany and Sudi for incitement.

The lawmakers denied wrongdoing even as the questioned reluctance by the State to institute investigations against attacks on Deputy President William Ruto with a similar zeal.

President Uhuru Kenyatta on Sunday also strongly condemned the incident noting that it risks destabilizing the country.

President Kenyatta spoke at Embakasi's Pipeline area after attending a church service at the African Inland Church where he was accompanied by seven Cabinet Secretaries.

"If anything catastrophic occurred as a result of that, wouldn't the country be on fire? Is that what we want?" he posed.

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Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda)

Official Website of the ICTR

Africa: 28 Years Later, the African Union Remembers Rwanda (All Africa)

By Bankole Adeoye and Hope Tumukunde Gasatura

April 4, 2022

April 7 marks the start of Kwibuka, the commemoration period of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, a cataclysmic event which saw one million killed in barely 100 days.

As this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the African Union, it is an apt time to reflect on what the genocide's legacy means for the African Union. Two decades ago, the failure of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to prevent or halt the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda was a major factor in the establishment of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

While the AU has registered progress since 1994, on the occasion of this milestone it is important to note that more can still be done to prevent atrocities on our continent.

Rwanda matters for all of Africa

The genocide against the Tutsi is not just a Rwandan story. Both the genocide and the country's rebirth since 1994 symbolise the worst and the best of Africa – our failures and our hopes.

Among other factors, the genocide was made possible by the failures of African and international actors to take preventive measures, as documented, in 2000, by the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) report, 'The Preventable Genocide'.

Yet some Africans played an admirable part, including Amb. Ibrahim Gambari, who lobbied for intervention in Rwanda as Nigeria's representative to the Security Council, or peacekeepers like Captain Mbaye Diagne, a Senegalese soldier who risked his life to save hundreds of children, women and men. This solidarity in the face of adversity and tragedy is a value which lies at the very foundation of the African Unity.

Lessons from the genocide have also been crucial. It served as a devastating reminder of the dangers of weaponized ethnic identities and social injustices, which can be found all over our continent. It also illustrated the importance of being alert to warning signs and acting on them – a crime of this magnitude did not come out of nowhere.

Following 1994, Rwanda has also proved a valuable lesson for Africa. Rebuilding a country in the aftermath of violence, particularly a devastating and traumatic genocide, is one of the biggest challenges anywhere in the world.

Rwanda has not only overcome this danger but prospered as a nation by pushing a broader vision of reconciliation encompassing socio-economic and educational inequalities. The Rwandan government strived to facilitate the healing process of the nation, by improving Rwandan's living conditions and encouraging people to think for them and to be open-minded through schooling.

Need for concrete measures

Since its inception in 2002 the African Union has been taking steps to resolve extensive peace and security challenges facing the continent. The harsh lessons from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi were at the root of the dramatic normative shift from the OAU's dogmatic principle of non-intervention to the AU's principle of non-indifference.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC), the highest standing decision-making body on matters of peace and security in Africa, has had several success stories. Since its establishment, the PSC has launched several mediation and peace-making efforts, including in Kenya, Sudan (Darfur), Sudan, and South Sudan.

The PSC also deployed military peace support operations, in Darfur, Somalia, the Comoros and in central Africa against the Lord Resistance Army (LRA). The African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) made considerable progress against al Shabaab.

Despite these great strides, the AU still faces challenges to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity. The anniversary of the 1994 genocide serves as a stark reminder that the AU cannot be a spectator in the face of violence of this nature.

Preventative measures are also crucial. We cannot stress enough the importance of education in preventing the recurrence or occurrence of genocide. Young people must be taught about the dangers of any form of discrimination – for instance, through the elaboration of a continental curriculum on preventing genocide.

Equally, there must be a renewed emphasis on the fight against impunity. Even in the Rwandan case, 28 years later, perpetrators of crimes against humanity still roam free across our continent. We must send a united message to anyone who has committed such crimes, or may do so in the future, that there is absolute solidarity among our nations, and that we will stop at nothing to deliver justice. All countries should establish legal frameworks that punish genocide perpetrators, whatever their nationality. Failure to do so will only increase the likelihood of future atrocities.

Looking to the Past and the Future

On April 7th, we are reminded that genocide represents the most flagrant crime against humanity and negates everything the African Charter and our African values stand for.

As we approach three decades after the genocide against the Tutsi, Let us reflect on steps that the continental body needs to take to be able to move from aspirations to actions. In this regard, all AU Member States and all African citizens should seize this occasion to raise awareness on the threat of genocide and to ensure that "Never Again" becomes a reality. As a continent, we must show solidarity and resolve by bearing primary responsibility for legislative, institutional and educational measures to prevent and to intervene against genocide and other mass atrocities.

The 28th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda will take place in a hybrid format, at the Nelson

Mandela Hall of the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and through the Zoom online platform. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) will also hold an Open session in May 2022 on the prevention of the ideology of hate speech, genocide and hate crimes in Africa. Other public activities will punctuate these statutory events to mark the #Kwibuka28 campaign.

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Ethiopia

Ethiopia: Crimes Against Humanity in Western Tigray Zone (Human Rights Watch)

April 6, 2022

Amhara regional security forces and civilian authorities in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone have committed widespread abuses against Tigrayans since November 2020 that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said in a new report released today. Ethiopian authorities have severely restricted access and independent scrutiny of the region, keeping the campaign of ethnic cleansing largely hidden.

The report, “We Will Erase You From This Land’: Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone,” documents how newly-appointed officials in Western Tigray and security forces from the neighbouring Amhara region, with the acquiescence and possible participation of Ethiopian federal forces, systematically expelled several hundred thousand Tigrayan civilians from their homes using threats, unlawful killings, sexual violence, mass arbitrary detention, pillage, forcible transfer, and the denial of humanitarian assistance. These widespread and systematic attacks against the Tigrayan civilian population amount to crimes against humanity as well as war crimes.

“Since November 2020, Amhara officials and security forces have engaged in a relentless campaign of ethnic cleansing to force Tigrayans in Western Tigray from their homes,” said Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch. “Ethiopian authorities have steadfastly denied the shocking breadth of the crimes that have unfolded and have egregiously failed to address them.”

The Ethiopian government should ensure immediate and sustained access to the region for humanitarian agencies, release all those arbitrarily detained, and investigate and appropriately prosecute those responsible for abuses. Any consensual agreement reached by the parties to the armed conflict should include the deployment of an AU-led international peacekeeping force to the Western Tigray Zone to ensure the protection of all communities from abuses.

“The response of Ethiopia’s international and regional partners has failed to reflect the gravity of the crimes that continue to unfold in Western Tigray,” said Agnès Callamard, Secretary General at Amnesty International. “Concerned governments need to help bring an end to the ethnic cleansing campaign, ensure that Tigrayans are able to safely and voluntarily return home, and make a concerted effort to obtain justice for these heinous crimes.”

Western Tigray Zone is a fertile administrative area in Ethiopia’s Tigray region. Claims over Western Tigray have been the source of heightened boundary and identity disputes since 1992. Western Tigray came under the control of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and allied forces and militias from the Amhara region within two weeks of the outbreak of conflict in Tigray in November 2020.

During the initial offensives, Ethiopian federal and allied forces carried out war crimes against Tigrayan communities, including indiscriminate shelling of towns and extrajudicial executions, forcing tens of thousands to flee to neighbouring Sudan and to other parts of Tigray. Tigrayan militias and local residents also carried out war crimes against Amhara residents and visiting labourers during a massacre in Mai Kadra town on November 9, the first publicly reported large-scale massacre of this conflict.

In the ensuing months, newly-appointed administrators in Western Tigray and Amhara Special Forces – a regional paramilitary force – undertook a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Tigrayan residents of the area.

Over 15 months, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed more than 400 people, including in-person interviews of Tigrayan refugees in Sudan, and remote interviews of Tigrayan and Amhara residents of Western Tigray and the Amhara region who suffered or witnessed abuses. Researchers also consulted medical and forensic reports, court documents, satellite imagery, and photographic and video evidence that corroborated accounts of grave abuses.

Campaign of ethnic cleansing

Amhara regional security forces, militias, and newly appointed authorities carried out a coordinated campaign of ethnically targeted persecution beginning in late 2020.

In several towns across Western Tigray, signs were displayed ordering Tigrayans to leave, and local administrators discussed their plans to remove Tigrayans in open meetings. A Tigrayan woman from Baeker town described threats she faced by Fanos, an irregular Amhara militia: “They kept saying every night, ‘We will kill you ... Go out of the area.’” Pamphlets appeared giving Tigrayans 24-hour or 72-hour ultimatums to leave or be killed.

The authorities rounded up thousands of Tigrayans for long-term detention and abuse in overcrowded facilities. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch believe thousands of Tigrayans are still held in life-threatening conditions.

Security forces also used gang rape, accompanied by verbal and physical abuse, abduction, and sexual slavery. A 27-year-old Tigrayan woman said that a militia member told her as the men raped her: “You Tigrayans should disappear from the land west of [the Tekeze River]. You are evil and we are purifying your blood.”

Authorities in Western Tigray also imposed restrictions on movement, humanitarian assistance, speaking the Tigrinya language, and access to farmland to coerce Tigrayans to leave. Amhara security forces, and in some places Eritrean forces present in Western Tigray, looted crops, livestock, and equipment, depriving Tigrayans of their means of survival. A 63-year-old farmer from Division village watched as a group of men destroyed his home. One of the men told him: “This is not your land. You have nothing to claim here.”

Many Tigrayan communities, facing starvation and intimidation, felt they had no choice but to leave. In other instances, local authorities provided trucks or buses to expel tens of thousands of Tigrayans, sending them east, toward central Tigray.

This coordinated campaign continued for months. Tens of thousands of Tigrayans had fled or been expelled by March 2021. Abuses and expulsions escalated again in November 2021, when tens of thousands of older and sick Tigrayans, young mothers, and children were expelled, while Amhara forces arrested and detained thousands of adult men, shooting at those who tried to flee.

Tekeze River bridge massacre

On January 17, 2021, Amhara militias, known as Fanos, and local residents rounded up and detained dozens of male Tigrayan residents of the town of Adi Goshu.

Members of the Amhara Special Forces rounded up and summarily executed about 60 Tigrayan men by the Tekeze River. Witnesses and the few men who survived believed the killings were a revenge attack after the Amhara forces suffered heavy losses during fighting with Tigrayan forces the previous night.

“When they shot at us, I fell first and then I saw also when the others in front of me were shot and fell,” said a 74-year-old survivor. “And the people behind me fell on me and covered me ... After that, they said, ‘The Tigrayans don’t die easily, shoot again.’”

The massacre prompted a mass exodus of Tigrayans from Adi Goshu.

Deaths in detention sites

Former detainees held in sites across Tigray said many people died in detention sites run by the Amhara forces and Fano militias. Some died as a result of torture, denial of medical care, and lack of food and water; guards killed others. A 72-year-old farmer said: “They [Amhara militia guards] kept telling us that Tigrayans deserve to be starved ... to death.”

Both Ethiopian federal forces and Amhara authorities have denied allegations of ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray. On February 25, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch wrote to Ethiopian federal and Amhara and Tigrayan regional authorities concerning the organizations’ findings. At time of writing, only the Amhara regional government had responded.

In armed conflict, all parties are obligated to respect international humanitarian law, the laws of war. Amhara regional forces and forces aligned with the Ethiopian government in the Western Tigray Zone committed the war crimes of murder, torture, rape, deportation and forcible transfer, and enforced disappearance. Such violations committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population in furtherance of a state or organizational policy constitute crimes against humanity.

The Ethiopian federal government and its international and regional partners should take concrete steps to protect all communities in Western Tigray, including by immediately releasing Tigrayans arbitrarily detained there, and allowing

protection monitoring. On March 24, the government announced a humanitarian truce. Regardless of any truce or ceasefire, Ethiopia's federal and regional authorities should allow unhindered, independent, and sustained humanitarian assistance.

The government should also demobilize and disarm all abusive militia forces in Western Tigray, and vet Amhara Special Forces and Ethiopian federal forces, and remove those implicated in serious abuses, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said. Civilian officials, including interim authorities in Western Tigray, and security force personnel implicated in serious abuses should be suspended pending investigations.

Any consensual agreement by all parties should include the urgent deployment of an AU-led international peacekeeping force with a robust civilian protection mandate to Western Tigray. This is crucial to promote human rights, to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid, and to help protect at-risk communities in Tigray. Ethiopia's international and regional partners should support these calls.

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EUROPE

The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, War Crimes Chamber

Official Court Website [English translation]

Predrag Bastah sentenced to 35 Years in Prison for Crimes in Vlasenica (The Sarajevo Times)

By Y.Z.

March 24, 2022

The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) pronounced and publicly announced the first-instance verdict in the Predrag Bastah case, finding the accused guilty of committing crimes against humanity in 1992.

In accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Code of BiH, the accused was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the mentioned crime, while the previously imposed sentence of long-term imprisonment of 22 years was imposed by a final judgment of the Court of BiH, from February 4th, 2010, so the accused was sentenced to a single term of long-term imprisonment of 35 years, the Court of BiH announced. The time spent on serving the sentence according to the previous final verdict shall be included in the sentence imposed on the accused, as well as the time spent in custody. Bastah was found guilty of persecuting Bosniak civilians on political, national, and religious grounds, participating in a joint plan and contributing to the common goal of depriving others person of life (murders), in the period from April 21st, 1992 to the end of September 1992, as part of a widespread and systematic attack by the military, paramilitary, and police forces of the Serb Republic of BiH against Bosniak civilians and other non-Serbs in Vlasenica municipality, knowing for such an attack and that his actions are part of that attack, as a member of the Republika Srpska (RS) Ministry of Internal Affairs reserve, Public Security Service (SJB) Vlasenica. The charge against the accused was rejected in the part relating to persons covered by a previous final verdict, as indicated in the operative part of the verdict, which is related to committing the criminal offense of Crimes against Humanity, the Court stated. It is possible to file an appeal against this verdict to the panel of the Appellate Division of the Court of BiH within 15 days from the receipt of its written copy.

Bosnian Serb Ex-Policemen, Soldiers Acquitted of Killing 57 Civilians (Balkan Insight)

By Marija Tausan

March 25, 2022

Two former policemen and three Bosnian Serb Army ex-soldiers were cleared of involvement in the murders of at least 57 Bosniak civilians in the village of Zaklopaca in the Milici municipality in 1992.

The Bosnian state court in Sarajevo on Friday handed down a first-instance verdict, acquitting Radomir Pantic, Nenad Vukotic, Branko Jolovic, Milomir Milosevic and Nikola Losic of killing at least 57 Bosniak civilians, including 11 children, in the village of Zaklopaca on May 16, 1992. “None of the direct witnesses was consistent in their statements when it comes to perpetrators of this horrible crime,” said presiding judge Mira Smajlovic. Pantic was accused of involvement in the killings as commander of the police’s Public Security Station in the town of Milici, Milosevic as a policeman and the other defendants as Bosnian Serb Army troops. The court found that there was no evidence that Pantic organised a convoy of vehicles and, together with the other defendants and other individuals, left Milici for Zaklopaca, while Milosevic drove a car that had the words ‘Koljaci – Pokolj’ (‘Butchers – Slaughter’) written on it. The court found that some witnesses who accused Pantic were not actually sure about his identity. Smajlovic cited the testimony of one witness who told the court that defendants Vukotic and Jolovic participated in the murder of a Bosniak man called Muradif Hreljic. “Out of five statements given by this witness, none matches up as regards the people who killed Muradif Hreljic. Besides that, [the witness] does not know Branko Jolovic at all,” the judge said. She added that by going to the scene of the crime, the court learned that the witness could not have possibly seen what happened from the spot where he claimed to have been standing. She also mentioned a witness who said during the trial that she regretted having given her previous statements and wanted to correct them. Smajlovic also pointed to testimony by Mehmed Kulo, a former policeman who conducted an investigation into the murders and made a list of people involved in the crime, but said at the trial: “These [defendants] were not these people.” Of the five defendants, only Jolovic attended the announcement of the verdict, while the four others failed to appear. The verdict can be appealed.

Kosovo Charges Ex-Fighter with Wartime Massacre of Villagers (Balkan Insight)

By Drenushe Ramadani

March 29, 2022

An ethnic Albanian who holds Serbian citizenship was charged with committing war crimes during a massacre by Serbian forces in the Kosovo village of Izbica in March 1999, when 147 civilians were killed.

Kosovo’s Special Prosecution said on Tuesday that it has filed an indictment charging a man identified only by the initials M.A. with involvement in committing war crimes against the civilian population of the village of Izbica on March 28, 1999. “The 12-month investigation proved that the accused M.A., together with so far unidentified individuals of the Serbian police and military forces, participated in the execution of 130 people,” the prosecution said in a statement. The suspect is an ethnic Albanian who holds Serbian citizenship and is a resident of Belgrade, the prosecution added. On March 28, 1999, Serbian forces killed a total of 147 Albanian civilians in Izbica. The surviving villagers hastily buried the bodies of their relatives and neighbours, and fled Kosovo for Albania to escape the Serbian offensive, but when they returned after the war ended later that year, the bodies had disappeared. They only found out several years later that the bodies had been reburied, mainly at a police training centre in Petrovo Selo in Serbia, as part of an attempted cover-up. M.A. was arrested in March 2021 and has been in custody ever since. The prosecution said it has taken testimonies from 100 witnesses and victims, and has secured material evidence such as video recordings and autopsy reports from the Izbica massacre.

Punishment Urged for Wartime Bosnian Army Commander (Balkan Insight)

By Haris Rovcanin

March 30, 2022

As the retrial of former Bosnian Army Third Corps commander Sakib Mahmuljin comes to an end, the prosecution called for him to be jailed for failing to stop Islamic volunteer fighters torturing and killing Serb prisoners.

In closing arguments at the retrial of Sakib Mahmuljin at the Bosnian state court on Tuesday, prosecutor Mladen Vukojicic said that the wartime Bosnian Army Third Corps commander had failed to prevent members of the El Mujahideen unit, a detachment of Islamic fighters from Middle Eastern countries, from killing Serb military captives in 1995.

Vukojicic said that the evidence had shown that members of El Mujahideen unit killed several soldiers and “butchered two of them and held up and showed off their heads” and that on one occasion they were looking for non-Muslims on the frontline to “slaughter them”.

“[Mahmuljin] failed through the system of command and control to take measures to prevent such acts. It is evident that the commander tolerated such behaviour, which was shown by witness testimonies,” said the prosecutor, who called for a jail sentence for the defendant.

According to the charges, members of the El Mujahideen unit killed 55 captured Bosnian Serb Army soldiers in the Vozuca and Zavidovici areas from July to September 1995 and cut some of their heads off.

The El Mujahideen unit operated as part of the Bosnian Army’s Third Corps during the war, but Mahmuljin argued during his initial trial that he was not responsible for the crimes committed by the foreign fighters.

He was initially found guilty in January 2021 but the verdict was overturned in November last year.

The prosecutor said that during the Bosnian Army's Farz 95 military operation, it was indisputable that members of the El Mujahideen unit kidnapped Bosnian Serb Army soldiers and three civilians from a battalion of the 328th Brigade of the Bosnian Army and took them to their base.

He added that there was sufficient evidence that Mahmuljin was informed about the abduction of the prisoners, and that they were being abused and killed.

The defence will present its closing arguments on April 5.

Canada Deports Crime Against Humanity Suspect to Bosnia (Balkan Insight)

By Nejra Dzaferagic

April 4, 2022

Nikola Koprivica, who is suspected of committing a crime against humanity in the village of Novoseoci, where over 40 Bosniaks were executed in 1992, was extradited from Canada to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bosnian state prosecution said on Monday that Nikola Koprivica has been extradited to Sarajevo to face charges of involvement in the shooting of more than 40 Bosniaks from Novoseoci, near Sokolac, in September 1992.

The Bosnian prosecution said that Koprivica, who had lived in Canada for several years, was located and identified in cooperation with the Canadian authorities.

A court case is already ongoing for the killings in Novoseoci. Among those on trial are Dragomir Obradovic, former commander of the police's Public Security Station in Sokolac, Momcilo Pajic, former commander of the Military Police Company with the Second Romanija Motorised Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army, and his deputy Aleksa Gordic.

Also on trial are Miladin Gasevic, former deputy commander of the Reconnaissance Company of the Second Romanija Motorised Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army, as well as Momir and Branislav Kezunovic, Zeljko Gasevic and Jadranko Suka, all former members of the company.

According to the charges, members of the Military Police and Reconnaissance Company went to Novoseoci on the night of September 21-22, 1992.

They took 44 Bosniak men to a landfill at Ivan Polje, where they were killed, while women, children and elderly people were taken away towards Sarajevo. One woman was also allegedly killed in the village.

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International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

Official Website of the ICTY

Serbiens pay tributes to victims of NATO bombing in former Yugoslavia (Peoples Dispatch)

March 27, 2022

The 78-days-long NATO bombing campaign in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between March 24 to June 10, 1999 caused the death of around 2,000 people, along with massive destruction of property and infrastructure.

On Thursday, March 24, left-wing sections in Serbia paid tributes to the victims of NATO bombings in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Thursday marked the 23rd anniversary of the start of the 78-days-long NATO bombing campaign in erstwhile Yugoslavia between March 24 to June 10, 1999, which caused the death of around 2,000 people, along with massive

destruction of property and infrastructure.

Representatives from various political parties including the New Communist Party of Yugoslavia (NKPJ), League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOJ), Party of Radical Left (PRL), Socialist Party of Serbia, and the Serbian Left laid wreaths at the monument of Eternal Fire in Belgrade and denounced the NATO invasion of Yugoslavia.

NATO intervened in the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia on March 24, 1999, under the pretext of protecting Kosovo from Serbian forces. The ethnic conflict in Serbia started in the late 1990s between the government led by Slobodan Milosevic and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). It resulted in large-scale violence, displacement, and loss of lives and property. The NATO forces had conducted massive airstrikes to smash the Yugoslav forces. The war ended with the Kumanovo Treaty between the International Security Forces (KFOR) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on June 9, 1999, whereby the Yugoslav-Serbian forces agreed to a phased withdrawal from Kosovo to make way for international civilian and security presence there under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).

The UN formed the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 as an ad hoc international court to try the perpetrators of crimes against humanity during the Yugoslav wars that started in 1991. Many accused the ICTY of being biased as it only looked into cases of war crimes committed by the Serbian leadership of former Yugoslavia, while disregarding those committed by western forces under NATO leadership.

On March 24, the PRL stated that the NATO attack on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, carried out in gross violation of international law, marked a new era of Euro-Atlantic imperialism, which, under the guise of democracy and human rights, destroys countries and kills people all over the world.

PRL accused that the US-EU led bloc is now pressuring Serbia to join the European sanctions against Russia, contrary to the vital interests of its population. “We would like to remind that Serbia has previously harmonized its foreign policy with the EU by imposing sanctions on Syria and Belarus and thus actually joined the hybrid war and the attempt to change the regime in these countries.”

PRL demanded the Serbian government to maintain military neutrality of the country and oppose sanctions as a way of conducting war as they can sometimes be just as deadly as war operations.

Infographic: 30 years since the Bosnian War. (Aljazeera)

By Hanna Dugal

April 6, 2022

The international armed conflict that lasted from 1992 to 1995 led to a genocide that killed more than 100,000 people.

April 6 marks 30 years since the start of the Bosnian War, an international armed conflict that lasted from 1992 to 1995 and saw the ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks.

According to an analysis by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), more than 100,000 people were killed during the Bosnian War, and at least 70 percent of them were Bosniaks.

Following Bosnia's recognition as an independent state in 1992, Bosnian Serbs backed by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, began a campaign to ethnically cleanse the Bosnian territory.

More than two million people became refugees during the conflict, according to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR).

The breakup of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was formed after World War I, comprising six Slavic groups with the official language being Serbo-Croatian.

During World War II, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was founded – a federation subdivided along ethnic lines to include six republics – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

The republic was under the control of communist leader Josip Broz Tito from 1944 until his death in 1980. Following Tito's death, ethnonationalist tensions began to rise as the republics edged away from each other.

In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia – this would be the start of the state's disintegration. In 1992, Macedonia followed suit.

On March 1, 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina held an independence referendum in which 99.7 percent of people, with a 63.4 percent turnout, voted in favour of separating from Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs wanted to remain part of Yugoslavia and

boycotted the vote.

Bosnia's move towards independence was driven by Serbia's aggressive separatist policies, in which Milosevic planned to unify Bosnian and Croatian Serb territories. In Bosnia, the Serb Autonomous Oblast (SAO), a governing unit, had already been set up by secessionist Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia in the early 1990s. In April 1992, the United States and the European Economic Community recognised Bosnia as an independent state. Following the recognition, Bosnian Serb forces began an attack on Sarajevo.

In early April 1992, Bosnian Serb forces started what was to become the longest city siege in modern warfare at the time. Bosnian Serb fighters backed by the Yugoslav army cut off the city's electricity and water in a 43-month siege. From 1992 to 1995, 11,000 people were killed in Sarajevo.

Key players in the Bosnian War

Ethnonationalism played a big role in the Bosnian War, with Serbia and Croatia violating Bosnia's borders to advance their nationalist agendas.

A UN embargo on arms sales to the whole of the Yugoslav federation was put in place by the Security Council in 1991, leaving the Bosnians defenceless against Serbian and Croatian aggressors. Serbia, on the other hand, had inherited military infrastructure and arms from the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) – the fourth-strongest army in Europe at the time.

Here are some of the key players during the Bosnian War:

Slobodan Milosevic – Serbia's president was the most influential figure during the Bosnian War and Balkan conflicts during the 1990s. Milosevic played a crucial role in driving ethnic tensions in the region.

Alija Izetbegovic – Bosnia's first president led the country to independence in the 1992 referendum. He was one of the three leaders who negotiated the 1995 Dayton peace accords.

Franjo Tudjman – Croatia's nationalist leader was a key participant in the "joint criminal enterprise" to ethnically cleanse Bosniaks, supported Bosnian Croats during the Bosnian war and also negotiated a peace agreement during the Dayton accords.

Radovan Karadzic – the leader of the Bosnian Serbs was responsible for the massacre that unfolded in Srebrenica. Following the war, Karadzic went underground before being arrested in 2008.

Ratko Mladic – Bosnian Serb military leader known as the "Butcher of Bosnia", Mladic commanded the Bosnian Serb army during the conflict. Along with Karadzic, he was responsible for planning the Srebrenica genocide.

Radislav Krstic – Bosnian Serb commander was involved in the killing of Bosniaks.

Timeline of key events during the war

1992:

March 1 – Bosniaks and Bosniak Croats vote for independence from Yugoslavia.

April 4-5 – The siege of Sarajevo begins under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic.

April 6 – The European Community recognises Bosnia's independence.

May – The UN imposes sanctions on Serbia for backing rebels in Bosnia and Croatia.

October – Croat forces carry out a surprise attack on Bosniaks in the municipality of Prozor, marking the beginning of the Croat-Bosniak war in Bosnia, often referred to as a war within a war.

1993:

January – Peace efforts fail in Bosnia.

April 16 – The UN declares Srebrenica a safe area under the protection of the UN Protection Force. Troops are deployed, however, the town is cut off with only a few humanitarian convoys reaching the area.

May 6 – The UN includes the cities of Sarajevo, Zepa, Gorazde, Tuzla and Bihac in the safe zones.

1994:

March – The US leads an agreement that ends the Bosniak-Croat war and results in a federation.

1995:

March – Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, orders Srebrenica and Zepa to be cut off completely and aid envoys to be stopped from reaching those areas.

July 9 – Karadzic issues an order to overtake Srebrenica.

July 11 – Under the command of General Ratko Mladic, Serb forces capture Srebrenica and systematically kill more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys. This is later ruled a genocide by the international courts in The Hague in 2005. Bosniak women and girls were mass raped.

November 21 – Following air attacks, Bosniak President Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic agree to a deal brokered by the US.

December 14 – The Dayton peace accords are signed in Paris. The agreement divided the country into two administrative entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a predominantly Bosniak and Croat population, and the entity of “Republika Srpska” (Serbian Republic) with a majority Serb population – seen by some as a direct result of ethnic cleansing.

Charged with war crimes In 1993, the International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was set up by the UN to deal with the war crimes committed during the conflicts in the Balkans. The tribunal lasted 24 years, from 1993 to 2017.

Witnesses and victims provided evidence of the atrocities of the war in which 161 individuals were indicted – 90 were sentenced, 19 acquitted, 20 had their indictments withdrawn, 17 died before conviction, 13 were referred to other courts, and two were retried.

Four types of crime were recorded at the tribunal – genocide, crimes against humanity, violations of laws/customs of war and grave breaches of the Geneva Convention.

Among the people tried by the tribunal were:

Slobodan Milosevic – proceedings terminated in 2006 following his death.

Radovan Karadzic – sentenced to life imprisonment for war crimes, crimes against humanity and committing genocide.

Ratko Mladic – sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity and committing genocide.

On February 26, 2007, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) formally recognised the massacre in Srebrenica as a genocide. In June of the same year, survivors and family members of victims of Srebrenica filed a complaint against the UN and the Netherlands for failing to protect civilians in Srebrenica and failing to report war crimes.

On June 27, 2017, the Hague Court of Appeal ruled that the Dutch government was partly responsible for the deaths of 350 Bosniak men and boys during the Srebrenica genocide.

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Domestic Prosecutions In The Former Yugoslavia

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Turkey

Turkish forces crimes against children in Ain Issa-Gire Spi (Hawar News Agency)

March 24, 2022

Since the Turkish onslaught against the Sere Kaniye and Gire Spi cantons on 9 October 2019, crimes are committed by the Turkish occupation army and its affiliated mercenary groups on daily bases.

According to the concerned bureau 31 children were martyred or injured by the Turkish occupation army and the affiliated mercenary groups as they were targeted directly or lost their lives by land mines.

The martyrs are nine children: Hatem Zaidan Misto, 7, Mustafa Saleh Ahmed, 17, Ahmed Ibrahim Rahim, 12, Mahmoud Himeidi Khalil, 13, Ziyad Zayed Khalaf, 12, Huda Zayed Khalaf, 9, Muna Zayed Khalaf, 7, Mustafa Saleh, 14, and Mohamed Ali Ahmed, 14.

While the injured are 22 children. They are:

'Ebid Khider Sarhan, 7, Mahmoud Zaydan Zaydan, 3, Udai Ismail Ahmed, 16, Mu'aid Ali Ahmed, 15, Mohamed Alki Ahmed, 16, Abdul Raheem Mohamed Hemed, 12, Emina Najeeb, 7, Sidra Zayed Khalaf, 1 year old, 'Udai Ismail, 15, Mustafa Adel Ahmed, 17, Aqeel Aziz Hisein, 16, Rashid Hesen Khalaf, 11, Beshir Zayed Hesen, 16, Raghad Ali, 15, Natil Taleb, 1 year old, Mahmoud Ali Mar'id, 17, Ghifran Mustafa Khalil, 15, 'Ebud Hemed Khalil, 12, Munir Khaled Hisein, 16, Khalaf Jasim Freij, 15, 'Awad Nawash 'Inizan, 14 and Maher Nawash 'Inizan, 10.

On the issue, Co-chair of the Child Protection Bureau in the Gire Spi Canton, Fadia Sherif, says "with the continuation of shelling tens of cases were referred to our bureau of crimes committed against children by the Turkish shelling and its mercenaries and remnants of the war of its mortars shelled on the canton".

Fadia made it clear that most documented cases that were referred to their cases amount to war crimes, that claimed lives of tens of children as shrapnel caused sustained damages to some others".

Fadia "called on the international community and the concerned humanitarian and legal associations to stop these crimes and to hold Turkey accountable for the crimes committed".

On 24 March two injuries (Mohamed Khalil Hassan and Ayman Hesen Hassan, 12) were referred to the Martyr 'Alush Hospital due to the Turkish shelling on the village of Khirbet Baydha in eastern Ain Issa on the strategically important Aleppo-Hasaka Highway known as the M4.

In addition to all of these crimes, some 5000 s/he pupils are deprived of schooling as schools are closed down due to the insecurity caused by the Turkish occupation force s and their affiliated mercenary groups.

Body of Training and Education say 23 schools on the frontlines are closed.

After drone sale, Turkey now to train Ethiopian army accused of committing war crimes in civil war (Nordic Monitor)

By Levent Kenez

March 25, 2022

Turkey has started the parliamentary process to put into effect a military cooperation agreement signed with Ethiopia last year. The agreement, which was sent to the relevant parliamentary committee, is expected to soon be approved.

Ethiopia is accused of committing serious human rights violations and war crimes in the bloody civil conflict with Tigray militia members since November 2020 by the United Nations and European Union as well as human rights organizations.

According to the Military Framework Agreement between Turkey and Ethiopia signed on August 18, 2021, one of a series of agreements signed during Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's official visit to Ankara last year, Ethiopian officers will be able to receive training in Turkish military schools and receive combat training in Turkish military units, and Turkish officers will train their Ethiopian counterparts at their military posts. In addition, the two countries will be able to hold joint military exercises.

During Ahmed's visit, Turkey also promised to provide financial aid to Ethiopia as well as financial cooperation in the military field that will enable Ethiopia to purchase weapons from Turkey.

According to Article 4(6) of the agreement, the parties also agree to share military intelligence. Moreover, parties will provide mutual logistic support and exchange munitions, materials and services in the form of grants or in return for payment.

The article on copyrights generally included in agreements on cooperation in the defense industry that Turkey has signed with countries to which it plans to sell weapons is also included in the framework agreement with Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian cabinet sent the agreement to the parliament for approval on March 19.

The official statement made after the cabinet meeting emphasized that Turkey and Ethiopia have been close friends for centuries and that Turkey has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to Ethiopia as an ally in need.

Turkey-Ethiopian military relations came to the international agenda after the Ethiopian army on January 7 hit a primary school building filled with children, women and elderly men with drones bought from Turkey. In the attack, at least 59 civilians were killed and dozens more were injured. Up until that time, Turkey was not known to have sold drones to Ethiopia. Weapons remnants recovered from the site were determined to be MAM-L (smart micro munition) guided bombs produced by Turkey's Roketsan and paired exclusively with Turkish-made Bayraktar drones.

The Protection of Civilians Peace organization Pax, which has been tracking the presence of drones throughout the northern Ethiopia conflict, identified a Turkish-made TB-2 drone at the Harar Meda military airport just south of Addis Ababa.

The Turkish Embassy was temporarily moved to Kenya after Tigrayan militants announced they would target the embassy after the bloody attack.

Bayraktar drones, which have been in the news during the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian war, are produced by Turkish company Baykar. Baykar, of which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son-in-law Selcuk Bayraktar is one of the owners, has increased its sales, particularly to African countries, thanks to Erdoğan's initiatives. The ability of a private Turkish company to sell weapons abroad depends on securing permission from the Presidency of the Defense Industry, which is subordinate to the Turkish Presidency. However, Turkey prioritizes the revenue it will generate rather than to whom the weapons are sold and how they are used.

In December 2021 the United Nations Human Rights Council decided to establish an international commission of human rights experts to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of violations and abuses committed in Ethiopia. The resolution was brought to a vote by the EU.

In February human rights organization Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), which submitted a complaint with the US law firm Debevoise & Plimpton and the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU) to the African Union's human rights commission, claimed that alleged violations by Ethiopia "could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity" in its war against Tigrayan rebel forces, including mass killings, sexual violence and military targeting of civilians.

Meanwhile, relations between Turkey and Ethiopia are also developing outside the military field. On March 11 a group of deputies headed by Mehmet Sait Kirazoğlu, chairman of Turkey Ethiopian Parliamentary Friendship Group, and the Turkish ambassador met with lawmakers and officials in Ethiopia. The delegation also received a briefing on the aid activities of Turkish government institutions.

Shortly after the visit, Turkish Ambassador Yaprak Alp met with the speaker of parliament, on March 17.

The Ethiopian ambassador to Turkey, Adam Mohammad, met with Elif Çomoğlu, director-general of East and Southern African Affairs at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, on Wednesday.

Nordic Monitor last week reported that Turkey speeded up the approval of bilateral defense cooperation agreements with African countries in order to increase arms sales to the continent, which it has viewed as a target market for defense industry exports for some time.

On an important note, Ethiopia on Thursday announced an immediate ceasefire to its 16-month-long civil war, paving the way for aid to displaced people across the northern Tigray region.

In a statement on Thursday the government said it was declaring "an indefinite humanitarian truce effective immediately," saying it hoped to help hasten the delivery of emergency aid into the Tigray region, where hundreds of thousands face starvation.

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Kosovo Specialist Chambers

Kosovo Albanian indicted for 1999 war crimes (abc NEWS)

March 29, 2022

PRISTINA, Kosovo -- Prosecutors on Tuesday indicted an Albanian man for war crimes over his alleged participation in the killings of 130 people in Kosovo 23 years ago.

The special prosecutor's office accused the resident of Belgrade, Serbia - identified only by the initials M.A. - of "war crimes against the civilian population," according to a statement.

A 12-month investigation indicated that in March 28, 1999, the suspect was a member of Serb police and military units that executed 130 civilians in Izbice, 80 kilometers (55 miles) west of the capital, Pristina. Twelve of the civilians survived.

Investigators questioned more than 100 witnesses and collected evidence showing that M.A. and other Serb forces had committed war crimes against civilians.

The statement said the suspect was in custody, without specifying the place and time of his arrest.

The prosecutor's office said the Izbice massacre investigation continues because it is "major and complex case" involving other suspects.

A bloody 1998-1999 bloody conflict between Serbia and Albanian separatists in Kosovo, then a Serbian province, left more than 12,000 people dead and about 1,600 still missing. NATO's intervention in the form of a bombing campaign on Serbia ended the war.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, a move recognized by the United States and most EU nations. Serbia has refused to recognize Kosovo as separate nation after 11 years of EU-brokered negotiations.

Kosovo Criticised for Slow Progress in Prosecuting War Crimes (Balkan Insight)

By Ardita Zeqiri

April 4, 2022

Only one indictment was filed last year for war crimes committed in the 1998-99 conflict and only two suspects were arrested, said a new report by the Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo.

A report on war crimes prosecutions published by the Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo on Monday said that only one new indictment was raised in 2021, only two people were arrested on suspicion of war crimes, while five cases were ongoing in the courts.

The head of the War Crimes Department at the Kosovo Special Prosecution, Drita Hajdari, said investigating and prosecuting war crimes remains a challenge because many suspects are not in the country.

"The prosecution has handled cases and filed indictments in cases where we have secured the physical presence of the defendant. We cannot file indictments in cases when we do not have the presence of the perpetrators," said Hajdari.

Hajdari added that although Kosovo law allows for trial in absentia, verdicts are almost unenforceable in such cases. She added that over 1,000 war crimes cases are pending.

The most recent indictment charged an ethnic Albanian, identified only by the initials M.A. with involvement in committing war crimes against civilians in the village of Izbica on March 28, 1999, when Serbian forces killed a total of 147 Kosovo Albanians.

The British ambassador to Pristina, Nicholas Abbott, said at the launch of the report said that the investigation of war crimes in Kosovo could be accelerated if there was judicial cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia.

Abbott said a major challenge is that many of the perpetrators of the crimes are now dead, or not in Kosovo, like suspect M.A., who lives in Belgrade. Serbia does not recognise Kosovo's independence and does not extradite suspects to Pristina.

Abbott added that an additional problem is that "many survivors are dead, or too old [to testify]".

From 2000 to 2008, war crimes in Kosovo were investigated by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK. After 2008, the EU's rule-of-law mission EULEX was responsible for investigating war crimes.

EULEX completed the process of handing over its war crimes files to the Kosovo prosecution and courts in 2018, and such cases are now in the hands of the domestic judiciary.

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Azerbaijan

Armenian PM Discusses Karabakh Escalation With Putin After Deadly Skirmish Reported (Radio Free Europe)

March 26, 2022

The Russian Defense Ministry says Azerbaijani armed forces entered a zone policed by Russian peacekeepers in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in violation of a Moscow-brokered cease-fire agreement that ended a six-week war in 2020.

The Defense Ministry in Moscow also accused Azerbaijani troops of using Turkish-made drones to strike troops in Nagorno-Karabakh, while the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed "extreme concern" over the spiraling tensions in the region.

Russia also said it had called on Azerbaijan to pull out its troops and called on the parties to the conflict to show restraint and ensure compliance with the agreements reached by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia.

The announcement was the first time since the end of the hostilities over Karabakh in November 2020 that Moscow has accused one of the parties of violating the cease-fire.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry described Russia's statement as "one-sided," saying it "does not reflect the truth."

On the morning of March 26 "members of illegal Armenian armed groups attempted to sabotage units of the Azerbaijani Army," the ministry said. "As a result of immediate measures, members of illegal Armenian armed groups were forced to withdraw."

The ministry requests that Russia "fully withdraw the remaining Armenian troops and illegal armed units from the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan."

It reiterated Azerbaijan's commitment to the cease-fire it signed with Armenia and Russia in November 2020 to end the military conflict in which Azerbaijan recaptured territory it had lost in a war fought in the early 1990s.

The two countries' defense ministers discussed the situation in the enclave and the "Azerbaijani side stated that it is clarifying the positions and deployment locations of its armed forces" on the ground, the ministry in Baku said.

The command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent is also taking measures to resolve the situation and return the troops to their original position, the Russian military said.

Moscow deployed almost 2,000 peacekeepers to the region after the cease-fire, reaffirming its role as chief power broker in a volatile part of the former Soviet Union where Turkey also wields influence through its alliance with Azerbaijan.

Incidents between the armed forces of arch enemies Azerbaijan and Armenia have been frequent in recent months, and on March 25 three ethnic Armenian soldiers were reportedly killed and several more wounded in clashes with Azerbaijani troops.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian discussed the latest escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Pashinian's press office said that the two leaders discussed "the situation created after the invasion by Azerbaijani units into the zone of responsibility of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation in Nagorno-Karabakh."

On March 26, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Putin and Pashinian had held two phone calls on March 24 and March 25.

"The situation on the contact line in Karabakh was discussed," Peskov told reporters.

"Prime Minister Pashinian raised the need to investigate the actions of Russian peacekeepers in the given situation and stressed that it is necessary that Russian peacekeepers demand that Azerbaijani armed forces withdraw to their initial positions," the transcript of the phone call released by the Armenian side said.

"The leaders of the two countries agreed to make efforts to resolve the crisis situation in Nagorno-Karabakh," it added.

The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 claimed more than 6,500 lives.

Remains from mass graves in Azerbaijan's Karabakh exhumed (Trend News Agency) April 4, 2022

Human remains found in mass graves have been exhumed in Azerbaijan's Karabakh, Military Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan said, Trend reports.

The Military Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan, together with representatives of the State Security Service, the State Commission for the Affairs of Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Citizens, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relevant structures exhumed the remains of human bodies from the discovered mass graves in Shusha region's Dashalty village, Khojavand region's Edilli village, Aghdam region's Syrkhavend village, Khojaly district's Farrukh village and other territories, report added.

These remains, presumably, belong to persons who went missing during the first Karabakh war. Forensic, molecular and genetic examinations of these remains have been ordered and other necessary actions have been taken, the report said.

Operational and investigative measures are ongoing in the Military Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan on a criminal case initiated under the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of Azerbaijan in connection with war crimes, terrorism, deliberate murders and other crimes against peace and humanity committed by the armed forces of Armenia and illegal Armenian armed groups against the Azerbaijani people, report emphasizes.

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Russia

Canada sending team to International Criminal Court to investigate possible Russian war crimes in Ukraine (The Globe and Mail)

By Robert Fife

March 28, 2022

The Canadian government is sending a specialized team of RCMP investigators to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to gather evidence of potential Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

The RCMP will also be tasked with interviewing Ukrainians, who have come to Canada, for testimony of war crimes committed by Russian forces, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said in an interview Monday.

The RCMP have long had officers assigned to the International Criminal Court, or ICC, a global court located in the Netherlands city of The Hague, to assist in investigations involving war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

But at the request of the ICC, Mr. Mendicino said Ottawa is now sending a specialized team of RCMP officers to specifically help in the ICC's formal investigation of alleged Russian atrocities.

"As we see human casualties pile up and the scale and size of this humanitarian crisis grow alarmingly, it is important that we hold those who are committing the atrocities responsible, and that is why Canada is making a significant contribution to the International Criminal Court's investigation into war crimes in Ukraine," Mr. Mendicino said.

He said RCMP officers will be part of teams of ICC investigators who will compile evidence that can later be used to prosecute Russians involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"It is essential that we preserve the record of what happened and what is happening in Ukraine in real time," he said.

The ICC's chief prosecutor, British lawyer Karim Khan, has said there are grounds to believe war crimes have been carried out against Ukrainian civilians since Russia invaded the country on Feb. 24.

If there's evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Mr. Khan will ask ICC judges to issue arrest warrants to bring individual Russians to trial in The Hague.

In a statement, RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki said Mounties in Canada will also investigate alleged war crimes under Canada's Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes program.

Mr. Mendicino said Ukrainians, who are fleeing the war and have come to Canada, will be interviewed by the RCMP to provide testimony and evidence of Russian atrocities.

“The way the RCMP can contribute to that on Canadian soil is to interview witnesses, including those who have fled Ukraine, by investigating any suspects who may have come to their attention and by collecting and preserving any evidence, which is garnered through this process,” he said. “Second, it’s important that Canada cannot be used as safe haven for anyone who is attempting to flee justice.”

Mr. Mendicino said the world has been watching in horror as Russia’s armed forces carries out what he called “systematic and brutal attacks” against the Ukrainian people.

“We are seeing homes that are being reduced to rubble. Hospitals and maternity wards subject to rock fire. You are seeing parks, where children and families play, completely decimated,” he said.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Russia had “destroyed apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, critical infrastructure, civilian vehicles, shopping centres and ambulances.” Those indiscriminate and deliberate attacks amounted to war crimes, he said.

Britain has also accused Russia of “barbaric and indiscriminate” shelling of Ukrainian civilians and offered to deploy police to the International Criminal Court to gather evidence of alleged war crimes.

Moscow denies it has deliberately targeted civilians in its brutal war against Ukraine, which has forced more than 3½ million people to flee to neighbouring countries since the fighting began.

Mr. Khan announced on Feb. 28 that he would investigate suspected atrocities in Ukraine at the request of 39 ICC-member states, including Canada. He will examine possible war crimes on both sides of the conflict going as far back to Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The United States, Russia and Ukraine are not members of the court.

In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved an order to withdraw from the process of joining the ICC. The decision came after an ICC ruling that Russia’s activity in Crimea amounted to an “ongoing occupation.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky authorized the court to investigate on its territory and a team of ICC investigators is collecting evidence in Ukraine.

The ICC has opened twelve official investigations involving war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Darfur, Sudan and Libya. A total of 46 individuals have been indicted including former leaders of Sudan, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The ICC began operations in 2002 and is modelled on the Nuremberg trials, when the U.S. and allied nations prosecuted top Nazi leaders in 1945 for war crimes.

Amnesty’s leader accuses Russia of war crimes in Mariupol (The Globe and Mail)

By Mogomotsi Magome

March 28, 2022

Amnesty International is accusing Russia of committing war crimes in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol.

The human rights organization will soon release an in-depth report on the devastation caused by Russia’s assault on the city on the Sea of Azov, Amnesty’s Secretary-General Agnes Callamard said in a press conference in Johannesburg.

“The siege of Mariupol, the denial of humanitarian evacuation and humanitarian escape for the population, and the targeting of civilians, according to Amnesty International’s investigation, amounts to war crimes,” said Callamard. “That is the reality of Ukraine right now.”

Callamard said “the crisis in Ukraine right now, the invasion ... is not just any kind of violation of international law. It is an aggression. It is a violation of the U.N. charter of the kind that we saw when the U.S. invaded Iraq.”

On other topics, Amnesty released its annual report Tuesday, with Callamard noting that, amid the pandemic, large corporations and wealthy countries had increased global inequality in 2021.

“Noxious corporate greed and brutal national selfishness, as well as neglect of health and public infrastructure,” deepened existing global inequalities, Callamard said.

Vaccine inequity during the pandemic has entrenched racial injustice, said the report. By the end of 2021, only 8% of Africa’s

population of 1.3 billion people had been vaccinated, far short of the World Health Organization's 40% vaccination target, it said.

"Despite efforts by some governments ... international cooperation largely failed. High-income countries stockpiled millions more doses than they could use, leaving some countries able to vaccinate their entire populations three to five times over," Amnesty's report said.

Amnesty estimated that some major vaccines manufacturers — including BioNTech, Pfizer and Moderna — stood to make profits of more than \$130 billion by the end of 2022. It said wealthy nations had largely failed to provide debt relief to poorer nations in order to support their economic recovery from the pandemic.

"There was an opportunity to use the huge global investment and medical breakthroughs to improve the delivery of healthcare. However governments around the world failed to show leadership," said the report.

In Africa, millions of civilians also suffered from armed conflicts in 2021, the report said.

Participants in Africa's conflicts — including ones in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Ethiopia, and Mali — have committed war crimes and other serious violations of international human rights law, according to the organization.

The report said 2021 also saw continued attacks on journalists, activists and human rights defenders, with some governments using COVID-19 regulations to suppress protests.

United Nations names experts to probe possible Ukraine war crimes (Reuters)

By Stephanie Nebehay

March 28, 2022

The United Nations named three human rights experts on Wednesday to investigate possible war crimes in Ukraine where Russia has been accused of indiscriminate bombardment of civilians.

The independent panel, led by Erik Mose of Norway, will probe all accusations of rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law "in the context of the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation," a statement said.

Ukraine and its Western backers have accused Russia's armed forces of killing and inflicting suffering on residents by shelling and besieging cities, most notably the southern port of Mariupol. Moscow denies targeting civilians.

On the other side, video has been circulating on social media purporting to show Ukrainian forces mistreating captured Russian soldiers. Kyiv has said the images look fake but that it will punish perpetrators if found to be true.

The U.N. Human Rights Council has created the commission of inquiry for one year at the request of Ukraine and allies including the European Union, Britain and the United States.

POTENTIAL PROSECUTIONS

Russia, which calls its Feb. 24 invasion a "special operation" to disarm and "denazify" Ukraine, opposed the probe.

The United Nations also has fact-finding inquiries for war crimes in Syria, Myanmar and other conflicts. Their reports have been used to build cases for potential prosecutions.

Under the resolution on Ukraine adopted by the 47-member Geneva forum, the panel will interview witnesses and collect forensic material for any future legal proceedings.

It is to report initial findings in September.

Mose is a former judge of the European Court of Human Rights and former president of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda who also served as a judge on Norway's Supreme Court.

Other panel members are Jasminka Dzumhur, the human rights ombudsperson of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Pablo de Greiff, a Colombian who was the first U.N. justice investigator

Apparent war crimes by Russian forces in Bucha must be investigated (Amnesty International)

April 4, 2022

Following reports of apparent war crimes committed by Russian military forces

against civilians in Bucha, Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said:

“These reports from Bucha are showing a wider pattern of war crimes including extrajudicial executions and torture in other occupied areas of Ukraine.

“We fear the violence suffered by civilians in Bucha at the hands of Russian soldiers is not unique. These incidents should be investigated as war crimes.

“To date, Amnesty International has gathered evidence of civilians in Ukraine killed by indiscriminate attacks in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblast, documented an airstrike that killed civilians queuing for food in Chernihiv, and gathered evidence from civilians living under siege in Kharkiv, Iziium and Mariupol.”

Later this week, Amnesty International will publish new testimony gathered during an on-the-ground investigation in a number of towns in the wider Kyiv region.

As Russia continues its war against Ukraine, Amnesty International is continuing to document violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. All of Amnesty International’s outputs published to date – including news updates, briefings and investigations – can be found here.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is itself a crime under humanitarian law.

The Horrors of Bucha: At the Scene of the War Crimes (Spiegel International)

By Christian Esch and Thore Schroeder

April 4, 2022

The road leading into Bucha from the south is lined with pastureland. On the way into town, you’ll pass a white Ford station wagon, its doors marked clearly with black tape spelling out the Cyrillic letters "дети," which means "children" in Russian. The tires of the car are flat, and the front of the vehicle is almost completely torn off. There are clothes lying on the ground next to the vehicle. It looks a lot like a family’s attempt to flee the town came to a sudden end here.

Until last Thursday, Bucha was in the hands of Russian Federation troops. From here, the invading army hoped to advance on the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. But following heavy fighting, during which the Russians in particular suffered severe losses, the progress of the invading army was stopped. The Russians have now withdrawn from the Kyiv Oblast and have left behind death and destruction, particularly in Bucha. Ukrainian officials said on Sunday that 410 civilians in the city of 40,000 were allegedly murdered by Russian soldiers. Some have begun mentioning Bucha in the same breath with Srebrenica, where Bosnian-Serb militias slaughtered 8,000 men and boys 27 years ago. The numbers may not be comparable, but the uninhibited violence meted out on civilians does appear to be.

Bucha could ultimately prove to be a decisive moment in the future course of this war. Not only because it is the place where the Russian army was forced to turn back – but also because the massacre perpetrated on the city’s inhabitants could result in an energy embargo against Moscow and even greater support for Ukraine as it seeks to defend itself.

When DER SPIEGEL reporters reached the town on Sunday afternoon, fully 11 bodies were still lying in a single street. According to the mayor of Bucha, there had been 23 bodies at the site earlier. The more than 400 dead civilians have been buried at different sites in the city. On Sunday, the Ukrainians reported the discovery of a mass grave containing 280 bodies. They appear to have been murdered by Russian troops – which would be a severe war crime.

"They Shot at Everything at Random"

The road from the south through the pastureland ends at an intersection adorned with the statue of a saint. Brand new row houses painted yellow stand ready for their first occupants. In recent years, Bucha has become a popular bedroom community for the Kyiv middle class. In recent weeks, trenches were dug near the sales office and a checkpoint was set up. On the cement blocks placed there, the black V, a Russian military symbol, has been sprayed over with neon orange reading: "Glory to Ukraine," along with the trident from the Ukrainian flag. Next to it is a burned-out personnel carrier, the Russian military green hardly recognizable any longer.

The road leading to the city center is lined with cars crumpled into strange blocks of twisted metal along with other debris. There is a burned-out Intersport shop. Fighting also took place around Heroes Square in the center of town, where there is a monument to the Soviet troops who fought in Afghanistan. The Russians fired at the monument because they thought the armored vehicle on display there could still be operational, says Nizar, a man wearing a neon-yellow Adidas jacket who

declines to provide his last name. "They shot at everything at random," he says, leading the way to a bright-blue residential building with a hole in the wall. "The shot went right through the plaster and the wall behind it."

And it wasn't just buildings that were hit. In front of the Novus supermarket on Station Road leading to Bucha's railway station, one victim of the Russians still hasn't been recovered. "We simply can't get him out," says Nizar. He is talking about Alexander, a city gardener who would normally be trimming the roses at this time of year – but who now sits dead behind the wheel of his crushed Tavria automobile. In late February, just after the Russian occupation of the city had begun, he was on the road in his Ukrainian subcompact when he was suddenly struck by a bullet from a Russian machine gun. "Then, a tank drove over him," says Nizar, as he leads the way across the square with the war memorial to the flattened vehicle, inside which Alexander is still sitting.

The body is wedged in beneath the crushed roof and there is a hole through his blue hoodie at the neck. The gardener has been decomposing here, on the main road, fully visible to all. But for over a month, his body couldn't be buried. "We don't have the equipment to get him out," says Nizar. "The Russians simply ignored him." He says that two bodies were also lying for several weeks on the floor of the clothes shop Planeta, with the Russians even saying that anyone who tried to move the bodies would be executed. "The head is missing from one of them," says Nizar. "He must have been hit with a large caliber weapon."

Vitaly Sinagin, a 45-year-old sculptor, was lucky: He managed to survive his encounter with the Russian Federation's army. But his entire body is testimony to the occupation: His legs are blue and red, his breast is green and blue, and he has a bandage wrapped around his belly. Sinagin was stopped on the street. "They asked if I was with the army or the Territorial Defense Forces. I said: 'No, I just live here and am collecting wood since there is no gas or electricity.'" The men threw him to the ground, pulled a plastic bag over his head and beat him, bashing his head with clubs until blood started trickling out of the bag. They threatened to light him on fire and ordered him to call out "Glory to Russia!" Sinagin refused. At some point, he lost consciousness. When he came to, the men had disappeared.

Hardly a Single Shop Door in Bucha Remains Intact

Sinagin says they were Chechens and that they had spoken a foreign language to each other. Following the first Russian troops, men in other, black uniforms showed up and began combing through the streets. "They were far better equipped," he recalls. Chechen units from the Russian National Guard, a police detachment, are fighting in Ukraine.

Hardly a single shop door in Bucha remains intact. A cash machine was dragged out of its frame with an armored personnel carrier. The pawn shop on the Street of Maidan Heroes has been completely emptied out, and even a women's clothing store was plundered by the Russian troops. But Sinagin says that it wasn't just the Russians who stole from the shops. Residents, he recalls, were also encouraged to steal by the occupiers: "They said: 'Go on! Take what you want!'"

The occupiers, though, insisted that all residents wear white armbands – the same armbands that the Russian soldiers also wore. They were told that they were vital for identifying them as peaceful civilians.

Potential reasons for the murderous rage displayed by the Russian soldiers can be seen on almost every street. Putin's troops experienced heavy losses in Bucha. Next to the Globus supermarket is a burned-out BMP-2M armored vehicle, on which the Ukrainians scrawled the legendary quote from the first days of the war: "Russian warship, go fuck yourself!" The charred remains of a tank can be seen a few meters further along.

The mass grave of Russian war materiel, however, can be found on Station Road just south of the station, with its pointed green roof and striking arched windows. It is one of the few landmarks in the city, in which the Soviet-era writer Mikhail Bulgakov owned a dacha. The two-laned Station Road is covered with the wreckage of tanks for several hundred meters. Two or three days after the beginning of Putin's "special military operation," a convoy of paratroopers suddenly came to a halt here. Ukrainian Bayraktar drones took aim at one vehicle after the other. Five weeks later, the extent of the inferno can still be seen. Trees broken in two like matches. Silvery melted metal oozing from the engines beneath destroyed tanks, with blackened small arms, canisters and remnants of electronic devices lying next to them on the road. A gun turret was blasted into the front yard of a building by one of the explosions.

Just Stepping Out the Door Was Life-Threatening

The southern part of Station Road has become a mecca for fighting Ukrainians. With their smartphones drawn and triumphant expressions on their faces, soldiers are roaming through the wreckage, snapping selfies or group photos as mementos. One of them, Alexander Baks, a commander with the Territorial Defenses around the age of 40 who spent some time fighting in Donbas in 2014, presents some spoils of the war he has collected: two Russian hand grenades. "One of them would explode if I dropped it now," he laughs. Then he and his comrades watch videos on a phone of destroyed Russian tanks in other places. The specimens exhibited here apparently aren't enough for them. Over and over again, the charred corpses of their enemies can be seen on the screen of Bak's smartphone. "Look, he's missing his pants!" and "Like rabbits!" they say,

laughing.

There were a lot of Russian corpses lying in Station Road in Bucha, says Svetlana Roban, a teacher, who had just dropped by with her husband to check on a house belonging to a friend. The 57-year-old wears a jacket with a fur collar and a flowered headscarf over her auburn hair to protect against the snow blowing in the wind on this April day. The couple survived the Russian occupation in their home on Tarasivska Street.

"We had no water, no gas and no electricity," she says, as her husband nods along next to her. They would collect water and heat it over an open fire before then pouring it into bottles that they put inside their clothes to keep warm. Roban says that just stepping outside the door was risky, she says, adding that two of their neighbors were shot to death by the Russians. One of them had taken his dog out for a walk and the other had strayed 100 meters too far from his home. Death sentences, carried out without any warning. "I have spoken with people who lived through World War II in this city," she says. "They say the last few weeks were worse than what they had experienced under the Germans." She then suggests that the reporters check out Kirov Street. "Most of the bodies are gone, but there are still some lying there."

Sergei Mironovich Kirov, the street's namesake, was a Soviet party official and Stalin confidant who was shot under mysterious circumstances in 1934. It still isn't clear whether the dictator played a role in his death. There are also plenty of questions surrounding the murders that took place on Kirov Street, later renamed Yablunska Street. It seems doubtful that the perpetrators will ever be identified and brought to justice. The suspected killers have left, and even on Monday, Bucha's mayor still didn't know if international investigators were in the city.

Potatoes in the Shopping Bag of a Dead Man

Eleven corpses are still lying on the asphalt here, spread out across several hundred meters, and based on the advanced state of decomposition, they appear to have been murdered weeks ago. But why were they shot? One is wearing a flat cap and a fake leather jacket. There is a hole in his left leg exposing his femur. Another, wearing orange gloves, still has the bar of the bicycle between his legs that he had apparently been riding when he was hit. There's a large exit wound on the back of his head and a dried pool of blood. Two decomposing men lie close together, as if friends joined in death. Potatoes can be seen in the shopping bag of a dead man, and medicines and a screwdriver in the opened shoulder bag of another victim. The most disturbing image is the corpse of a relatively young man in jeans and sneakers, his hands tied behind his back with white cloth. A pool of brownish-red blood spreads around his head.

A motorcade comes to a stop just a few meters away from him. Two S-Class sedans and an armored Toyota SUV. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko and his brother Wladimir, the former boxing stars, have come to the suburb. Vitali, the older brother, tells the DER SPIEGEL reporter that the "Russians have conducted a safari on civilians." He says 300 civilians are dead in the city. "This is genocide against Ukrainians." He says the mayor of Bucha told him that a pregnant woman and her children were shot to death in a car. "Every euro, every cent you get from Russia or send to Russia is full of Ukrainian blood – the blood of our civilians," Klitschko says.

According to various sources, the occupiers forbade the removal of the bodies of the murdered. Perhaps as a warning to other residents not to revolt against the new rulers. Still, despite the ban on removing the dead, so many bodies accumulated early on that two mass graves had to be dug, says Serhiy Klapichnyj, an employee at the city's funeral home. He says 54 people were buried in one, and 40 in another. There would be significantly fewer than the 300 victims Bucha's mayor reported to the news agency AFP. Klapichnyj says a total of 30 bodies had been taken away on Sunday. Of those, he says the hands had been tied on eight of them.

The pits for the dead were dug behind St. Andrew's Church. One of the pits, about 2 meters wide and 15 meters long, is still open. Some of the dead have been placed in body bags, others haven't. Body parts are sticking out. Andrii Galavin, a priest at the local St. Andrew's Church, is standing at the edge of the pit. He says he returned to Bucha on the previous day. The grave had just been dug when he was evacuated "on March 10th or 11th," he says. "We couldn't take our dead to the cemetery – it was too dangerous," he explains as he stares at the grave, his hair wet from the snow. "We had to bury these people at some point or the dogs would have eaten them."

He claims the Russians killed indiscriminately. "At one checkpoint they were friendly, a hundred meters away they were shooting for no reason." He says that many people were hit as they tried to flee the city. That is likely what happened to the people who had been in the white Ford station wagon at the entrance to the town. Galavin says the Russians were probably angry because their advance had been halted in the neighboring town of Irpin. "But that's no reason to kill people indiscriminately." At the end of the conversation, Galavin says he would like to say something to the Germans. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for welcoming our refugees."

At U.N. Security Council meeting, Zelenskyy accuses Russia of war crimes (PBS)

By Oleksandr Stashevskiy

April 5, 2022

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday that the Russian military must be brought to justice immediately for war crimes, accusing the Kremlin's troops of the worst atrocities since World War II.

The Ukrainian leader made his plea via video as grisly evidence continued to emerge of civilian massacres carried out by Russian forces on the outskirts of Kyiv before they pulled back from the capital.

The images, particularly from the town of Bucha, have stirred global revulsion and led to demands for tougher sanctions and war crime charges.

Making his first appearance before the U.N.'s highest body, Zelenskyy said the Russian troops are no different from other terrorists like the Islamic State group. He showed the council brief video footage of bloody corpses that ended with the words "Stop Russian Aggression."

He stressed that Bucha was only one place and that there are more with similar horrors, and he called for a tribunal similar to the one that was set up at Nuremberg to try war criminals after World War II.

The grisly scenes of battered and burned bodies and evidence that some of the dead were bound and shot in the head have led Western nations to expel dozens more of Moscow's diplomats and propose further sanctions, including a ban on coal imports from Russia.

The head of NATO, meanwhile, warned that Russia is regrouping its forces in order to deploy them to eastern and southern Ukraine for a "crucial phase of the war," and said that more horrors may come to light as Russian troops continue to pull back in the north.

"When and if they withdraw their troops and Ukrainian troops take over, I'm afraid they will see more mass graves, more atrocities and more examples of war crimes," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Ukrainian officials said the bodies of at least 410 civilians have been found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured from Russian forces and that a "torture chamber" was discovered in Bucha.

Zelenskyy told the Security Council there was "not a single crime" that Russian troops hadn't committed in Bucha.

"The Russian military searched for and purposefully killed anyone who served our country. They shot and killed women outside their houses when they just tried to call someone who is alive. They killed entire families, adults and children, and they tried to burn the bodies," he said.

Police and other investigators walked the silent streets of Bucha on Tuesday, taking notes on bodies that residents showed them. Survivors who hid in their homes during the monthlong Russian occupation of the town, many of them past middle age, wandered past charred tanks and jagged window panes with plastic bags of food and other humanitarian aid. Red Cross workers checked in on intact homes.

Associated Press journalists in the town have counted dozens of corpses in civilian clothes. Many appeared to have been shot at close range, and some had their hands bound or their flesh burned. A mass grave in a churchyard held bodies wrapped in plastic.

The Kremlin has denounced the images as fake and suggested the scenes were staged by the Ukrainians. But high-resolution satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies showed that many of the bodies had been lying in the open for weeks, during the time that Russian forces were in the town.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the images from Bucha revealed "a deliberate campaign to kill, to torture, to rape, to commit atrocities." He said the reports of atrocities were "more than credible," and that the U.S. and other countries will seek to hold the culprits accountable.

"Only non-humans are capable of this," said Angelica Chernomor, a refugee from Kyiv who crossed into Poland with her two children, and who had seen the photos from Bucha. "Even if people live under a totalitarian regime, they must retain feelings, dignity, but they do not."

Chernomor is among the more than 4 million Ukrainians who have fled the country in the wake of the Feb. 24 invasion.

Russia has rejected similar accusations against its forces in the past by accusing its enemies of forging photos and video and using so-called crisis actors.

As Western leaders condemned the killings in Bucha, Italy, Spain and Denmark expelled dozens of Russian diplomats on Tuesday, following moves by Germany and France. Hundreds of Russian diplomats have been sent home since the start of the invasion, many accused of being spies.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the expulsions a “short-sighted” measure that would complicate communication and warned they would be met with “reciprocal steps.”

In another show of support, the European Union’s executive branch proposed a ban on coal imports from Russia, in what would be the first sanctions from the bloc targeting the country’s lucrative energy industry over the war. That coal imports amount to an estimated 4 billion euros (\$4.4 billion) per year.

European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen denounced Moscow’s “heinous crimes” around Kyiv.

The 27-nation EU has been a steadfast backer of Ukraine since the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24 and has already pushed through four rounds of sanctions — but Ukrainians officials have begged for more.

Just hours before the latest proposal was announced, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that to prevent “new Buchas” the West must impose the “mother of all sanctions” — on Russian oil and gas.

“A few months of tightening your belts are worth thousands of saved lives,” he said.

But Western nations are divided over how far to go. Some are calling for a boycott of Russian oil and gas imports, while Germany and others fear that such a move could plunge the continent into a severe economic crisis.

Western weapons have enabled Ukraine to mount a stiffer than expected resistance to Russia’s overwhelming firepower. That resistance stopped Russian forces from overrunning the capital and other cities, and many troops have now withdrawn from areas around Kyiv.

But Western and Ukrainian officials say Russia is merely regrouping for another offensive.

“Moscow is not giving up its ambitions in Ukraine,” NATO’s Stoltenberg said. “We expect a further push in the eastern and southern Ukraine to try to take the entire Donbas and to create a land bridge” to the Crimea Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014. Russia-backed separatists in the Donbas have been fighting Ukrainian troops for the last eight years.

Russia Accused of ‘Hiding’ War Crimes in Mariupol With Mobile Crematoriums (The Daily Beast)
April 6, 2022

Russian authorities have begun using mobile crematoriums in the besieged city of Mariupol in order to hide evidence of murdered civilians, the city’s mayor alleges.

In a lengthy post to Telegram on Wednesday, Vadym Boichenko said Russian military officials had reacted swiftly to “hide their tracks” after images of dead civilians littering the street in Bucha sparked international outrage over the weekend.

“After widespread international coverage of the genocide in Bucha, the top Russian leadership issued an order to destroy any evidence of the crimes of their army in Mariupol,” Boichenko said.

“The Russians left all the dirty work for collaborators. Eyewitnesses report that the [Russians] recruited local and 'DNR' terrorists to special brigades to clean up. They are collecting and burning the bodies of the residents of Mariupol who were killed as a result of the Russian invasion,” he said.

“The world has not seen a tragedy on the scale of Mariupol since the Nazi concentration camps. The Rashists have turned our entire city into a death camp,” he said, using a derogatory term for “Russians” that is a play on “fascists.”

“This is no longer Chechnya or Aleppo. This is the new Auschwitz and Majdanek. The world should help punish Putin's bigots,” he wrote.

Just hours before his alarming announcement, two civilians were killed by Russian forces in Ukraine’s Donetsk region on Wednesday as they were collecting humanitarian aid, according to local authorities.

“The place of distribution of humanitarian aid was shot up by Russian fascists with rocket artillery in Vuhledar,” Pavel Kirilenko, the head of the regional military administration, announced on Telegram.

Photos from the scene showed medics tending to several wounded people who lay on the ground amid the wreckage. At least

two people were killed, and another five wounded, Kirilenko said.

The attack came as Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, in comments to Russian media, insisted with a straight face that Russian troops are not targeting civilians, despite growing evidence to the contrary.

His comments came after Ukraine's Security Service released audio of what it said was an intercepted call between a Russian soldier and his commander. In the recording, the commander can be heard angrily ordering the soldier to shoot "everyone," regardless of whether they are civilians or not.

"Yes, cut them all fucking down!" he said.

In the recently liberated town of Hostomel, in the Kyiv region, authorities said hundreds of civilians are still missing and feared dead after Russian forces decimated the area while they had control for 35 days.

Taras Dumenko, the head of the local administration, told Hromadske Radio on Wednesday that "more than 400 civilians have disappeared without a trace."

"In Hostomel, there were not so many bodies found, further out in the villages of our community there were bodies found of those executed, and residents who were killed," he said.

He went on to say authorities were informed of several killings of civilians, incidents that were confirmed with photo or video evidence, but that their bodies had yet to be found.

"But one must understand that the invaders also covered up the traces of their crimes," he said.

Russian troops appeared to be more brazen in the town of Bucha, outside of Kyiv, where scenes of streets literally littered with slain civilians shocked the world this week. Bucha Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk detailed the horrors that unfolded there in comments to BBC on Wednesday, saying he had personally witnessed several killings.

"Three civilian vehicles were trying to evacuate towards Kyiv and were brutally fired upon. There was a pregnant woman whose husband screamed and begged [for them] not to shoot her, but she was just brutally shot," Fedoruk said.

About 320 residents in total were killed, he said.

The harrowing new details come shortly after a Russian missile strike at a pediatric hospital in the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv, with chilling images showing children's toys near the scene of the attack.

In the parking lot, CCTV footage caught the moment the Russian missile struck an ambulance donated by the U.K. to the facility. Witness accounts by those who were there say at least one child and one man died and at least 60 others were injured. International condemnation—by now a daily chorus—has done little to deter the carnage.

Doctors Without Borders staff, who were there helping administer medical aid at the compound, which also includes a cancer center, say the windows of their vehicles were blown out in the bombings. "Several explosions took place in close proximity to our staff over the course of about 10 minutes," Doctors Without Borders Ukraine chief Michel-Olivier Lacharité told Reuters. "As they were leaving the area, the MSF team saw injured people and at least one dead body."

Ukrainian officials say at least 167 children have been killed since Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion on Feb. 24. A further 279 have been gravely wounded, and thousands more undoubtedly traumatized for life by what they have seen. At least 927 schools and other educational facilities have been damaged in the war so far, according to the Ukrainian prosecutor general's office.

Near the capital of Kyiv, another suburb has been abandoned by Russian troops and another trail of suspected war crimes lies in their wake. Like the scenes in Bucha that horrified an already shocked world earlier in the week, images out of Borodianka revealed another nightmare. A woman interviewed by CNN showed a corpse in her garden. The dead man's pants were pulled down; he had a bag over his head and his hands were tied behind his back. "He was executed, gunshot to the head," a Ukrainian police officer told CNN. Buildings in the shelled city have almost all been defaced with the letter V or Z, symbols of Putin's "special military operation," or codeword for war.

European leaders will meet on Wednesday to decide on new sanctions against Russia, which now look to be gradual rather than immediate as Europe's dependency on Russian gas becomes increasingly clear with energy bill increases expected to top 400 percent in the coming months.

In the U.S., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley warned of a geopolitical disaster in the making. "The Russian invasion of Ukraine is threatening to undermine not only European peace and stability but global peace and stability

that my parents and a generation of Americans fought so hard to defend,” he said. “We are entering a world that is becoming more unstable and the potential for significant international conflict is increasing, not decreasing.”

Air strikes, cluster munitions, torture: Russian war crimes documented in Bucha and Borodianka (Ukrinform)

April 6, 2022

Ukrainian law enforcement officers and forensic experts are documenting the war crimes committed by Russian troops in Bucha and Borodianka, Kyiv region.

“Prosecutors of the Kyiv Regional Prosecutor's Office jointly with investigators of the Main Department of the Security Service of Ukraine in Kyiv and Kyiv region, as well as 50 experts of forensic research institutes of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine from different regions of the country are actively documenting the war crimes committed by the Russian Armed Forces in Bucha and Borodianka,” the press services of the Prosecutor General's Office and the Security Service of Ukraine inform, Ukrinform reports.

During the armed aggression, the enemy inflicted numerous blows to the peaceful city of Borodianka – air bombing, artillery shelling, and use of prohibited cluster munitions.

While carrying out investigative actions in these territories, the prosecutors of Kyiv region, the investigators of the Security Service of Ukraine, and experts recorded much unexploded ordnance and numerous funnels formed as a result of artillery shelling.

In addition, large-scale destruction of the civilian infrastructure of localities is recorded: private and multi-story residential buildings, schools, kindergartens, healthcare facilities, churches, shops, garages, and warehouses are bombed, public and private vehicles are damaged. There are no military facilities near the affected sites. In addition, other crucial evidence of Russia's armed aggression has been established and documented.

The complete information on casualties and damaged infrastructure is being established.

Currently, a number of criminal proceedings have been instituted over violation of the laws and customs of war (Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

As part of the pre-trial investigation, a comprehensive examination was ordered to establish the extent of destruction and damage to movable and immovable property, to determine material damage.

As reported, Irpin, Bucha, Hostomel and the entire Kyiv region were liberated from Russian invaders. Mass killings of civilians by Russians were recorded in the liberated towns and villages. In particular, a mass grave with almost 300 people buried was found in Bucha, liberated from the invaders. Dozens of dead bodies lay on the streets, some of them with their hands tied.

As Evidence Of War Crimes In Bucha Mounts, A Hunt For Russian Military Units (RadioFreeEurope)

April 6, 2022

On March 11, the commander of an artillery unit belonging to Russia's famed 76th Guards Air Assault Division died in combat in the Ukrainian town of Bucha.

Captain Gennady Bayur was killed, according to a death announcement published some two weeks later in a chat room of the social-media site VK, in a land-mine explosion in the town northwest of Kyiv. He had commanded the 234th Guards Air Assault Regiment.

Another Russian soldier, from the 64th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, lost his mobile phone or had it taken from him when he was killed. According to Ukrainian intelligence, which published a screenshot of the phone, it was found in Bucha; a number linked to the phone matches up to a social-media account located in the brigade's home base.

Bucha is a crime scene.

Increasingly, it is also a worldwide synonym for atrocities that may have been committed by Russian troops during the first six weeks of their assault on Ukraine.

Days after Russian forces withdrew from Bucha, workers are struggling to clear the bodies of dozens, possibly scores of civilians from the town's streets, from hastily dug mass graves, and from building basements, and to give them a proper burial. An unknown number of the civilian corpses show signs of having been summarily executed, with hands bound behind their backs. Some had gunshot wounds to their heads.

Ukrainian and Western investigators, meanwhile, are struggling to compile evidence and take witness accounts, as the

government pledges to prosecute what it says are war crimes.

RFE/RL reporters, scouring through social-media posts, public lists of dead soldiers, video footage from the devastated town, and other information, have sought to pinpoint some of the military units that were known to have occupied Bucha between the start of the invasion on February 24 and April 1, when it was reclaimed by Ukrainian forces.

What Happened In Bucha?

The presence of Russian military units in Bucha, and other Ukrainian towns and cities they have occupied, is not proof that war crimes were committed, and investigators may be hard-pressed to accumulate conclusive, air-tight proof that could withstand scrutiny in a court or tribunal.

But in the case of Bucha, information that has already come to light -- photographs, videos, eyewitness accounts -- plus the fact that the town was under Russian military control for more than a month, provides strong circumstantial evidence pointing to Russian culpability.

Bucha's mayor, Anatoliy Fedoruk, posted a video on March 31 in which he said the town had been recaptured by Ukrainian forces following a Russian withdrawal. It wasn't immediately clear if Russian troops had left on March 31 or earlier. The Ukrainian military said its forces entered Bucha on April 1.

On April 3, Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, published a list of Russian units, both military and National Guard, that he said had been deployed to Bucha and two other towns in the Kyiv region, Irpin and Hostomel.

Among those he named were the 104th and 234th Airborne Assault Regiments of the 76th Airborne Assault Division.

Based in the northwestern Russian city of Pskov, the division is renowned in Soviet and Russian military history, for both battlefield prowess and brutality. During the Second Chechen War in the early 2000s, paratroopers from the 76th Airborne Division were credibly accused of killing Chechen civilians indiscriminately.

The social-media post about the death of Bayur, the commander of the artillery unit, was one piece of evidence pointing to the presence of the paratroopers in Bucha.

Sometime around March 26, a video apparently produced by Ukraine's military intelligence agency appeared online, featuring a captured soldier whose unit is identified as the 76th Airborne Division. The video was later removed by YouTube but a copy was published on a Ukrainian journalist's Telegram channel.

In the video the soldier, who is identified as Timofei Bobov, describes how on February 24 his unit was ordered to Ukraine and deployed to "clean up Hostomel or Bucha." According to Bobov, he was instructed to break into apartments in residential buildings with a crowbar and take the people who were inside to the basement. He did not indicate what happened to them afterward.

RFE/RL could not independently verify the video, but there have been press reports from Bucha from witnesses who say their apartment doors were pried open with crowbars and relatives taken away by Russian soldiers. There is also footage of bodies in basements.

In a video published by AP on April 3 from Bucha, a discarded wooden ammunition box is briefly shown. The box has marking on it indicating it belonged to the 7th Airborne Assault Company, 234th Regiment, 76th Airborne Division.

Cell Phone, Instagram Account

Another unit identified by Arestovych as occupying some of the towns northwest and east of Kyiv is the 64th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, whose headquarters is in the Khabarovsk region, on the Pacific coast in Russia's Far East.

On April 3, a Telegram channel that appears to have links to Ukraine's military published a screenshot from a Russian soldier's phone, describing it as "a phone of one of the occupiers of Bucha [that] was found."

The screenshot showed an Instagram account with a phone number that RFE/RL was able to trace to a 29-year-old Khabarovsk resident. RFE/RL was unable to determine whether the man was part of the 64th Brigade, but photographs from the man's social-media friends and acquaintances show soldiers from the 64th Brigade.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency later published a list with hundreds of names, and other identifying information, of officers and soldiers from the 64th Brigade. That list could also not be independently confirmed.

Belarus Deployment

Other units known to have occupied some of the towns north of Kyiv include another paratrooper unit: the 331st Guards Airborne Regiment of the 98th Division, based in Kostroma, northeast of Moscow. The regiment's commanding officer, Colonel Sergei Sukharev, was killed on March 13, and was posthumously awarded military honors. It was unclear exactly where and how he died, however.

The Defense Ministry in Belarus -- from which many of the Russian units that were sent toward Kyiv entered northern Ukraine -- also reported on a ceremony involving the 331st Airborne Regiment on January 25, a full month before the war began.

On February 28, meanwhile, a photograph of a list of soldiers killed in Bucha, from a unit identified as the "2nd Squad of the 2nd Platoon" appeared on another Telegram channel titled Search For Your Own. The channel is filled with photographs of Russian soldiers who have been killed or taken prisoner in Ukraine.

RFE/RL traced one of the names on the list of killed soldiers to a social-media profile that suggests the soldier served in the 56th Guards Air Assault Regiment, headquartered in Russia's Volgograd region.

Amid mounting international outcry and condemnation of Moscow, the Russian authorities have denied that Russian troops were involved in the killing of civilians in Bucha or other Kyiv region towns. Without providing evidence, Russian officials have claimed photographs and footage widely distributed by Ukrainian and Western media were staged.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has suggested, also without evidence, that the images showed signs of being faked, and that the timing of the retreat from Bucha means that Russian soldiers could not have been responsible. That statement is contradicted by eyewitness reports from Bucha.

The U.S.-based group Human Rights Watch also collected evidence and interviews with residents of Bucha, concluding that there were "obvious war crimes" committed in districts controlled by Russian forces.

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Syria

"This was a systematic machinery of death": Syrian eyewitness details crimes against humanity (CBS News)

March 27, 2022

A key eyewitness to Syrian crimes against humanity is speaking out for the first time

on CBS News, describing the atrocities he witnessed at a pivotal moment — as the West sounds alarms about civilian deaths in war-torn Ukraine.

"The Gravedigger," a codename he is using because of ongoing threats against him and his family, described in an interview the wrenching details of the Russian-backed assaults on the Syrian population, and said they provide worrying indications of what is to come.

"I see the news coming out of Ukraine, my heart hurts because I know what Russia has done in Ukraine — what it can do — because I know what it's done in Syria," he said.

Russia's support has been critical for years in keeping the government of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad in power. The human cost of the more than decadelong civil war has been staggering: United Nations estimates put the number of Syrians dead at 400,000 in the conflict that followed the peaceful Arab Spring pro-democracy movement.

"As far as Putin and Assad are concerned, they should go to the trash bin of history for what they've done in the world," the eyewitness told CBS News.

Earlier this month, he spoke to committees on Capitol Hill about the heinous crimes in Syria, including the dumping of thousands of bodies in mass graves. CBS News has learned that he also briefed officials at the White House and the State Department. He is working with the advocacy group, the Syrian Emergency Task Force.

In a landmark decision in January, a German court found former Syrian colonel Anwar Raslan guilty of crimes against humanity, based on the Gravedigger's account and other evidence.

"Twice a week, multiple trailer trucks would come and each truck would have upwards of 100 to 400 or more bodies," he said. "They were tortured to death, you could see clearly the signs of torture on their bodies. ... This was a systematic machinery of death."

At one point during the interview, he put his head in his hands, saying one prisoner dumped at the mass grave was not yet dead.

"When the intelligence officer saw that this person was alive, he ordered the bulldozer driver to drive over the body and killed him on the spot," he said.

He pointed CBS News to a site called Al Qutayfah near the Syrian capital, where satellite images show its transformation from a barren field to a series of trenches.

"Everything that was going on, the mass graves, were systematic and were part of what the Assad regime wanted to do," he said.

Syria: New anti-torture law "whitewashes" decades of human rights violations (Amnesty International)

March 31, 2022

Responding to the news that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has enacted a new anti-torture law that fails to address a decade of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions carried out by Syria's security forces, Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said:

"While we welcome any legislative steps towards complying with internationally recognized anti-torture conventions, the new law effectively whitewashes decades of state-sanctioned human rights violations.

"It fails to offer redress to past victims of torture, include any protection measures for witnesses or survivors of torture, nor does it state whether torture survivors, or in the event of their death, their families would receive compensation. Crucially, it fails to mention any measures that could be taken to prevent torture from occurring in detention centres and prisons in the future."

"Amnesty International calls on the Syrian authorities to urgently allow independent monitors to access the country's notorious detention centres — where torture leading to death has been taking place at a mass scale for years — as a first step to signalling any genuine intent to curtail the practice of torture by state agents. Furthermore, the anti-torture law must align with international human rights law — and that means as a first step, ensuring that the perpetrators of torture, cruel, inhuman or other ill-treatment face justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts and without recourse to death penalty."

Background

The anti-torture law was enacted by Presidential Decree on 30 March after being discussed in Syria's parliament for the first time on 28 March.

Amnesty International has previously documented inhuman conditions across Syria's prisons. The widespread and systematic use of enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, which has led to deaths in detention, and extrajudicial executions following sham trials, amount to crimes against humanity.

Russia's Ukraine war builds on tactics it used in Syria, experts say (The Washington Post)

By Claire Parker

March 31, 2022

The stories from people fleeing Mariupol are harrowing: dwindling food supplies. No electricity or water. Russian tanks roaming the streets. Nights punctuated by shelling.

For Syrians, the accounts of life in the southeastern Ukrainian city, besieged by Russian forces, sound eerily familiar. Rights groups, officials and observers have drawn comparisons to the brutal tactics Russia deployed to turn the tide of the Syrian civil war in favor of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"We're staggered by really the amount of similarities," said Daniel Balson, advocacy director for Europe and Central Asia at Amnesty International.

The conflicts are not the same: In Ukraine, Russia launched a ground invasion and has sustained significant casualties, while in Syria, where Russia intervened in 2015, it mostly offered air support.

But Russia continues to employ weapons and strategies honed on Syrian cities to deadly effect.

Syrians "have the best experience in dealing with the Russian targeting of civilian neighborhoods," said Farouq Habib, deputy chair of external relations for the Syria Civil Defense, the volunteer search-and-rescue group known as the White Helmets.

Ukrainian officials have warned that Mariupol is "becoming a second Aleppo." Manolis Androulakis, Greece's consul general in Mariupol who became the last European Union diplomat to leave the city this month, said it will join Aleppo as "part of a list of cities that were completely destroyed by war."

The Syrian metropolis came to symbolize the willingness of Russian and Syrian forces to use ruthless tactics against civilians.

In 2016, during a nearly six-month siege of opposition-held parts of Aleppo, Syria's largest city before the war, Russian forces attacked factories and water stations and cut off supply lines, leaving 250,000 residents with severe shortages of food, medicines and fuel. Humanitarian catastrophe followed.

In Mariupol, Russian forces have surrounded and bombarded the city, cutting off communications, water, gas and electricity, and preventing aid convoys from entering. Reports have emerged of residents melting snow for drinking water, rationing food among hungry children and running out of vital medicines.

Other Ukrainian cities, such as Chernihiv, face similar conditions. Secretary of State Antony Blinken accused Russia this month of "starving" Ukrainian cities.

Russia has attacked medical facilities in both Aleppo and Mariupol, as well as schools and buildings where civilians had taken refuge — such as the theater Ukrainian authorities say Russia bombed in Mariupol — in a "complete violation" of the international principle that "belligerents have an obligation to distinguish between military and civilian targets," Balson said.

Syria also provided a testing ground for weapons Russia is using in Ukraine. Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu said in August that Russia had tested more than 300 weapons in Syria, Russian state media reported.

As in Syria, "a lot of the civilian casualties that we're documenting [in Ukraine] are being caused by dumb bombs — not targeted weapons," Balson said. "It's impossible to use such weapons in these heavily built-up areas while ensuring that no civilians lose their lives."

In 2016, Human Rights Watch accused Russia and Syria of killing more than 440 civilians, among them more than 90 children, in a month-long bombing campaign in Aleppo.

Civilian harm monitor Airwars said in a report published last week that nearly 25,000 civilians have allegedly been killed by

Russian strikes in Syria since 2015.

Russia and Syria deliberately bombed civilian areas, including medical facilities, and used indiscriminate weapons such as cluster munitions and incendiary bombs, HRW found. Russia's alleged use of "vacuum" and cluster munitions in Ukraine has drawn scrutiny in part because of the damage the weapons wreaked in Syria.

Five years after Russia began bombing Syria, the United Nations' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria accused Russia of committing war crimes through its indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas. But no Russian officials have faced trial.

Russia has also been accused of violating international law in Ukraine. Moscow has denied committing war crimes in Syria and said its forces are not targeting civilians in Ukraine.

Russian and Ukrainian officials said they had agreed to a temporary cease-fire Thursday, to allow aid in and evacuees out.

Habib said that fixating global attention on the establishment of humanitarian corridors, and away from efforts to end hostilities or to establish safe zones, plays into Moscow's hands, in strategic terms.

"They want to empty those cities of their population, so it will be less costly for Russia to take over," Habib said of Russian authorities.

The war in Syria has forced 6.6 million Syrians to flee the country, according to the United Nations, with large numbers heading to Europe following Russia's intervention in September 2015. More than 4 million people fled Ukraine in just over a month of fighting, the United Nations said Wednesday. Three-quarters of Mariupol's population have left the city, according to some estimates.

The refugee exodus is a sign of Russia "exporting the problem," Habib said. As it did in Syria, Russia will seek to portray civilians who stay behind as enemy combatants — and therefore legitimate targets, warned Hanna Notte, senior research associate at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.

Another element of Russia's Syria playbook on display in Ukraine: disinformation. In Syria, Russia and allies portrayed the White Helmets as terrorists. In Ukraine, the Kremlin has cast Ukrainian officials and soldiers as Nazis.

International law and conflict experts have raised concerns that the lack of accountability for Russian President Vladimir Putin's actions in Syria emboldened the Russian leader. Balson pointed to what he described as a broader pattern of Russian forces killing civilians with impunity, stretching back to its siege of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, in 1999.

"When the Russian government has intervened," he said, "there has been long-standing, well-documented incidences and patterns of human beings losing their lives, losing access to their resources, losing access to their homes."

In the lead-up to the Ukraine invasion, observers speculated that Putin might be less willing to kill Ukrainians because of the cultural and family ties they share with Russians.

That hasn't proved to be the case. The United Nations said 1,189 civilians had been killed as of Wednesday in Ukraine, in what officials say is a vast undercount. Local officials in Mariupol estimate that 5,000 people have been killed in that city alone.

Still, Ukraine is in many ways better positioned to counter Russian attacks than Syrians were. Ukrainians have taken refuge in bunkers and deep subway systems built to withstand missiles and bombs. And they've put up a fierce and unified resistance, defying Russian and Western expectations.

Unlike the Syria conflict — which Russia fought at relatively low cost by attacking from the sky while Syrian forces and allied militias attacked from the ground — Russia has sent tens of thousands of ground troops into Ukraine, where they are suffering heavy losses.

But as Russian casualties mount and ground offenses falter, experts said, Putin may continue to pivot toward fighting the type of air war he waged in Syria.

"He's started to resort to the Syria low-cost tactics," said Natasha Hall, senior fellow in the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But Ukraine has received greater international attention and backing than did opposition groups and civilians in Syria, she said — and Russia has already faced greater consequences.

The surprise of some Western observers about Russia's willingness to attack Ukrainian cities has frustrated many Syrians.

“We as Syrians are really saddened to see the same atrocities that we have been suffering from, and we have been calling for the world to stop, are now repeated,” Habib, of the White Helmets, said. “And we see that as a direct result for the lack of accountability for what happened previously in Crimea and in Syria.”

Syrians who survived Russian bombardment have offered Ukrainians practical tips: Don't respond to bombing scenes until you're sure a second bomb isn't coming, and stock up on food.

The White Helmets, meanwhile, are sharing lessons learned from Syria with Ukrainian partners and translating into Ukrainian its safety guidebook for civilians under attack, Habib said.

“I don't see this ending soon, so they need to be prepared for a long-term war,” he said.

Syria: French court says opposition spokesperson can face war crimes charges (Middle East Eye)

By Alex MacDonald and Harun al-Aswad

April 5, 2022

Syrians have welcomed a decision by a court in France to dismiss attempts by a leading Syrian opposition figure to have war crimes and torture charges against him thrown out, paving the way for his prosecution.

Islam Alloush's organisation, Jaish al-Islam, a group largely based in the Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta, is suspected of involvement in the disappearance of a number of campaigners, including Syrian human rights activist Razan Zaitouneh, her husband Wael Hamada, and two colleagues, Samira Khalil and Nazem Hammadi - often collectively referred to as the Douma Four, after the city in Ghouta they were based in.

Islam Alloush, who was first arrested in in Marseille in January 2020, was a spokesperson for the Syrian rebel group which mainly received funding from Saudi Arabia after officially forming in 2013.

On Monday, the Investigating Chamber of the Paris Court of Appeal threw out claims by Alloush's defence team that the French authorities had no jurisdiction over the Syrian, whose real name is believed to be Majdi Mustafa Nameh, reversing a previous decision by the Court of Cassation which ruled against universal jurisdiction applying to him.

If further appeals fail, Alloush could become the first member of the Syrian opposition to end up on trial for war crimes.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH) first filed a complaint against Jaish al-Islam on 26 June 2019.

"The investigating chamber followed the prosecutor's office's request and our position as civil parties in confirming the jurisdiction of the French courts in this case," said Marc Bailly, Patrick Baudouin and Clemence Bectarte, lawyers for the civil parties, in a statement.

"We hope that this decision will serve as a reminder of the importance of the role of universal jurisdiction in the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes."

After their initial formation, Jaish al-Islam advocated the creation of an Islamic state in Syria and their rule of Eastern Ghouta was marked by human rights abuses, suppression of opposition and torture.

The group's founder, Zahran Alloush, was also known for engaging in sectarian rhetoric against religious minorities, particularly the Alawite sect to which Syrian President Bashar al-Assad belongs, although he later moderated his language. Zahran Alloush was killed by government forces in 2015, and the group lost control of Eastern Ghouta in 2018.

Osama Nassar, an activist and journalist originally from Douma, welcomed the news from the French court.

"I still demand the truth about my friends whom were kidnapped by Jaish al-Islam...justice seems something hard to reach with all of the crimes throughout the years and, besides that, Islam Alloush is one of many others," he told Middle East Eye.

"However, it is important to bring such abusers to courts or, let's say, to 'justice' as a tiny step towards revealing the truth."

He added that there was also potentially a more direct impact from the court case, as he pointed out Jaish al-Islam were still active in the north of Syria and were engaged in the "same old behaviour of terrifying people, especially those who might be witnesses of its violations".

"So, maybe such a development would make them think again before they commit their next crime," he explained.

The group's members are now part of the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army, which controls much of northern Syria.

Another Syrian activist, now based in the north of the country, said he was arrested in 2016 along with a number of friends for criticising the group on Facebook.

"They tortured us for days," he said, speaking anonymously.

"Not only Islam Alloush, the entire Security and Media Office of the Jaish al-Islam must be prosecuted, because they have contributed to widespread violations against civilians."

Accountability

A friend of Zaitouneh from Douma, who spent eight years in a government prison, also told MEE that he welcomed the ruling on Alloush.

"He is part of this gang that has committed many murders," said Tarek, not his real name, who left Syria in 2020 after being released from prison.

"Of course he should be held accountable."

Maimouna al-Ammar, another friend of the Douma Four and a campaigner with Families For Freedom - an organisation that deals with the disappeared in Syria - said although it was an "important step" there needed to be accountability on a much larger scale.

"True justice for Syrians can only be achieved by the UN Security Council referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court to allow for senior officials within the Syrian regime and other perpetrators to be prosecuted for war crimes," she told MEE.

"We will not give up our struggle to see this happen."

Syria's war has raged since 2011 when security forces loyal to Assad opened fire on pro-democracy protesters, eventually provoking an armed response and foreign intervention.

The war has killed more than 500,000 people and driven millions from the country, while there have been multiple accusations of human rights abuses on all sides of the conflict, which eventually drew in militant groups, Kurdish separatists, foreign volunteers, Russia and Turkey among others.

In January, a former senior Syrian government security official was sentenced to life in prison in Germany, accused of overseeing dozens of murders at an interrogation facility near the beginning of the war.

Despite having spent so many years suffering at the hands of the Assad government, Tarek said that there should be no distinction made when it came to prosecuting those suspected of war crimes in Syria.

"All parties must be held accountable, including the opposition," he said. "The humanitarian position does not require being biased."

Killing 4 children in Syrian regime bombardment may amount to war crime (Relief Web) April 5, 2022

The relevant United Nations bodies and the international community share a large part of the responsibility for the Syrian regime's continued human rights violations, including the recent killing of four children in the Idlib countryside on Monday, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor said in a statement.

The Syrian regime forces have targeted the town of Maarat al-Na'san in the Idlib countryside, northern Syria, with a number of heavy artillery shells, killing four children and wounding others as they were on their way back from school.

Euro-Med Monitor viewed photos published by local activists showing that the shrapnel hit school children's bags and books, indicating that the shells fell directly or very close to the children's whereabouts, targeting indiscriminately without any justification, which may amount to a war crime.

The incident is new evidence of the serious consequences of the continued neglect to hold the Syrian regime accountable at the international level. Many lives could have been saved if the United Nations and the international active forces held the Syrian regime accountable and quelled its audacity to commit more brutal crimes.

According to the White Helmets (Syrian Civil Defense), the Russian and Syrian forces and allied militias launched 130 air and artillery attacks during the first quarter of this year on northwestern Syria. These attacks targeted civilian homes, public buildings, and service facilities, killing 47 people and wounding more than 100 others.

Achieving justice for the victims in Syria is still largely possible, but this requires an international will and setting aside all that stands between these parties and human values and holding the perpetrators of violations accountable.

Influential international parties applied a double standard when they condemned the Russian operations in Ukraine and imposed severe sanctions on Russia but ignored taking decisive positions towards the Russian military operations in Syria, which have killed and injured more than 12,000 Syrians since 2015.

Legal researcher at Euro-Med Monitor, Youssef Salem, said: "Bombing civilian areas is a clear violation of the rights of protected groups in armed conflicts, as international humanitarian law absolutely prohibits targeting civilians, and Article 38 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.'"

"During the years of the conflict, the Syrian regime was not satisfied with ignoring the necessary measures to protect children, but also practiced serious violations against them that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including killing, maiming, torture, enforced disappearance, and forced conscription."

The relevant United Nations institutions and the international community should make a real shift in their handling of human rights violations in Syria, launch serious and organized efforts to hold Syrian officials accountable for possible war crimes, and impose real sanctions that undermine the ability of the Syrian regime to continue its illegal practices humanity.

Efforts to hold perpetrators accountable in Syria through the principle of universal jurisdiction adopted by national courts in Europe should be supported, and lawsuits should be filed before those courts against those suspected of participating in the assault on the lives of Syrian civilians or causing them in any way of suffering.

Germany arrests Syrian accused of torturing captives with IS (ABC News)

April 6, 2022

German investigators on Wednesday arrested a Syrian man accused of war crimes for allegedly torturing captives while he was with the Islamic State group in Syria in 2014.

Federal prosecutors said the man, identified only as Raed E. in line with German privacy rules, was arrested in Berlin. He is suspected of membership in a foreign terrorist organization, crimes against humanity, war crimes and bodily harm.

The suspect joined IS in summer 2014 and participated in an attack that August on the Shueitat tribe in the Deir el-Zour region of eastern Syria, prosecutors said. Activists reported death tolls ranging up to 700.

Raed E. is accused of abusing and torturing three captives after that attack. Prosecutors say that he had a man who was looking for a 13-year old brother kidnapped by IS arrested and then tortured him at various IS prisons.

The suspect allegedly also ordered the 13-year-old suspended from a ceiling with his hands tied behind his back. And he is accused of twice physically abusing a third captive during months in captivity.

Prosecutors said in a statement that, in addition to working in IS prisons, he handled transactions in which the freedom of Shueitat captives was bought and manned two checkpoints for the extremist group.

They didn't say how or when he came to Germany.

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Yemen

Saudi Aramco's Jeddah oil depot hit by Houthi attack (Al Jazeera)

March 25, 2022

Yemen's Houthis rebels have acknowledged a series of attacks on Saudi Arabia after state media in the kingdom reported rocket and drone strikes targeting an oil depot in Jeddah and other facilities in Riyadh.

A huge plume of black smoke was seen rising from the plant in Jeddah, as the city prepared to host a Formula One race on Sunday.

While Saudi Arabia and state-run Saudi Aramco did not immediately acknowledge the blaze, it appeared to be centred on a fuel depot that the Houthis have previously targeted.

Later on Friday, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said the group attacked Aramco's facilities with missiles and the Ras Tanura and Rabigh refineries with drones.

Sarea added that the attack also targeted vital facilities in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

The attacks targeted "Aramco facilities in Jeddah and vital facilities in the capital of the Saudi enemy, Riyadh", tweeted Sarea. Facilities of oil giant Aramco were also attacked in Jizan, Najran, Ras Tanura and Rabigh with "a large number of drones", he added.

Al Arabiya TV, quoting the coalition, said the kingdom's air defence system destroyed two explosive-laden drones targeting Najran.

The United States condemned the Houthi attacks.

"At a time when the parties should be focused on de-escalation and bringing needed life-saving relief to the Yemeni people ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, the Houthis continue their destructive behavior and reckless terrorist attacks striking civilian infrastructure," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

Following the Jeddah attack, people on the F1 track could see the large black smoke cloud in the distance.

The F1 said plans for Saturday's third practice and qualifying and Sunday's race were still set to go ahead.

"We have received total assurance that the country's safety is first," Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali told reporters after a meeting with drivers, teams and local authorities. The Saudi Motorsport Co, which promotes the race, acknowledged the attack but said the "race weekend schedule will continue as planned."

We "remain in direct contact with Saudi security authorities, as well as F1 and the FIA to ensure all necessary security and safety measures," the company said, referring to motorsport's governing body.

"The safety and security of all our guests continue to be our main priority."

Nabeel Khoury, a former US diplomat, said the timing of the attacks is significant.

"To some extent whenever they [Houthis] hit the targets either in Saudi Arabia or the UAE it's a hit against tourism in these countries – that you can organise car races and international games as if nothing is happening while we are under siege and being struck on a daily basis from there," Khoury told Al Jazeera.

'Military operation'

Saudi Arabia has been leading a coalition battling the Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital of Sanaa in September 2014, for seven years.

The kingdom has been internationally criticised for air raids that have killed dozens of civilians while the Houthis have pointed to the assaults as a justification for the launch of drones, missiles and mortars into the kingdom.

On Saturday, Saudi state media said the coalition fighting in Yemen had begun a military operation – including air attacks on Yemen's Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa, and the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah – to stop attacks on its oil facilities and "protect global energy sources".

It said the operation was in its early stages and that Yemen's Houthis should bear the consequences of their "hostile behaviour".

Saudi state television acknowledged attacks in the town of Dhahran that hit water tanks and damaged vehicles and houses.

Another attack targeted an electrical substation in an area of southwestern Saudi Arabia near the Yemeni border, state TV said.

The North Jeddah Bulk Plant stores diesel, petrol and jet fuel for use in the city. It accounts for more than a quarter of all of Saudi Arabia's supplies and also supplies fuel crucial to running a regional desalination plant.

The Houthis have twice targeted the North Jeddah plant with cruise missiles: One attack came in November 2020 while the last one came on Sunday.

At the time of the 2020 attack, the tank, which has a capacity of 500,000 barrels, held diesel fuel, according to a recent report by a UN panel of experts examining Yemen's war. Repairs cost Aramco approximately \$1.5m.

Saudi airstrikes hit Yemen's Houthis after Jiddah attack (Associated Press)

By Ahmed Al-Haj and Samy Magdy

March 26, 2022

A Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen unleashed a barrage of airstrikes on the capital and a strategic Red Sea city, officials said Saturday. At least eight people were killed.

The overnight airstrikes on Sanaa and Hodeida — both held by the Houthis — came a day after the rebels attacked an oil depot in the Saudi city of Jiddah, their highest-profile assault yet on the kingdom.

Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, said the strikes targeted "sources of threat" to Saudi Arabia, according to the state-run Saudi Press Agency or SPA.

He said the coalition intercepted and destroyed two explosives-laden drones early Saturday. He said the drones were launched from Houthi-held civilian oil facilities in Hodeida, urging civilians to stay away from oil facilities in the city.

Footage circulated online showed flames and plumes of smoke over Sanaa and Hodeida. Associated Press journalists in the Yemeni capital heard loud explosions that rattled residential buildings there.

The Houthis said the coalition airstrikes hit a power plant, a fuel supply station and the state-run social insurance office in the capital.

A Houthi media office claimed an airstrike hit houses for guards of the social insurance office in Sanaa's Haddah neighborhood, killing at least eight people and wounding four others, including women and children.

The office shared images it said for the aftermath of the airstrike. It showed wreckage in the courtyard of a social insurance office with the shattered windows of a nearby multiple-story building.

Hamoud Abbad, a local official with the Houthis in Sanaa, said the facility is located close to a building used by the U.N. agencies in the capital. He claimed that U.N. vehicles were seen leaving the area prior to the airstrikes.

In Hodeida, the Houthi media office said the coalition hit oil facilities in violation of a 2018 cease-fire deal that ended months of fighting in Hodeida, which handles about 70% of Yemen's commercial and humanitarian imports. The strikes also hit the nearby Port Salif, also on the Red Sea.

Al-Malki, the coalition spokesperson, said it targeted drones being prepared in Hodeida to be launched on the Kingdom. He accused the Houthis of using civilian infrastructure, such as Hodeida's ports and the Sanaa airport, to launch attacks on Saudi oil facilities, according to SPA.

Late Wednesday, coalition airstrikes rained on Houthi-held areas in Hodeida, al-Malki announced. No immediate casualties were reported.

A U.N. mission overseeing the Hodeida deal voiced concern about the airstrikes and urged warring sides to "maintain the civilian nature of the ports and avoid damage to civilian infrastructure."

"Once again we are seeing civilians bearing the brunt of this conflict which is just getting worse every year," said Erin Hutchinson, Yemen director at the Norwegian Refugee Council, a charity working in Yemen. "This escalation is going to do nothing to elevate the hardships that millions are going through."

The escalation, which comes on the seventh anniversary of the Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen's war, is likely to complicate efforts by the U.N. special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, to reach a humanitarian truce during the holy

month of Ramadan in early April.

It comes as the Gulf Cooperation Council plans to host the warring sides for talks late this month. The Houthis however have rejected Riyadh — the Saudi capital where the GCC is headquartered — as a venue for talks, which are expected to include an array of Yemeni factions.

The Houthis also announced Saturday a unilateral initiative that included a three-day suspension of cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia, as well as fighting inside Yemen. They demanded an end to the coalition air and sea blockade on their territories before engaging in negotiations.

Peter Salisbury, Yemen expert at the International Crisis Group, doubted that ongoing efforts will succeed in bringing a peaceful settlement to the grinding war in the near future, given that international attention is now focusing on other crises including the war in Ukraine.

“I really wouldn’t buy into any optimism we’ll see diplomatic progress in 2022,” he said. “It’s pretty clear that all parties are still looking for ways to either win outright or cause significant damage to their rivals.”

Yemen’s brutal war erupted in 2014 after the Houthis seized Sanaa. The Saudi-led coalition entered the war months later to try restore the internationally recognized government. The conflict has in recent years become a regional proxy war that has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians. It also created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

The Houthis’ Friday attack came ahead of a Formula One race in the kingdom on Sunday, raising concerns about Saudi Arabia’s ability to defend itself against the Iranian-backed rebels. The Houthis targeted the same fuel depot that they had attacked in recent days — the North Jiddah Bulk Plant that sits just southeast of the city’s international airport and is a crucial hub for Muslim pilgrims heading to Mecca.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by The Associated Press showed one of the two tanks damaged in the Houthi attack on Jiddah still burning late Saturday morning. Bright red flames leapt up from the tank, with thick black smoke rising from the fire.

The attack appeared to target new tanks, as a tank twice struck by the Houthis just two rows north appeared untouched in the new attack. A tank alongside the burning one appeared to have white wrap and fire-suppressing foam around it.

In Egypt, hundreds of passengers were stranded at Cairo International Airport after their Jiddah-bound flights were canceled because of the Houthi attack, according to airport officials.

The kingdom’s flagship carrier Saudia announced the cancelation of two flights on its website. The two had 456 passengers booked. A third canceled flight with 146 passengers was operated by the low-cost Saudi airline Flynas.

Some passengers found seats on other Saudi Arabia-bound flights and others were booked into hotels close to the Cairo airport, according to Egyptian officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because there were not authorized to brief media.

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Special Tribunal for Lebanon

Official Website of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon
In Focus: Special Tribunal for Lebanon (UN)

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Israel and Palestine

Al-'Auja, Jordan Valley: Israel demolishes house under construction and confiscates community residents' bulldozer (B'tselem)

March 24, 2022

On Wednesday, 23 March 2022, at around 9:00 A.M., Civil Administration personnel arrived with a military and Border Police escort and equipped with a bulldozer to the southern side of the village of al-'Auja. The forces demolished a house under construction intended to house a young couple by power of Military Order 1797. Later, at around 4:00 P.M., soldiers came to farmland near the community of a-Zoabi (al-Farisiyah) and confiscated a bulldozer owned by a resident of al-'Auja used for agricultural work in the area.

South Hebron Hills: Israel confiscates prefab used as gas station, and storage and destroys agricultural terraces, uprooting 60 olive trees (B'tselem)

March 24, 2022

On Tuesday, 23 March 2022, at around 10:00 A.M., Civil Administration personnel arrived with a military and Border Police escort, a bulldozer and a crane truck to the main trance to the village of Khirbet Qalqas in the South Hebron Hills. The forces confiscated a prefab that served as a gas station and a broken-down minibus used for storage. From there, the forces continued about a kilometer towards Hebron, where they demolished agricultural terraces and uprooted about 60 olive trees in a four-dunam grove belonging to a Hebron resident.

Al-Haq Sends Joint Urgent Appeal to UN Special Procedures on the Arbitrary Arrest and Detention of Human Rights Defender and Lawyer, Salah Hammouri (Al-Haq)

March 28, 2022

On 21 March 2022, a joint urgent appeal was submitted to the UN special procedures from the Association France Palestine Solidarite; Cairo Institute for Human Rights studies; the Palestinian Human Rights Council, including Al-Haq; and the Platform of French NGOs for Palestine on the recent arbitrary arrest and detention of Salah Hammouri by Israel. Salah Hammouri, 36, is a Palestinian- French Jerusalemite, Human Rights Defender, lawyer and member of the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights association, as well as a former political prisoner.

On 7 March 2022, between 4:00-5:00 am, about 25 Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF), including special unit forces, Al-Musta'ribeen Unit, broke Salah Hammouri's apartment door in Kufor Aqab north of Jerusalem, entered his bedroom, and grabbed him from his bed while he was still sleeping. The IOF ransacked the premises and confiscated three mobile phones and one laptop belonging to Salah. During his arrest, Salah sustained an injury to his wrist as he was bound with a plastic zip-tie, aggressively escorted out, and forced to kneel on the floor facing a wall until he was transferred to a military jeep. Salah was first taken to Ofer military base in Beitounia, Ramallah, where he was held until the evening and later transferred to Al-Mascobbiya Interrogation Center in Jerusalem. On 9 March 2022, an Israeli military judge extended Mr Hammouri's initial detention order which was soon followed by a three-month administrative detention ordered by the Israeli military Commander on the basis of "secret information".

At the time of his arrest and at the time of writing, Mr Hammouri continues to challenge the decision by the Israeli Interior Ministry to revoke his permanent residency status in Jerusalem. The initiation of Mr Hammouri's residency revocation under Amendment No. 30 to the Entry into Israel Law of 1952 entails profound violations of international law and puts him at imminent risk of forced deportation, amounting to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, the war crime of forced population transfer, and crimes against humanity of displacement, and apartheid.[6] The Ministry's decision further results in the denial of basic human rights, including inter alia the rights to family life, health, education, work.

Salah Hammouri's case highlights the Israeli occupation and apartheid regime's widespread and systematic practice of illegal population transfer and demographic manipulation, as manifested through laws, policies, and practices, to maintain their institutionalized regime of racial domination and oppression over the Palestinian people. His case was highlighted in Amnesty International's landmark report demonstrating Israel's crimes of apartheid, specifically the illegal practice of forcible population transfer, deportations, and demographic engineering.

Accordingly, it is imperative to immediately and urgently address the arbitrary arrest and continued punitive residency revocation of Salah Hammouri as it represents a step towards the wider application against HRDs, peaceful dissent, and Palestinians of Jerusalem more generally to achieve demographic goals. Al-Haq and fellow Palestinian and International Human Rights organisations call for the immediate intervention of the relevant UN Special Procedure mandates and urge them to:

- I. Demand Israel, as an Occupying Power, to reverse its decision to revoke the permanent Jerusalem residency status of Salah Hammouri; reiterating the illegality of residency revocation based on "breach of allegiance" leading to the forcible transfer of Palestinian civilians, which is a war crime and crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the ICC;
- II. Call on Israel to unconditionally and immediately release Salah Hammouri from administrative detention, and further, put an end to his prolonged persecution and all policies and measures of intimidation and harassment against him;
- III. Call on Israel to immediately repeal its Entry into Israel Law (1952), which has been used to further the Israeli policy of population transfer and achieve demographic goals in Jerusalem in violation of Palestinians' fundamental rights, including their right to freedom of movement and residence, and the right to leave their country and to return;
- IV. Urge Israel to immediately cease any and all practices and policies intended to intimidate and silence human rights defenders, in violation of their right to freedom of expression, including through arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, institutionalized hate speech and incitement, residency revocation, deportations, and other coercive or punitive measures;
- V. Require the immediate initiation of an investigation into the illegal infiltration of Human Rights Defenders' phones and all the other victims that have been in communication with the targeted HRD;
- VI. Require an immediate moratorium on the sale, transfer, and use of all forms of surveillance technology, particularly NSO Group's Pegasus spyware, until a full independent investigation of its operation within Palestine is carried out by the UN to identify the scope of its surveillance activities carried out against Palestinian human rights defenders, and their ties to the Israeli government;
- VII. Call for international justice and accountability, including at the International Criminal Court, for Israel's widespread and systematic human rights violations and alleged international crimes, including the crime of population transfer and the crime of apartheid, which constitutes a crime against humanity.

Israel: at least five dead in Tel Aviv shooting (The Guardian)

By Martin Chulovbr
March 29, 2022

Reports say suspected Arab gunman killed at least five people in Bnei Brak, east of Tel Aviv, before he was fatally shot

Israeli paramedics have said at least five people were killed in a shooting attack in a Tel Aviv suburb, the third such incident in less than a week.

Amateur video broadcast on Israeli television stations showed a man dressed in black and pointing an assault rifle walking down a street in Bnei Brak, a Jewish ultra-Orthodox city east of Israel's commercial capital.

The gunman was later identified as a 26-year-old resident of Ya'bad, near Jenin in the northern West Bank. He is believed to have been working at a building site in Bnei Brak and had previously served a short sentence in an Israeli prison for a security offence.

The attack caps one of the bloodiest weeks in recent years in Israel, and has stirred fears that Islamic State is attempting to wreak a campaign of violence ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins next weekend.

Two earlier attacks in Hadera and Beersheba are believed to have been carried out by the terror group's sympathisers. Tuesday's attack was not immediately linked to any organisation.

Witnesses said the Bnei Brak gunman began shooting at apartment balconies and then at people on the street and in a car before he was fatally shot. Video footage filmed from nearby shows a black-clad slim man walking into a street with an assault rifle after a bicycle rider made a lucky escape.

The Magen David Adom ambulance service said the gunman killed at least five people. "The terrorist was liquidated," spokesperson Zaki Heller said. He was reportedly shot dead by a police officer.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, who is based in the West Bank, issued a rare condemnation of the attacks.

“The killing of Palestinian and Israeli civilians will only lead to further deterioration of the situation, while we are all striving for stability,” Abbas said in a statement carried by the Wafa news agency.

Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett, who heads an ideologically disparate coalition government ranging from Jewish nationalists to Arabs, said the country was “facing a wave of murderous ... terrorism”.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condemned Tuesday’s “terrorist attack”, calling the recent spate of violence “unacceptable”.

The incident followed the conclusion of a summit between Arab foreign ministers from Morocco, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain, as well Blinken, hosted by Israel in the Negev desert. The gathering had raised the ire of Hezbollah in Lebanon, which had called it “treacherous”, and had been staunchly opposed by Islamic factions in Gaza.

Tensions have also increased in the West Bank after several deadly clashes between residents and border police. Israeli officials had warned of deteriorating conditions across the West Bank. The annual commemoration of Land Day, marking the deaths of six Israeli Arabs who were killed in 1976 protesting against the planned appropriation of land, is due to be held on Wednesday.

Last week’s attack in the southern city of Beersheba, in which four people were killed in a stabbing and car-ramming rampage, was carried out by an Arab citizen of Israel whom authorities said was an Islamic State sympathiser.

On Sunday, as the Arab summit convened in southern Israel, an Arab assailant, a resident of a town in the north of the country, shot and killed two police officers in Hadera, a city about 30 miles north of Tel Aviv. Other officers shot and killed him.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for both attacks. The terror group is not known to have a significant presence inside the country. However, the presence of sympathisers who drew inspiration from the group’s leaders had long been a concern.

In Every Corner of Palestine, There Is a Story of Dispossession (The Nation)

By Mohammed El-Kurd

March 30, 2022

Today is Land Day, an annual commemoration of those killed protesting Israeli theft of Palestinian lands 46 years ago. But even now, there is a Nakba everywhere you look.

Today is Land Day in Palestine—a day that commemorates the moment 46 years ago when Israeli forces shot and killed six Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who dared to protest the Israeli regime’s confiscation of tens of thousands of dunams of Palestinian land.

The murders took place during a moment of uprising—much like now—on the eve of a general strike that had been called by the Initiative for the Defense of Lands, a committee established in 1975 by Palestinian political activists, public intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, and journalists. The night before, Palestinians in various towns within the 1948 territories burned tires and closed streets to block the forces sent by Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin. At dawn, the army raided numerous Palestinian villages with military vehicles and tanks, wounding about 50 Palestinians, arresting 300, and killing six—Raja Abu Raya, Khader Khalaleh, Khadija Shawahna, Khair Yassin, Raafat Zuhairi, Mohsen Taha.

Despite the violent crackdown—or perhaps because of it—the strike was carried out successfully, and the repression meant to deter nationalist sentiment ignited an anti-colonial mood so magnetic it connected the fragmented realities of Palestinians in 1948 territories, Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora like never before.

Forty-six years later, people throughout the world continue to memorialize this moment, honoring the martyrdom of those who fell by protesting, planting olive trees, and reminding one another that Land Day is not mere folklore. It is not a commemoration of a tragedy that once was. It is a commemoration of something ongoing and present tense.

Since that bloody day in 1976, countless new settlements have overwhelmed stolen Palestinian land. Our towns and neighborhoods continue to be encircled by colonies and military outposts, their residents isolated from one another. The Israeli government has killed and displaced thousands of Palestinians—both those who defended their lands and those who walked in the shadows, heads bowed, thinking they could evade the horrors of the Occupation.

Everywhere you look on the map, there is a story of dispossession. In the Naqab, Palestinian Bedouins are uprooted and replaced by pine trees. In Silwan, the Occupation forces demolish homes to fulfill a biblical fantasy. In Sheikh Jarrah, ethnic cleansing comes disguised as a “real-estate dispute.” In Beita, settlers build illegal outposts on hilltops, and soldiers kill for them. Out of all the loot, the Land remains—indisputably—the most valuable.

s I observe this Land Day, I can tell a dozen stories of dispossession, but today I want to write about the communities of Masafer Yatta, whose villages, tucked in the South Hebron Hills, are under imminent threat of expulsion.

On March 15, the people of Masafer Yatta were granted travel permits by the Israeli Occupation authorities to enter occupied Jerusalem for a hearing at the Supreme Court. Photographs of them sitting in the courtroom reminded me of my own time there. I remembered my family and neighbors trying to trace meaning in the Hebrew deliberations, some of them fluent in the language and some who didn't speak it at all. We whispered in each other's ears fragments of what the judges and lawyers said, as if playing a miserable game of broken telephone.

The hearing on March 15 marked the beginning of the end to an excruciating 20-year legal battle to save eight Palestinian villages in the South Hebron Hills. Sometime in June, an Israeli judge—himself a settler in the occupied West Bank—will rule whether to expel some 1300 Palestinians from their ancestral lands, which they have inhabited and cultivated for generations.

When reading about Masafer Yatta, you will likely encounter a type of reporting that would have you believe that Palestinians are to blame for their own dispossession. A headline from *The Times of Israel* reads, "High court to rule on expelling over 1000 Palestinians from West Bank firing zone," as if the people in Masafer Yatta had gleefully decided to build their homes in the middle of a shooting range, choosing for their children to play amid the raining bullets or for their livestock to graze between tank tracks. Yes, who among us could resist the allure?

The reality, of course, is quite different. In the early 1980s, the Israeli army designated Masafer Yatta—22 villages on 30,000 dunams of Palestinian land—as "Firing Zone 918," declaring it off-limits to anyone but the Israeli military and those it permits to remain there (this does not apply to Jewish citizens of the state or Jews from around the world). Then, in 1999, the Occupation authorities committed the war crime of expelling the residents of 14 of those villages from the lands they had inhabited for generations, on the grounds that they had been "illegally living in a firing zone." That wasn't the only incident of forced displacement. According to B'Tselem, "since 2006, Israeli authorities have demolished 64 homes in these communities, in which 346 people, including 155 minors, lived."

A recently uncovered 40-year-old official document found in the Israel State Archive confirmed that the regime declared military zones in that area solely to expel the native residents.

This discovery raised no eyebrows among Palestinians, however, who arrived at this conclusion decades ago. Declaring Palestinian lands to be putative military zones is one of the many methods of land-grabbing at the regime's disposal, and it happens more often than one would think. Today, 18 percent of the lands in the occupied West Bank are considered "firing zones."

The Palestinians in the Hills—who not only predate said "military zones" but the Zionist state itself—are fighting for the remaining eight villages, often in the face of extreme harassment and danger. "Residents of Masafer Yatta are the target of constant raids, arrests, settler violence, land seizures, and home demolitions. It is understood among the people of the area that these obstacles are thrown in their way to terrorize them into leaving," my friend and filmmaker Ryah Aqel explained in an article we wrote together for *The Nation* in early 2021.

We wrote the article after Aqel's cousin, Harun Abu Aram, had been shot and paralyzed by the Israeli military. It is the tortuous reality of life in a targeted Palestinian village, however, that families like Aqel's rarely experience just one unjust loss. In 2000, Abu Aram's uncle, Khalil Mohammad, then just 14 years old, was killed by an unexploded bomb left behind by the Israeli occupation forces on the family's own grazing land.

Twenty-two years later, the possibility of falling victim to leftover Israeli explosives remains an enduring threat. "Israeli occupation forces now conduct military training dangerously close to the villagers' homes. It is disturbingly common to find remnants of US-made ammunition, be it bullets or tank shells, in the hills. In fact, schools in the South Hebron Hills are required to teach children how to distinguish between leftover weapons and debris," Aqel explained.

And there are other consequences, other horrors. Children and their grandparents sit and watch military tanks parade at their front doors while almost all have stories of loved ones who have been injured or killed by the army or their leftover explosives. I think about Hajj Suleiman Eid al-Hathaleen, an elder of Masafer Yatta, who was intentionally run over and killed by an Israeli tow truck just two months ago. His towering presence once gave strength to the anti-occupation movement. Today his loved ones mourn him while the world barely notices.

To know that these atrocities are the result of military men and politicians simply placing their index fingers on a Palestinian area and dismembering it for the sake of political dominance and settler expansion is to live in a state of constant bewilderment and outrage. It is one that I and so many other Palestinians know well.

Approximately 30 kilometers from the Hebron Hills, my neighborhood, Sheikh Jarrah, fights its own battle against

colonialism. Perhaps because I was born into it, I didn't think our reality was bizarre until I stepped out of it.

But bizarre it is: Someone from Long Island decided one day to move to Jerusalem, thousands of miles from his home, and claim my home as if by divine decree and with the support of billionaire-backed settler organizations. The eviction orders and court summons visited upon us by employees of said settler organizations are so common as to be almost mundane—as are the friendships between those employees and the city council members. Even now, Israeli parliamentarians set up make-shift tents in my neighbors' front yards, performing their spectacles in time for election season.

The Israeli regime's architecture of displacement uses many different methods but all have a single goal: to control as much land as possible while keeping as few Palestinians possible without triggering international alarm bells—be it through manufacturing “real-estate disputes”; demolishing homes built “without authorization”; stealing lands by declaring them to be “military zones,” “archeologic sites,” “environmentally protected,” or “state-owned”; or simply by stunting the growth of Palestinian communities by isolating them and severing their social and economic ties with neighboring towns. The Zionist project has always created narratives to legalize and justify replacing the native with the settler.

The land grabs in Masafer Yatta highlight the importance of Land Day as an event that unites and mobilizes Palestinians everywhere against ongoing colonial expansion. In fact, what sparked Land Day's inaugural general strike is similar to what is happening in the South Hebron Hills and what led to the recent resurgence of resistance in the Naqab.

In early February 1976, a year after expropriating 3,000 dunams of Palestinian land in Kafr Qassem (where the Israeli army carried out a horrific massacre in 1956, killing 49 Palestinians), the Israeli military designated the farmlands of three villages “military training zones.” Those village were Arraba, Sakhnin, and Deir Hanna in the Northern District of the country. Much like those living in Masafer Yatta, the residents of these villages were told that entering their farmlands would be considered a criminal offense for which they would be punished. Shortly after, on February 29, the Israeli regime—led by the West's beloved “Soldier of Peace” and the mastermind behind the “Break the Bones” policy, Yitzhak Rabin—confiscated 20,000 dunams of Palestinian lands in the Galilee, declaring them “state-owned.”

Those practices lit a fire under the seats of Palestinians everywhere. Palestinians protested in solidarity and struck in parallel with their compatriots in 1948-territories. Every year since, Land Day has served to remind the world of the connection Palestinians have with the land and their relentless commitment to defending it.

It is not lost on Palestinians how the regime continues to use discriminatory laws and fictitious narratives to justify ethnic cleansing. Some Palestinians have even satirized the absurdity of settler-colonial rule. “God has become a refugee, sir/ Confiscate therefore even the carpet of the mosque,” the great poet Rashid Hussein wrote in his 1960 poem “God Is a Refugee,” penned in protest of the 1960 “Land Law,” which classified 93 percent of the lands in historic Palestine as “state-owned,” and the 1950 “Absentee Property Law,” which allowed the state to seize the properties of Palestinian refugees dispossessed during the Nakba. “You have liberated even the grazing cattle, the day you gave Abraham Mohammed's field.”

Should the settler judge rule in favor of the expulsion of the communities in Masafer Yatta, the 1,300 Palestinians living there will not only be made homeless but will also be ripped from the lands they have loved and nurtured for generations. The Israeli buildings will grow taller, and the settler population will grow faster. Their hands, as Hussein wrote in his poem, will “sow land mines in [our] gardens.” And as their colonies cut off the circulation between our towns, they will tell us, “You are nothing but the scraps of nations, living scattered among caves!”

But Hussein's poem offers other insights, other reminders—words that echo with particular resonance this Land Day. “But [they] have forgotten,” he observes, “that untended coals are enough to start a fire... Enough to light a path.”

19-month-old Palestinian baby dies after Israel delays treatment (Middle East Monitor)

April 1, 2022

A 19-month-old Palestinian baby died in Gaza last week, after waiting five months for Israel to grant her permission to leave the blockaded enclave for treatment.

Fatima Al-Masri, who was diagnosed last year with a hole in the heart, missed two appointments for treatment at Al-Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem, in December and February, while her family were repeatedly informed that her case was “under review” by Israel's Coordination and Liaison Administration.

“I loved her from deep inside my heart. I wish I had died as well as her,” said Jalal Al-Masri, Fatima's father. “They kept saying the application was ‘under review, under review’ and then she died.

“It felt like I had died as well, without Fatima in my life. Nothing breaks a person more than losing their child.”

“We are under a blockade. I don't understand how Israel can send me this message about her case being under review. If Israel

wanted to send her by herself for treatment, then send her," added Masri.

The death of Fatima has been condemned by several human rights groups, including the Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights.

"Al-Mezan deeply regrets Fatima's death and strongly condemns Israel's ongoing closure on the Gaza Strip and its associated restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, that includes denying patients access to the hospitals in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Israel and abroad," the NGO said in a statement.

Many Palestinians have lost their lives since 2006, as Israel refuses to issue medical permits for those living in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, while children affected with cancer do get medical permits to be treated in Jerusalem hospitals, their parents are not allowed to accompany them. They are either left alone in hospitals or one of the old grandparents is only allowed to attend to them.

The UN's Special Rapporteur for Palestine, Michael Lynk, in a report last week that described Israel's control over Palestinian territories as "apartheid", said Gaza's health system "is flat on its back, with serious shortages of healthcare professionals, inadequate treatment equipment and low supplies of drugs and medicines."

Mahmoud Shalabi, Programme Manager in Gaza for the charity, Medical Aid Palestine, said the blockade had "suffocated" the health system, leaving hospitals short of medicine and equipment, and that conditions had worsened during the pandemic.

53,000 Palestinian children detained by Israel since 1967 (Middle East Monitor)

April 5, 2022

Israeli occupation authorities have arrested more than 53,000 Palestinian children since 1967, the Commission for Detainees and Ex-Detainees' Affairs said in a statement yesterday.

Abdul-Nasser Farawna, the commission's head of Studies and Documentation Department, said that the Israeli occupation deals with Palestinian children like adults, stating that they are subject to the same torture, investigation and detention conditions.

This number, Ferwana said, includes girls and boys, stressing that Israel does not respect international laws and conventions when it comes to dealing with minors.

About 1,300 Palestinian children were detained in 2021, Ferawna said; a 140 per cent increase in the rate of child detentions compared to the previous year.

Since the start of 2022, Ferawma said, Israel has detained more than 200 children, and there are currently 160 children inside the occupation's jails.

In a report issued to mark Palestinian Child Day today, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club said that Israel detained more than 9,000 Palestinian girls and boys between 2015 and March 2022.

Mossad Says Can't Find Archival Papers on 1982 Lebanon Massacre (Haaretz)

By Ofer Aderet

April 5, 2022

Israeli Mossad's 'strange' admission, per Supreme Court president, was made on a petition to disclose materials about Christian militias that massacred Palestinian in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila

A lawyer for the Mossad told the High Court of Justice on Monday that the agency is having difficulty locating historic documents in its archives relating to ties between the agency and Lebanese Christian militias that carried out massacres at two Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982.

The lawyer for the intelligence agency, Omri Epstein, made the claim at a hearing on a petition filed by dozens of human rights advocates who have been seeking the disclosure of documents demonstrating Mossad's links in the 1970s and 1980s to Lebanese Christian militias that committed the massacres at the Sabra and Chatila camps.

Supreme Court President Esther Hayut, who heads the panel hearing the case, called the Mossad's claim "strange."

At the hearing, Epstein said that the agency's current ability to locate the documents "in the way in which they are stored, as well as the capability to locate documents for such an inclusive request spanning eight years, is limited and difficult."

Hayut noted that the intelligence agency is legally required to preserve the documents, which are to be opened to the public

after 90 years. “The assumption is that until the 90 years have elapsed, you need to preserve the material – so what does it mean that it’s difficult for you to locate them?” she asked.

Epstein responded that behind closed doors and on an ex parte basis – meaning without the presence of the representatives of the human rights advocates – he would be able to explain at further length “how the material is maintained in the Mossad archives.”

In his petition, Eitay Mack, the lawyer representing the petitioners, alleged that about 40 years had so far elapsed “since the Mossad was responsible for the State of Israel’s support for murderous militias that committed atrocities in the civil war in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the Mossad still believes that it is its right to conceal the information relating to them from the public.” Mack alleged that the 1982 massacre at the two camps “was just one of a series of massacres, executions, abductions, disappearances, dismemberment and abuse of bodies that the Christian militias carried out.”

“This secret case needs to come to light,” the petition alleges, “to also permit a public discussion and learn the lessons that might prevent continued support by the Mossad and the State of Israel for security forces and militias around the world that are perpetrating atrocities.”

Delay in disclosing documents

The nondisclosure of historic documents was the subject of another High Court case that was decided about two months ago ,involving a request by researchers from the Taub Center for Israel Studies at New York University to review documents in the state archives related to the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

The petition claimed that the disclosure of the documents was being delayed in violation of the law, in part due to the involvement of the military censor in deciding which documents can or cannot be disclosed. The law does not address the censor’s involvement.

In the course of that case, it emerged that the minutes of meetings in 1968 that should have been made public in 1999 – after 30 years – have still not been disclosed, 22 years later. Representatives from the State Archives claimed that it would take them at least another three years to do so.

Deputy Supreme Court President Neal Hendel accepted the archives’ acknowledgement that it was many years behind in disclosing material that is no longer confidential and that it was not meeting the pace of disclosure provided by the law.

“The facts show that the manpower at the disposal of the State Archives is insufficient to deal with the major burden in the work [involved in] examination and disclosure so that it cannot comply with the provisions of the regulations,” Hendel wrote. “This fact violates the public’s right to access to the information deposited in the State Archives and does harm to the academic research based on the material disclosed by the archives.”

But he added that even if the deadline for disclosure has elapsed, archival material should not be disclosed before it is examined, “since the disclosure of some types of restricted material, even if the period of restriction has ended, could harm state security, which the limitation period was designed to protect in the first place.”

To make the process more efficient, Hendel recommended that consideration be given to making changes that would either “adapt the reality to the regulations or alternatively to adapt the regulations to the reality,” as he put it.

Hendel also addressed the issue of the involvement of the office of the military censor and approved the censor’s involvement due to what he described as “the possible risk to national security as a result of the disclosure of archival documents on the internet.”

Foreign intelligence officials, he wrote, could misuse information from the archives. “As a result of the large quantity of information published on the internet and in the shadow of technological capabilities in the big data field, a foreign intelligence official could copy the material, meld the information and conduct searches of it based on the subjects that interest him, and in the process gain insights that have the potential to harm state security,” he wrote.

“In light of the censor’s expertise, professional experience, tools and abilities and the potential for substantial harm to state security as a result of the disclosure of sensitive security-related material on the internet, consulting the censor is [at minimum] a reasonable exercise of the authority given to the archivist to disclose archival material,” Hendel concluded.

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Gulf Region

Saudi Arabia: Detained Uyghur men at risk of torture must not be extradited to China (Amnesty International)

March 23, 2022

The Saudi Arabian authorities must halt plans to extradite two Uyghur men to China, where they will be at high risk of torture amid a brutal crackdown on Muslim minorities in the country's Xinjiang region, Amnesty International said today.

Religious scholar Aimidoula Waili and his friend Nuermaimaiti Ruze, who have been detained in Saudi Arabia since November 2020 without explanation, were transferred to the capital Riyadh last week and are now believed to be at imminent risk of being forcibly repatriated to China.

“If sent to China, it is highly likely that these two men will be subjected to arbitrary detention and torture in Xinjiang’s network of repressive internment camps or prisons, where hundreds of thousands of other Uyghurs have faced grave human rights violations,” said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Under international law, the Saudi government has an obligation not to extradite Waili and Ruze to China due to their risk of being tortured. The Saudi authorities should halt all plans to deport the men and immediately release them from detention, unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.”

Family members of the two Uyghur men told Amnesty International that Waili (also known as Hamdullah Veli) and Ruze (also known as Nur Muhammed Rozi) were transferred from Jeddah to Riyadh on March 16 – a move they believe signals their imminent extradition to China. “We are extremely worried about our father, what would happen to him if sent to China. We need everyone to help immediately to stop this extradition,” Waili’s daughter Sumeyye told Amnesty International.

Waili, who was previously tortured in prison in Xinjiang, travelled to Saudi Arabia from Turkey in February 2020 to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage, with his friend Ruze. In early November 2020, Waili heard from a friend who had spoken to a Saudi official that the government was planning to repatriate him to China. A few days later, he and Ruze were arrested.

The two Uyghur men have been detained since 20 November 2020 and were held in Jeddah Dhahban Central Prison before their transfer to Riyadh. The Saudi authorities have not given Waili and Ruze a reason for their arrest or informed them about any charges against them.

Background

Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment states that no state party shall extradite a person to another country where they would be in danger of being subjected to torture. Saudi Arabia became party to the convention on 23 September 1997.

Aimidoula Waili was previously arrested in Xinjiang in August 2013 because one of the employees at his factory had allegedly incited an uprising. In early November 2020, Waili told Amnesty International he was tortured in prison: being electrocuted and forced to stand on ice while wearing nothing but slippers and underwear for up to three hours every day.

After his release in 2016, Waili went to Turkey where he was granted residency documents that allowed him to remain in the country indefinitely. Earlier in February 2020, Waili and Ruze entered Saudi Arabia on a tourist visa to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage.

In June 2021, Amnesty International published a report revealing how hundreds of thousands of Muslim men and women in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are being subjected to arbitrary mass detention, indoctrination and torture.

Testimonies from former internment camp detainees detailed the extreme measures taken by Chinese authorities since 2017 to essentially root out Islamic religious beliefs and traditions, as well as the cultural practices and local languages of the region’s Muslim ethnic groups.

The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to cover up the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, and to prevent members of the Uyghur diaspora from speaking up about them. Amnesty International has documented numerous

cases where Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslim people in Xinjiang had been detained simply for living, travelling, or studying abroad or for communicating with people abroad. Many were detained simply for being “connected” with people who lived, travelled, studied, or communicated with people abroad.

Saudi Arabia executes 16 more people ahead of Grand Prix (Morning Star)

By Ceren Sagirbr

March 26, 2022

Saudi Arabia has executed 16 more people since the mass execution of 81 men on March 12, executing on average more than one person a day, campaigners in Britain revealed today. Of the 16 executions, eight took place this week, just days before F1 Grand Prix practice sessions begin in the country.

If the kingdom continues to carry out executions at its current rate, there would be nearly 500 executions this year, according to calculations by legal action group Reprieve. Saudi Arabia has executed 108 people in 2022 so far, which is more people than in 2020 and 2021 combined.

Nearly three-quarters of the 81 men killed in the mass execution were accused of non-lethal offences and more than half were killed for taking part in pro-democracy protests. Reprieve director Maya Foa said: “Formula One boss Stefano Domenicali says Saudi Arabia is headed in ‘the right direction’ when the kingdom is on track to execute almost 500 people this year.

“There have been executions almost every day in the lead-up to the race — they have clearly heard the message from the sport’s organisers that there will be no consequences. “The 10-year deal F1 has just signed with Saudi Arabia is effectively a contract to sportswash the bloodstains from Mohammed bin Salman’s regime.”

Lord Hain, co-chairman of the Motorsport APPG and vice-chairman of the Formula One APPG, said: “If the Jeddah race is to go ahead, it must be a venue to strongly condemn Mohammed bin Salman’s regime, and all participants — drivers, officials, corporate sponsors — must loudly call for the kingdom to place a moratorium on the death penalty, in line with Formula One’s core values.”

The figures come ahead of the seven-year anniversary Saturday since the beginning of the Saudi-led coalition’s entry into the war in Yemen, which is facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

As of January 2022, at least 8,970 civilians have been killed and 10,226 injured in air strikes on civilian targets.

Anti-arms campaigners have warned that the coalition’s bombing campaign would not have been possible without supplies from countries such as Britain and the United States.

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) has calculated that the total value of British arms sales to Saudi Arabia is the beginning of the war is around £23 billion.

Sam Perlo-Freeman of CAAT said: “While the UK government and its allies rightly condemn the horrific atrocities being visited on Ukraine by Russia, they are not merely standing by, but actively enabling the same atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, through their continuing arms supplies.

“These arms sales must stop now, and the international community, after seven years of inaction, needs to pursue serious efforts to promote a diplomatic solution to the war, end the blockade of Yemen, pursue accountability for war crimes and human rights abuses, and act urgently to ensure sufficient humanitarian aid to Yemen to allow its people to live.”

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ASIA

Afghanistan

The US' Cloak-and-Dagger Paramilitary Operations in Afghanistan (Inkstick)

By Caleb Brennan

March 28, 2022

The cliché has always been to refer back to where, exactly, you were when the towers fell. Politicians riff on it in their speeches, waxing poetic on both the indelible horror and the surge of patriotic duty they felt. Journalists to this day extract every ounce of prose from the images they absorbed on cable news. Late-night comedians pause from their usual monologues to soberly address their audience with relatable anecdotes of being awestruck on their morning commute. Very few, however, can attest to being uniquely prepared to join the tip of the Praetorian spear as the World Trade Center collapsed.

On the CBS News podcast “Intelligence Matters,” a hagiographic back-and-forth between ex-intelligence experts and former CIA director host Michael Morell, retired CIA senior Operations Office Phil Reilly relayed this distinctive experience. When the first tower was hit, Reilly was taking language classes to prepare for his new role as a station chief. “I was on the phone that day to my former office that dealt with Special Operations — Special Activities at the time — Center asking to, you know, ‘Put me in coach. I’m ready to come back.’ And that’s exactly what I did that day,” Reilly explains shortly before an ad notes that the programming you’re enjoying is sponsored by the Raytheon Company.

Reilly will go down in history as one of the first Americans to enter Afghanistan following the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Along with seven other CIA paramilitary officers, Reilly was flown in on a Russian Mi-17 helicopter to make contact with the Northern Alliance — the only major anti-Taliban resistance in the region — and conduct operations that would gather intelligence, conduct covert acts of extreme violence, surveil Taliban strongholds, and eventually arm a slew of warlords that were more than eager to become a counterinsurgency backed by American firepower and Pentagon capital.

Left out of the jovial exchanges between Reilly and Morell is how these opaque operations are a preeminent form of conducting modern warfare: A method with high civilian casualties, no judicial oversight, and a means of preventing the kind of public relations disaster that many in the military intelligence community maintain (and their most sympathetic allies in the press) was the central reason for America’s failure in Vietnam.

Paramilitary tactics — which involves the usage of individuals (in this case both trained CIA operatives, police or security forces, and indigenous warlords) who function like professional military but without any of the oversight or bureaucratic note-keeping — are inherently unaccountable. They create an environment that promotes war crimes, human rights abuses, and conceals the true cost of occupation or geopolitical subterfuge. Conversely, while it has been pertinent to critique the deployment of airstrikes, drones, and private military contractors in the occupation of Afghanistan, not enough culpability was placed on the CIA and Special Forces, who oversaw the use of domestic paramilitary units that, throughout the 20-year US intervention, were granted carte blanche to brutalize, abduct, and murder Afghan civilians with impunity.

WHEN RELIANCE ON PARAMILITARY FORCES STARTED

Paramilitary operations have been a function of US imperial interventions since the 1899 occupation of the Philippines — and the subsequent war that broke out between Philippine nationalists and their newly self-appointed rulers. But it was not until the US military ran up against the irregular, guerilla tactics of the Viet Cong that it became an unprecedented stratagem.

The Viet Cong relied on both a military and political wing to establish influence over their native territory, the latter of which was tasked with winning over South Vietnamese peasants and establishing local leadership that would be sympathetic to their liberation effort. These outreach tactics proved successful, as countless villages would be employed as weapons caches or safe havens for communist insurgents. Since the political wing was composed almost entirely of non-combatants, the US military would not, legally speaking, be able to target them with conventional soldiers. As such, the CIA developed the Phoenix Program, a secretive counterinsurgency scheme that “neutralized” civilians through murder, torture, and sexual violence. Foreshadowing what would unfold in Afghanistan, CIA operatives, mercenaries, and those indigenous to South Vietnam were recruited to eliminate individuals that could have any association with the political efforts of the Viet Cong.

Of the 19,534 targets that were nullified — 4,832 were killed — a mere 150 had any association with the upper echelons of Viet Cong leadership. The vast majority were civilians with little influence over the Viet Cong’s political network; the blatant outcomes of a bounty program (and war) that incentivized a body count regardless of its relation to civilian casualties. By all accounts, these cloak-and-dagger paramilitary operations only contributed to the resentment felt amongst villagers that were supposedly being protected from communist aggression. The indignation of otherwise agnostic peasants, created with every rice patty burned, every village displaced, every newly vaporized civilian would contribute to the downfall of South Vietnam. And the effectiveness of paramilitary tactics — that coupled relentless carnage with Potemkin-style national development — were called into question. But, luckily for those eager to justify foreign intervention without sully America’s supposed

human rights commitments, the unique circumstances of Afghanistan would provide ample rationale for the retrenchment of this unique style of imperial warfare.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN AFGHANISTAN

From the very beginning of the Afghan occupation, paramilitary tactics were the essential tool in the US military's tactical arsenal. Given that there was no formal Afghanistan military or police force following the collapse of the original Taliban government, warlords and private militia were used to fill the void, and they worked intimately with US military intelligence. The only qualifications seemed to be a distaste for Taliban rule and willingness to commit acts of horrific violence, and finding recruits was not difficult considering the economic deprivation within the country. It was disclosed that "fighters receive as much as \$400 a month in salary, twice what a soldier in the Afghan security forces earns. Commanders earn \$1,000 or more a month, as much as an Afghan army general."

Individual warlords became fabulously wealthy from US government contracts, and their followers were permitted to ransack the homes of the Afghan civilians that they raided. Not only did they carry out military operations, but militia groups were granted lucrative deals to defend the construction projects of private US firms tasked (on no-bid agreements) with modernizing the country's infrastructure; though sometimes it was simply easier to bribe the Taliban into guaranteeing safe passage.

Likewise, the initial CIA paramilitary groups had direct ties to the government, as Ahmed Wali Karzai, the half-brother of then-President Hamid Karzai, was the central strongman in the Kandahar region during the initial overthrow of the first Taliban government. He would go on to assist in the founding of the Kandahar Strike Force. Many members of these groups were of Pashtun ethnicity, as their native homeland in southeastern Afghanistan was uniquely impacted by the Taliban insurgency and key leaders of the tribe had been expelled by the Taliban following the collapse of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. However, paramilitaries could be found everywhere from the poppy fields of Helmand to the peaks of the Hindu Kush mountains that overlook Kunar.

Eventually, the most notoriously violent paramilitary outfits in the country — groups like the Kandahar Strike Force and the Khost Protection Force — would be formed with the explicit approval and backing of the CIA and US Special Forces. While these units are small in number and produced (in terms of the total number of recorded civilian deaths) limited casualties compared to airstrikes, their raids were especially deadly: CIA-trained paramilitary units proved far more likely to kill civilians than regular Afghan forces.

Similar paramilitary units that engaged in capture-kill missions, committed extrajudicial killings, and launched signature night raids on civilian households went by more innocuous names like "NDS-01" or "NDS-02" due to their connection with Afghanistan's then-newly formed intelligence bureau, the National Directorate of Security. Some were folded into the Afghan Local Police, while other paramilitary groups were ad-hoc and concentrated within hyper-specific areas — though neither subgenres had the same sort of backing that CIA-sourced forces received.

Afghan civilians, rightfully so, used little discretion when referring to paramilitary groups and simply referred to them as "Campaign." They saw little difference between these forces and the Taliban. As the journalist Andrew Quilty reported:

[CIA advisers] not only train Afghan unit members, but also choose their targets, which the Americans call 'jackpots'; issue detailed pre-mission briefings; and accompany Afghan paramilitaries on the ground during raids. The Afghans and Americans are ferried to remote villages at night by American helicopters, and American assault aircraft hover overhead while they conduct their raids, providing lethal firepower that is sometimes directed at health clinics, madrassa dormitories, or civilian homes."

The paramilitary strategy can be seen as an extension of the "Rumsfeld Doctrine," whose namesake sought to use private-sector fat cutting to create a lean, mean US military that relied heavily on combat technology and airstrikes, and limited the amount of US ground troops. As Anand Gopal, a journalist who covered the Afghan conflict and authored *No Good Men Among the Living*, explained in an interview on Dec. 28, 2021:

"This wasn't simply done just to avoid accountability, it was actually done as a way to reimagine what it meant to fight wars: Which was that we're going to outsource most of the risk and the violence to other actors — either to airplanes or proxy forces. And in doing so, we can have this really light military force. We won't have this bloated Pentagon budget, though that never changed. ... But the thing is they don't actually mind the budget."

Gopal continued:

"What they didn't want is the state being the ones carrying out these duties because that meant Big Government. A lot of these forces — a lot of these people carrying out paramilitary operations — were doing jobs that the US military would have done."

The Rumsfeld doctrine would augur the neoliberal turn within the US military. Soon independent contractors were providing scores of services for the Department of Defense. Even the paramilitaries got in on the action. According to Gopal, small US aid projects — like building school houses — were sometimes funneled through militias after they set up shop in rural hamlets. Eventually, this strategy would produce an entirely clandestine paramilitary army. The exact number of paramilitary members is difficult to calculate due to the nature of such groups, but some estimates place the total at just over 200,000 (when including police and security forces that were often a revolving door for paramilitary recruits), while Gopal places the number closer to 100,000 — with “60,000 to 80,000 armed private security employees” and “tens of thousands of private militiamen working directly for the Afghan government, the US special forces, or the CIA.” For context, the total number of formal Afghan security forces and military personnel was approximately 135,000 army soldiers and 110,000 police. Additionally, even at the height of Obama’s troop surge between November 2009 to September 2010, the US military personnel count in the country spiked at 100,000.

The consequences of this policy cannot be overstated. US-backed paramilitary forces were responsible for countless war crimes, and their presence in civilian areas proved devastating for local populations — especially in the rural areas where 74% of all Afghans reside. While it is, given the lack of public records, almost impossible to determine how many civilians were murdered by paramilitary operatives during raids or combat, we do have specifics on raids of villages that were documented by international NGOs and journalists. For example, a Paktia village experienced a brutal massacre in August of 2019, when a paramilitary outfit organized by the CIA murdered eight men who were visiting family for the Eid al Adha holiday. The victims had no relationship with the Taliban and other villagers, like a 60-year old elder and his young adult nephew, were shot in the face. According to a Human Rights Watch paper that documented the story, such raids — which are supposed to find Taliban operatives — have “become a daily fact of life for many communities.” The report goes on to say that 14 such incidents were recorded by the organization between 2017 to 2019.

These were not isolated incidents. Another illustration comes from an Afghan woman who told *The New Yorker* that a US-backed paramilitary leader named Amir Dado (who had originally been removed by the first Taliban government) began terrorizing her village around 2003. Dado requisitioned:

“that two young men either pay a tax or join his private militia, which he maintained despite holding his official post. When they refused, his fighters beat them to death, stringing their bodies up from a tree...In another village, Dado’s forces went from house to house, executing people suspected of being Taliban; an elderly scholar who’d never belonged to the movement was shot dead.”

WHERE’S THE ACCOUNTABILITY?

Given the sheer volume and deep history of the paramilitary presence within Afghanistan, it’s not hard to imagine that such micro-crises were, given the data we have on civilian killings, replicated countless times. Yet, hardly any paramilitary outfits or their handlers have been held responsible for their cold-blooded callousness. In fact, quite the opposite occurred, as CIA-backed death squads and their families received an exclusive evacuation to the US following the fall of Kabul.

Yet, regardless of the heinous acts of any particular paramilitary, the blame falls squarely on those that oversaw the actual occupation and the institutions that lobbied for the exporting of malfeasance. “As much as I want to criticize the US military for going too far in certain instances, the reality is that the US military was very much restrained in a lot of incidents,” said Adam Weinstein, a Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, in a Jan. 6, 2022. He continued:

“The US military did take, in some cases, extraordinary measures to prevent civilian deaths. But then what do you do when you have a military that wants to protect that value, but still wants to take the gloves off? Well, you outsource it to the paramilitaries.”

The onus, then, falls on the bipartisan support for such militia initiatives. It was not just Rumsfeld, after all, that advocated for “innovation” within the warfare construct. Obama appointees like former CIA Director David Petraeus and Under Secretary of Defense Michèle Flournoy aggressively advocated for counterinsurgency programs that pushed “armed social work.” The very nature of the counterinsurgency doctrine requires the use of paramilitary outfits. And the congressional committees, that are supposed to hold executive technocrats in check, failed to perform the “Leahy vetting” which prevents US military aid from going to groups with poor human rights records.

The tragedies created by the paramilitary approach to Afghanistan produced a latent carnage that will never be fully grasped. But it is urgent for us to remember that the consequences of saber-rattling and foreign intervention go far beyond the spectacle of drone bombs and humvees. It’s the minute, unrecorded atrocities that pile up the fastest, and it’s no surprise that the Afghan body politic — the only one truly keeping the score — wearily accepted the archaic terms of Taliban rule.

Budget 2022: What it means for war crimes in Afghanistan and refugees (Lawyers Weekly)
By Shandel Mcauliffe

March 31, 2022

The federal budget, as announced by Lawyers Weekly on Tuesday (29 March), provides the Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) with \$6.7 million to help with investigating and prosecuting potential war crimes in Afghanistan.

The budget sets out:

“\$3.9 million to the Attorney General’s Department to advise OSI on matters of international law, obtain legal assistance from foreign jurisdictions and to protect sensitive national security information in potential criminal proceedings” and “\$2.8 million to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions to provide legal advice to OSI, including training for investigators and brief preparation”.

Director at Karim + Nicol Lawyers Michelle Karim noted: “At first glance this is a welcome budget measure. It’s important to investigate any war crimes committed by Australian forces between 2005-2016 in Afghanistan.

“It remains to be seen if \$6.7 million is an adequate amount, but it is certainly not an insignificant amount. Regardless of who is elected after May 2022, whether it remains to be a Liberal-National government or Labor government, there is the real possibility that further funds will be required to bring those responsible for war before a tribunal or court for violating Australian law.”

Ms Karim outlined the difficulties such an investigation might face: “This investigation will require the Office of Special Investigator as well as the CDPD to work collaboratively with the intelligence community in foreign jurisdictions, particularly the USA and UK.

“Any investigation into war crimes committed by Australian soldiers between 2005 and 2016 will require on the ground investigative work which may prove difficult given the fall of the Afghan government in August 2021 and the return of the Taliban.”

She offered this feedback, she added, with the caveat that she did so with “limited knowledge” of the findings of the Brereton Report and the relevant stakeholders who had been advocating for funding into the investigation of war crimes that may have occurred in those years.

The budget’s commitment to issues relating to Afghanistan doesn’t stop with the \$6.7 million for the OSI. An extra 16,500 places for Afghan refugees have also been promised over the next four years.

Chief executive officer for the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) Paul Power commented: “A campaign for 20,000 additional places has been led by Australia’s Afghan diaspora and supported by many organisations, faith groups, veterans and citizens.

“While the announced additional intake is a little smaller than that advocated by the national community campaign, these 16,500 additional places will provide hope and safety for some of the Afghan nationals most at risk, including people who worked with Australian forces and organisations in Afghanistan, separated family members, women and children at risk, LGBTIQ people and members of religious and ethnic minorities.”

This additional allocation should, however, be viewed in the context that refugee places were cut in 2020’s budget, and many places went unused during COVID-19. Mr Power stated: “The additional intake of 16,500 places is a substantial restoration of visas removed from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program or lost over the past two years. The annual program was cut by 5,000 places per year in the 2020 budget from its previous level of 18,750 places. In the past two financial years, 13,382 of the remaining visas were never issued during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the lost places not rolled over into subsequent years.”

Mr Power added: “In January, immigration minister Alex Hawke announced the government would allocate 10,000 humanitarian and 5,000 family places for Afghan nationals over the four years to June 2025. The additional 16,500 humanitarian places over the four years from July 2022 to June 2026 will increase the number of visas for displaced Afghan to 31,500 over a five-year period (26,500 humanitarian and 5,000 family visas).”

Lawyers Weekly also recently reported on a drive for change in how Australia processes migrant families. A Senate committee inquiry resulted in the report: Together in Safety: A report on the Australian Government’s separation of families seeking safety, calling for greater support in keeping migrant families together.

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Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

Official Website of the Extraordinary Chambers [English]

Official Website of the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT)

Cambodia Tribunal Monitor

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Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal

Bangladesh tribunal sentences ex-Jamaat MP Khalek Mondol, Rokunuzzaman to death over war crimes in Satkhira (bdnews24.com) March 24, 2022

A three-member panel of the International Crimes Tribunal led by Justice Shahinur Islam delivered the verdict on Thursday.

Khalek was in the dock as the verdict was read out but Rokunuzzaman is absconding.

In 1971, Khalek served the anti-Bangladesh paramilitary force Razakar as an organiser in Satkhira while Rokunuzzaman was a member of the group.

According to the case dossier, the duo collaborated with the Pakistani occupation army to commit a series of crimes, including murder and rape, across Satkhira.

They were charged with six counts of war crimes, all of which were proved beyond a reasonable doubt by the prosecution, the tribunal said in its verdict.

Khalek was implicated in a case filed in July 2009 for slaying five people in Satkhira during the war of liberation.

The case was started by Nazrul Islam Gazi whose father, Rustam Ali Gazi of Satkhira Sadar's Shimulbaria village, was one of the victims of Khalek's wartime atrocities. The matter was later referred to the International Crimes Tribunal.

Mondol, a Jamaat policymaker, was later arrested on Jun 16, 2015 at a madrasa in Satkhira Sadar Upazila on charges of conspiracy to incite violence.

The ICT's probe panel later conducted an investigation into the case from August 2015 to February 2017.

The panel submitted its findings against Khalek, Rokunuzzaman and two others on Feb 8, 2017. Their trial subsequently opened in April 2018, with the court hearing the testimonies of 17 witnesses before reaching its verdict.

When will UN recognise Bangladesh genocide? (The Daily Star)

By Haroon Habib

March 26, 2022

Bangladesh celebrated its golden jubilee of independence in 2021. The celebration reminded the newer generations of our nation of the patriotism of their ancestors, who fought a heroic war against the marauding Pakistan Army that killed an estimated three million people, raped over 300,000 women, and caused enormous destruction. The celebrations also reminded us of the mass exodus of nearly 10 million people to the bordering states of India to escape military atrocities, which was one of the largest refugee crises in the 20th century.

All these human tragedies, well documented in the pages of history, will never be forgotten by the Bangladeshis as most families at that time either lost their loved ones or suffered the brunt of the military madness. In memory of the tragedy, Bangladesh observes March 25 as "Genocide Day" as the Pakistan military launched a brutal campaign of manslaughter on that day in 1971, code-named "Operation Searchlight"—a campaign that went on for nine months. The irony is that the United Nations (UN) has not yet recognised the genocide nor the use of rape as a weapon of war to this day, even though they were carried out in a calculative and cruellest fashion, as many researchers have concluded.

On December 31, 2021, the very last day of Bangladesh's golden jubilee celebration, the US-based Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention issued a statement detailing the genocide of Bengalis. The recognition came following research carried out by the institute after Tawheed Reza Noor, son of one of Bangladesh's martyred intellectuals Serajuddin Hossain, approached the institute, named after Raphael Lemkin, a great scholar best known for coining the term "genocide" and who initiated the historic UN Genocide Convention.

There have been consistent efforts by various Bangladesh governments, families of the victims and human rights groups for the UN recognition of the 1971 genocide. But the world body remains consistently silent over it, even though it has, in recent years, accorded recognition to the Armenian genocide, and also acted decisively on the Bosnian, Cambodian and Rwandan genocides.

The genocide of 1971 is well documented in various forms. The first detailed report of the atrocities was published by a well-known Pakistani journalist Anthony Mascarenhas in the UK's *The Sunday Times*, on June 13, 1971. Mascarenhas, who was among a group of journalists from West Pakistan invited by the government to write in support of the military actions in East Pakistan, fled to London to report what he had actually seen. In his famous report, titled "Genocide," he wrote, "I saw Hindus hunted from village to village and door to door, shot off-hand after a cursory 'short arm inspection' showed they were uncircumcised. I have heard the screams of men bludgeoned to death in the compound of the Circuit House in Comilla. I have seen truckloads of other human targets and those who had the humanity to try to help them hauled off for disposal under the cover of darkness and curfew."

On August 2, 1971, the *Time* magazine provided the details of the massacre. It quoted a senior US official as saying, "It is the most incredible, calculated thing since the days of the Nazis in Poland." Genocide researcher Prof RJ Rummel said, "These 'willing executioners' were fuelled by an abiding anti-Bengali racism, especially against the Hindu minority. Bengalis were often compared with monkeys and chicken... and the soldiers were free to kill at will."

Archer K Blood, the US consul general in Dhaka in 1971 who disagreed with his country's handling of the Bangladesh struggle, reported that naked female bodies in Dhaka University's Rokeya Hall were found "hanging from ceiling fans with bits of rope," after apparently being "raped, shot, and hung by heels" from the fans.

Remarkably, the UN could not act decisively to stop the bloodbath as the massacre happened during the Cold War era, although the then UN Secretary-General U Thant, on June 3, 1971, had remarked, "The happenings in East Pakistan constitute one of the most tragic episodes in human history. Of course, it is for future historians to gather facts and make their own evaluations, but it has been a very terrible blot on a page of human history."

Apart from committing heinous crimes, the Pakistan Army and their fanatic cohorts raped hundreds of thousands of women, shaking the very foundation of conscience and human rights. In some cases, according to the studies, young Bengali women were taken from one camp to another to be used as "comfort girls." The brutalities inflicted on them included severing of breasts and mutilation of their private parts by inserting bayonet or gun barrels. Many were kept hanging upside down till death. Tens of thousands of bodies, both male and female, with their hands and legs tied in the back, floating on ponds and rivers were a common sight across the country.

Belated, yet welcome, since it was the first such public statement by a global genocide research institute, the Lemkin Institute's statement narrated the historical backgrounds of the genocide and remarked that the Bengalis, who constituted the majority of Pakistani population at that time, were perceived by the Pakistani ruling coterie as "inferior" or not "true Muslims." The statement stated, "The genocidal policies of the postcolonial era became expressed in extreme and mass physical violence throughout the entire process of the Liberation War (of Bangladesh), from its very beginning, when West Pakistan implemented 'Operation Searchlight,' to the end of the war, when West Pakistan, facing defeat, proceeded to kill thousands of Bengali intellectuals."

It further echoed the documented history, "The atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators—Razakars, al-Badr and al-Shams—included a systematic policy of sexual violence against Bengalis, the majority of them Bengali Hindu women and girls, involving vicious gang rapes, sexual slavery, sexual torture, and forced maternity." British physician Dr Geoffrey Davis, who worked in Bangladesh on request of World Health Organization (WHO), estimated that the commonly cited figures of killing and rape were "very conservative" compared to the real numbers.

Truly, the rape was carried out in a systematic manner with the aim to change the race of Bengalis!

Noted researcher Robert Payne, in his book "Massacre: The Tragedy of Bangla Desh," quoted a senior Pakistan Army general as saying, "Kill three million of them and the rest will eat out of our hands." The UN's declaration of Universal Human Rights 1981 said, "Among the genocides of human history, the highest number of people killed in (a) lower span of time is in Bangladesh in 1971. An average of 6,000 to 12,000 people were (sic) killed every single day... This is the highest daily average in the history of genocides."

The Lemkin institute further stated, "Given the lack of a broad international recognition of the crime, the Lemkin Institute calls upon (the) international community, including the United Nations, to urgently recognise the Bengali genocide as a way to pay tribute to the victims and to hold (the) perpetrators accountable." It has also called upon the international community to pressure Pakistan to work with Bangladesh in its search for truth and justice.

Hopefully, the significant statement by a well-known genocide prevention institute will pave the way for many more similar international bodies to come forward with similar recognition, and help remove the UN's inertia that it has preserved for long. The crimes committed against humanity, anywhere in the world, must not go unpunished—otherwise, justice turns futile.

Pakistan, even after 51 years, has not apologised to Bangladesh for the crimes committed by its army, nor has it put on trial those 195 war criminals identified by Bangladesh in 1972 as the principal perpetrators. Pakistan's own Hamoodur Rahman Commission recommended taking effective action to punish those POWs who were responsible for committing the atrocities in the former East Pakistan. However, the listed war criminals were subsequently repatriated to Pakistan along with other POWs following the Tripartite Agreement signed among Bangladesh, Pakistan and India in 1974. But they were not freed from criminal charges. Bangladesh contends that the clemency mentioned in the Trilateral Agreement never implied that the masterminds and principal perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide would continue to enjoy impunity. The customary international laws also provide ample opportunity to try the Pakistani POWs.

True, the UN recognition is important for the victims' families as well as for the aggrieved nation that is now 51 years old and also an important member of the United Nations. However, it is also no less important for the world body itself to protect its mandate and image. It must not be forgotten that such recognition is not merely a formal signing of a document, but also a new pledge and fresh commitment against the recurrence of such crimes in the future.

Bangladesh still in throes of terrorism (Daily Pioneer)

By Hiranmay Karlekar

April 2, 2022

The Sheikh Hasina Government has largely been successful in bringing the culprits to book but the threats of violence are far from over.

The Sylhet Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal sentenced four persons to death for killing writer-blogger Ananta Bijoy Das, in Sylhet, Bangladesh, on May 12, 2015. Of the four — Abul Khaer Rashid Ahmed, Abul Hossain alias Abul Hussain, Haranur Rashid and Faisal Ahmed — Abul Khaer is in custody. The rest are absconding. The judgment is significant. It focuses on the violent challenge that extremist Islamist terrorist organisations pose to Bangladesh and its secular, democratic humanist civil society, including bloggers who are often atheists decrying religion.

Militant fundamentalist Islamist parties like the Jama'at-e-Islami Bangladesh (Jama'at) and associated organisations like Razakars, al-Badr and al-Shams, which collaborated with, and participated in, the horrific atrocities perpetrated by the Pakistani Army during the 1971 Liberation War, crawled into the woodwork, as some of their leaders fled abroad, after Bangladesh's liberation on December 16, 1971. They resurfaced following Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination on August 15, 1975, and were actively promoted by the regimes of the two military dictators, Generals-turned-President Zia-ur Rahman and HM Ershad, and the pseudo-civilian Governments which wielded power periodically, that followed. The support continued under the two Governments headed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (1991-96 and 2001-06) — the second in coalition with the Jama'at.

The elements clustered around the Jama'at and allied organisations received a boost from the Mujahideen's victory over Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan (December 27, 1979 to February 15, 1989) and the victory of the Taliban, which was formed in 1994 and came to rule almost the whole of Afghanistan from September 1997. Organisations like the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJIB), Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) unleashed violence on a massive scale that shook Bangladesh.

The United States and other western countries, which had become extremely uneasy since the late 1990s over the medieval, retrogressive polices of the Taliban Government in Afghanistan, and the al-Qaeda's terrorist strikes against the US and other western countries, pressed hard on Begum Zia's Government to act. More serious efforts followed the ascent to power of the second Awami League-led Government, with Sheikh Hasina as Prime Minister, in 2009. The resultant measures caused some

subsidence in lawlessness, and the terrorist organisations to go underground.

Two terrorist organisations that rose to salience in their place and made their existence known are Ansar-al Islam, earlier known as Ansarullah Bangla Team, affiliated to Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), and Daesh affiliated to the parent Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). They have played a major role in the murder of bloggers, which began with the killing of Ahmed Rajib Haider in Dhaka on February 15, 2013.

The attacks on bloggers followed a series of developments that began with an amendment of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973 enacted for investigation into the activities — and prosecution of — persons guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes under international law, during the Liberation War. The Act was amended in 2009 and two International Crimes Tribunals were established in 2010 and 2012 respectively to try war criminals and collaborators. Jama'at and allied organisations, whose leaders had collaborated with the Pakistanis and perpetrated unspeakable atrocities themselves, sprang into violent opposition which grew in spread and intensity as sentences were announced.

Others, however, felt that the sentences were not harsh enough. Matters came to a head when Abdul Quader Mollah, assistant secretary, Jama'at, was sentenced to life imprisonment on February 5, 2013, on six counts of crimes against humanity. While the Jama'at reacted violently, large-scale protests broke out demanding the death sentence to Mollah and others convicted of war crimes. Raising these demands, thousands of people, a majority of them students and youth, began collecting at Dhaka's Shahbag intersection. The gathering became massive and the movement spread to other parts of Bangladesh. Finally, Bangladesh's Supreme Court overturned the verdict and sentenced Mollah to death. He was hanged in a Dhaka jail on December 12, 2013.

Opponents of the war crimes trials responded with murder. As seen above, machete-wielding activists of the Ansarullah Bangla Team (subsequently Ansar-al Islam), killed blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, who had been active in the Shahbag gathering, in Dhaka on February 15, 2013. Other killings followed. Those murdered included not only bloggers but LGBT activists, Shias, Hindus academics — indeed, all opposed to religious bigotry and supportive of humanism, secularism and rationalism. Professor Ali Riaz wrote in 'Bangladesh: Islamist Militancy, Democracy Deficit and Where to Next?' in Al Jazeera (June 28, 2016), "At least 49 people have been killed in the last 17 months." The objective was simple — to create a climate of terror in which nobody would speak out against the warped worldview of fundamentalist terrorists and allied organisations.

Resolute counter-terrorist operations, galvanised by the dastardly attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka on July 1, 2016, in which 20 persons, including 18 foreigners and women, were savagely killed along with five terrorists killed by Bangladeshi Army commandos, have caused the violence to ebb. Nevertheless, it continues — the anti-Hindu riots from October 13 to 19 last year, during which at least 11 persons, including seven Hindus, were killed, was clearly the work of Islamist terrorist organisations. Sheikh Hasina's Government, which took stern action, needs to be vigilant.

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War Crimes Investigation in Myanmar

The judicial process relating to the Rohingya situation (The Financial Express)

By Muhammad Zamir

April 3, 2022

Finally, it is encouraging to see that there has been a slight change consistent with democratic norms, good governance and culpability regarding criminal actions that have been undertaken against the Rohingya population of Myanmar's Rakhine State by the Myanmar armed forces. This has led to thousands of deaths within this ethnic minority community and also to their eventual effort to find sanctuary and safety by crossing into Bangladesh-- their neighbouring country. Myanmar's crackdown on the Muslim minority group, starting in 2017, caused more than 25,000 deaths and nearly a million people displaced.

For the first time the United States has stepped forward and acknowledged that genocide took place against the Rohingya population. On March 21, 2022, US Secretary of State Blinken has formally indicated that genocide took place for the eighth time in the world when the Myanmar military committed the crime against humanity, against the Rohingya community in

Myanmar. This was done through setting fire on Rohingya villages, killing, rape, torture, and other horrific abuses. The attack on the Rohingyas was widespread and systematic, which is crucial for reaching a determination of crime against humanity. Blinken has observed that available evidence also points to a clear intent behind these mass atrocities - the intent to destroy the Rohingya minority, in whole or in part. That intent has been corroborated by the accounts of soldiers who took part in the operation and later defected, such as one who said he was told by his commanding officer to, and I quote, "shoot at every sight of a person," end quote - burn villages, rape and kill women, orders that he and his unit carried out. Intent has also been evident in the racial slurs shouted by members of the military as they launched widespread attacks on mosques that included desecration of the Muslim holy book, the Koran. It has also been mentioned that one needs to recognise that for decades the Myanmar military has been committing killings, rape, and other atrocities against members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, which are also well documented.

Consequently, one needs to understand that efforts undertaken by Gambia and the OIC, supported by a few other countries pertaining to receiving justice for the abused Rohingyas, assumed particular significance from the fact that the matter is now lying with the International Court of Justice (ICJ)-- the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, through judgments which have binding force and are without appeal for the parties concerned, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorised United Nations organs and agencies of the system.

The International Court of Justice had finished a week of hearings on Monday, 28 February as to whether it has the jurisdiction to decide if Myanmar violated a 1948 treaty against genocide. In this context it was pointed out that the West African state of Gambia had filed a complaint before The Hague-based United Nations Court in 2019, alleging Myanmar's treatment of the Muslim minority group violated the post-World War II Genocide Convention, but Myanmar had argued that Gambia had no right to bring the case because its nationals had not been affected. It may also be noted that the judicial process regarding the dispute had become more complicated because, since the proceedings began, the military in Myanmar had staged a coup and arrested its civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi who very sadly, despite being a Nobel Prize winner for Peace had come to The Hague to defend the wrong-doings of the armed forces of her country during preliminary hearings in 2019. Contrary to democratic principles, she is currently in jail on charges of treason. One is tempted to observe that if you spit in the air it will, in all likelihood, fall on your face. The South Asian country is now being represented by a former Propaganda Minister, Ko Ko Hlaing.

Myanmar, it may be noted, has been arguing that "Humanitarian considerations themselves cannot generate legal interest," Myanmar's lawyer Stefan Talmon said during his opening statements during this latest session of hearings. However, Gambia very correctly disagreed, arguing anyone can initiate proceedings under the U.N. Convention. "We made it our business when we, as civilized nations, committed ourselves to the Genocide Convention," Gambian Minister of Justice Dawda Jallow said in his opening statement. According to Myanmar lawyers sponsored by their armed forces, Gambia is serving as a proxy for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, an intergovernmental organisation representing countries with large Muslim populations. However, it should be noted here that while it is true the OIC is supporting Gambia in its efforts, so are a number of other countries, including Canada and The Netherlands.

Gambia's lawyer Paul Reichler has called these allegations "an affront to state sovereignty and an insult to the Gambia." He also narrated to the ICJ during this latest session that the most poignant moment in his 37-year career before the ICJ was watching a video of the Rohingya refugees, which has now crossed the million mark in Bangladesh chanting "Gambia Gambia" in refugee camps after the case was opened last year.

It may be recalled that in 2021 the ICJ granted preliminary measures and ordered the Buddhist-majority government in Myanmar to stop acts of violence against Rohingyas and protect evidence of any crimes as well as regularly report the status of the situation to the court. It has been reported by human rights activists both from within Myanmar and from abroad that this is not happening. The possibility of the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar with the assurance that they can live with dignity and safety is also not being followed up.

The history of the proceedings can be found in the ICJ press releases Nos. 2019/47, 2019/49, 2019/54, 2020/3, 2020/4, 2020/14 and 2022/1, and is also available on the Court's website. Attention has, however, been drawn to the fact that the Court's press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents. The complete verbatim records of the hearings held from 21 to 28 February will be published later on the Court's website (www.icj-cij.org). The Human Rights Watch has reported that while the representation of Myanmar at the court by junta officials had raised concerns, some Rohingya activists welcomed their presence as they were representing armed forces officials in the hearing who are considered responsible for the atrocities in northern Rakhine State.

Rohingya activist Yasmin Ullah has commented that watching the perpetrators of mass violence face the Court has even been

cathartic as "we have not heard once from the military in a legal court as they have always acted by proxy."

Such a presence from Myanmar authorities has also been noted by other human rights activists. They believe that the momentum to hold Myanmar's military accountable is gradually building, with a universal jurisdiction case underway not only in Argentina but also through the emphasis that there is need for an investigation at the International Criminal Court pertaining to the forced deportation of Rohingya to neighbouring Bangladesh.

Achieving justice for the Rohingya has far-reaching consequences for all those who have suffered at the hands of Myanmar's military. Abuses against the Rohingyas have now echoed throughout Myanmar, as the commanders who oversaw the atrocities against the Rohingya and led a military coup more than a year ago are now carrying out apparent human rights abuse and crimes against humanity with regard to other ethnic groups across Myanmar.

In its summing up and closing statements, Gambia argued that Myanmar's objections to the genocide case were merely a delaying tactic, and that any further delay in the proceedings may risk further atrocities against the Rohingyas.

If the case proceeds, Myanmar will need to respond to Gambia's factual allegations that its security forces took part in a genocidal campaign against the Rohingyas, an opportunity that many victims and their families have long been waiting for.

On February 28, the hearings on Myanmar's preliminary objections to Gambia's case on the alleged genocide against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar came to a close. Yet legal analysts have remarked that the Court could take a year before it decides on whether the case can proceed. In the meantime, the Court's 2020 Order to protect the 600,000 Rohingya in Myanmar is still in place, providing a measure of protection. However Human Rights Watch feels that if the case proceeds, it would take several years before the Court reaches a judgment. That, one feels, is too long a time, particularly for those unfortunate Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh and are now waiting for repatriation to their homeland with dignity, safety and equal rights. In the meantime, as expected, the Myanmar authorities have retorted to Blinken's observation by denying that any genocide was committed on any ethnic community members in that country. The United States needs to play a more proactive role with regard to facilitating quick repatriation of the Rohingya refugees back to their homeland. In this context necessary pressure needs to be exerted on the ASEAN.

Burma Army Shells Village In Eastern Demawso (BNI)

By Kantarawaddy Times

April 4, 2022

A house was destroyed and a school damaged by artillery fire from the Burma Army (BA) in eastern Demawso Township, according to Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), which has been fighting to overthrow Burma's dictatorship since its formation last May.

Three shells hit Dor Khu Li village this morning (31 March, 7am). "Fortunately, no one was injured," a KNDF officer from Battalion 1 told Kantarawaddy Times, saying there was no fighting in the area that triggered the attack. The BA fired artillery indiscriminately at the village and other places for two and a half hours.

Tanee Ler Leh in eastern Demawso Township was also shelled by regime forces between 13 and 18 March, injuring at least two men.

According to the Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN), the military killed 235 civilians and wounded 177 living in Karenni State after the fall of the civilian government until 13 March. The Karenni resistance groups have suffered many casualties during battles with the BA despite being outgunned and outnumbered. Recently, the regime has stepped up airstrikes on rebels and civilians, firing artillery, attack helicopters and fighter jets, and using armed vehicles.

Karenni civil society organisations have accused the regime of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Karenni State and called on the international community to take action.

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AMERICAS

North & Central America

Canada Deports Crime Against Humanity Suspect to Bosnia (Balkan Insight)

By Nejra Dzaferagic

April 4, 2022

The Bosnian state prosecution said on Monday that Nikola Koprivica has been extradited to Sarajevo to face charges of involvement in the shooting of more than 40 Bosniaks from Novoseoci, near Sokolac, in September 1992.

The Bosnian prosecution said that Koprivica, who had lived in Canada for several years, was located and identified in cooperation with the Canadian authorities.

A court case is already ongoing for the killings in Novoseoci. Among those on trial are Dragomir Obradovic, former commander of the police's Public Security Station in Sokolac, Momcilo Pajic, former commander of the Military Police Company with the Second Romanija Motorised Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army, and his deputy Aleksa Gordic.

Also on trial are Miladin Gasevic, former deputy commander of the Reconnaissance Company of the Second Romanija Motorised Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army, as well as Momir and Branislav Kezunovic, Zeljko Gasevic and Jadranko Suka, all former members of the company.

According to the charges, members of the Military Police and Reconnaissance Company went to Novoseoci on the night of September 21-22, 1992.

They took 44 Bosniak men to a landfill at Ivan Polje, where they were killed, while women, children and elderly people were taken away towards Sarajevo. One woman was also allegedly killed in the village.

Canada's commitment to support war crime investigation in Ukraine a good first step (The Star)

By Mark Kersten

April 4, 2022

Canada is sending a team of RCMP officers to support the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its investigation into war crimes in Ukraine. The move is unprecedented. No Canadian government has ever sent such a team. But what does it mean for the investigation, for the ICC, and for Canada's role in pursuing justice for international crimes?

Earlier this month, 41 member states of the ICC, including Canada, referred the situation in Ukraine to the court. In subsequently opening the Ukraine investigation, ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan asked states for help. Canada was among those that answered the call. On March 28, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino announced that RCMP officers would be shipped out to support the ICC's efforts. The Canadian team will assist in collecting and preserving evidence and interviewing witnesses.

The ICC has long faced budgetary restrictions. That is in part because states like Canada have insisted over the past decade that the court's budget should remain effectively frozen. This has left advocates to lament that while these states ask the ICC to investigate international crimes, they don't back it up with the necessary resources. Placing money where its mouth is has not been Ottawa's strong suit. In 2018, Canada joined a group of Latin American states in referring Venezuela to the ICC, but offered no assistance to conduct the investigation.

Many thus hope that Canada and others are setting a precedent in bolstering their support of the ICC, not only in Ukraine, but in other situations of mass atrocities, like Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Palestine.

While there is no timeline on Canada's commitment to the ICC's Ukraine probe, the government should make clear that it is in the accountability game for the long-haul. Investigating war crimes is no easy task; it takes painstaking work to link atrocities to the individuals most responsible for their commission hiding out in Kremlin. But that won't be done overnight. Ottawa's interest must last longer than the headlines and, crucially, longer than the public's outrage over Russia's invasion.

Canada must also commit to justice for atrocities closer to home. Minister Mendicino has stated that Canada cannot be used as safe haven for anyone who is attempting to flee justice. RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki added that officers will investigate alleged war criminals here in Canada.

The Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act allows Canadian authorities to prosecute perpetrators of atrocities in Canada under the regime of universal jurisdiction. War criminals can be tried even if the perpetrator is a foreigner and the crimes were perpetrated abroad. Put otherwise, if a perpetrator of atrocities enters Canada, they can be prosecuted in Canadian courts.

But there's a snag: despite government estimates that 200 perpetrators of mass atrocities live in Canada, successive governments have abandoned their commitment to universal jurisdiction, viewing international justice as too costly. Instead, they have used immigration law to push alleged perpetrators out of the country, often back to where their crimes were committed and with zero guarantee that they will be held accountable.

In other cases, Canadian authorities dither. In 2020, an alleged war criminal from Liberia was murdered in London, Ont.; Bill Horace had lived freely in Canada for over a decade, despite his war crimes being well-known to the RCMP.

Canada should reverse course. A number of Ottawa's allies including the Baltic states, Germany, and Sweden have opened their own war crimes investigations into atrocities in Ukraine. Canada should promise to do likewise and prosecute any perpetrators that may land on its soil.

When it comes to Canada's commitment to international justice over the past decade, one word comes to mind: stingy. Ottawa wants the reputation of being a champion of global accountability efforts but wants the headlines for pennies on the dollar.

Justice and accountability for Ukraine won't come cheap and it may not come soon. If the government's commitment to support the ICC's investigation represents both a reversal on universal jurisdiction as well as a renewed interest in investing in global justice efforts, it could have a significant impact on achieving accountability for international crimes in Ukraine, Canada, and wherever else such atrocities are committed.

The investment would be well worth it.

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South America

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Venezuela

International Criminal Court opens office in Venezuela (NBC)

April 1, 2022

The prosecutor's office of the International Criminal Court said Thursday that it will open an office in Venezuela as it investigates allegations of torture and killings by the South American country's security forces.

The decision to open the office was announced by ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan at the end of a three-day trip to the capital, Caracas. In a televised appearance alongside President Nicolas Maduro, Khan said he welcomed the commitment of the Venezuelan government to explore cooperation and technical assistance as part of the efforts to investigate alleged crimes against humanity.

Among other measures, Khan said Maduro's government agreed to provide visas to court officials and to the participation of

international organizations and partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Any state that encounters difficulties in complying with the rule of law must be respected, Khan said. He added that he is aware that the visit has not been easy, perhaps; but I feel very grateful for the commitment and the frank debates that we have had.

Khan announced the investigation in November. At the time, the court and Maduro's administration signed a memorandum of understanding in which the government agreed to cooperate to clarify the facts that led to the initiation of the process.

That announcement followed a lengthy preliminary probe started in February 2018 that focused on allegations of excessive force, arbitrary detention and torture by security forces during a crackdown on anti-government protests in 2017.

Khan's predecessor, Fatou Bensouda, had indicated there was a reasonable basis to conclude that crimes against humanity had been committed in Venezuela, echoing the findings of the U.N.'s human rights council last year. But she left the decision to open any probe to Khan, a British lawyer who took the reins of the ICC earlier this year.

Maduro on Thursday said the opening of the office in Venezuela will allow for an effective level of dialogue that will help clarify the facts in a timely manner. We are first interested in seeing justice carried out, and where a crime of the characteristics is committed, it be punished according to the law, on time, Maduro said. He added that the country's judicial system is being overhauled.

Since its creation two decades ago, the ICC has mostly focused on atrocities committed in Africa. It could be years before any criminal charges are presented as part of the court's investigation.

In a written statement, Khan said the start of the process is not a one-way street and should also serve as the basis for stronger partnerships. He said efforts to put into effect the memorandum of understanding will include providing technical assistance and knowledge transfer to Venezuelan authorities to support the effective investigation and prosecution at the national level of alleged crimes, as well as offering training and expert advice to help implement domestic legislation.

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Terrorism

Condemnation of Houthi Terrorist Attacks on Saudi Arabia (US Dept. of State)

By Antony J. Blinken
March 25, 2022

We strongly condemn this week's multiple Houthi terrorist attacks on Saudi Arabia, including today's that struck an Aramco facility in Jeddah, which is clearly civilian infrastructure.

At a time when the parties should be focused on de-escalation and bringing needed life-saving relief to the Yemeni people ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, the Houthis continue their destructive behavior and reckless terrorist attacks striking

civilian infrastructure.

We will continue to work with our Saudi partners to strengthen their defenses while also seeking to advance a durable end to the conflict, improve lives, and create the space for Yemenis to determine their own future collectively.

Iran nuclear talks at stalemate over terrorism issue (The Washington Post) By Karen DeYoung
April 1, 2022

Tehran's demand that the United States lift its designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, and U.S. refusal so far to do that, have brought the year-long negotiations over reviving the Iran nuclear deal to a halt, with no new meetings scheduled and little obvious room for compromise.

Since talks being held in Vienna adjourned last month, European participants have shuttled between Washington and Tehran in a vain search for accommodation from both sides. At this point, nothing mutually acceptable has been proposed, according to a U.S. official knowledgeable about the issue who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic and political matter.

Whether the United States will yield in any way is up to President Biden, and the president hasn't made a decision, the official said. Politically, we know that it's an extremely difficult step to take. For the moment, head U.S. negotiator Robert Malley said at a foreign policy forum last weekend, success is not just around the corner, and not inevitable.

Those beyond the inner circles in the two capitals are growing increasingly worried. We must conclude this negotiation. Much is at stake, Enrique Mora, the European Union deputy foreign policy chief wrote on Twitter last week before visits to both Washington and Tehran early this week. The E.U. is coordinating the talks between Iran and other signers of the original 2015 deal, which are Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China.

Although the talks essentially involve Iran and the United States, which withdrew from the agreement in 2018, Tehran has refused to speak directly to the Biden administration, which is technically only an indirect participant, speaking to Iran through the Europeans.

While there is a handful of other, less contentious issues still to be settled, people familiar with the matter indicated that disagreement now revolves almost entirely around the Revolutionary Guard Corps issue. Earlier U.S. consideration of a public Iranian statement disavowing regional aggression, in exchange for the terror delisting, is no longer on the table, the people said.

For the administration, the biggest impediment to lifting the designation is the likely reaction in Congress, where the delisting issue has only increased considerable bipartisan opposition to any revived agreement with Iran. In briefings and meetings with lawmakers in recent weeks, Malley and Brett McGurk, the Middle East coordinator at the National Security Council, have outlined what they believe would be the negligible effect of the delisting, as well as the peril of not concluding a deal.

The Revolutionary Guard Corps and its leaders are under a wealth of other State and Treasury Department terrorism sanctions that would remain in place, including Iran as one of four countries on the official U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Regardless of what happens in the negotiations, Malley said at the weekend conference in Qatar, the Revolutionary Guard Corps will remain sanctioned under U.S. law and our policies, and our perceptions of it will not change.

Speaking at the same forum, Kamal Kharazi, former Iranian foreign minister and current adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, said the Revolutionary Guard Corps certainly must be removed from the foreign terrorist organization list. When Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian indicated some flexibility in a recent television interview, he quickly backtracked, indicating in an Instagram post that the issue was a red line for Iran.

Designation as a foreign terrorist organization has enormous symbolic significance for both Iran and the United States. President Donald Trump announced the listing in April 2019, a year after he withdrew from the nuclear deal. The move was pushed by his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and national security adviser John Bolton, as part of what Trump called his maximum pressure sanctions campaign against Iran.

At the time, it was also widely seen as Trump's attempt to boost the electoral chances of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who campaigned on security issues but who nonetheless failed the next day to garner enough votes to form a government.

The listing of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite wing of the Iranian military responsible for its regional activities in Iraq and elsewhere, remains the only time the United States has so labeled part of another nation's government. While the measure

was hailed by some lawmakers, a number of commentators and sanctions experts argued that it pointlessly set a bad precedent, and would likely increase, rather than decrease, Iranian aggression.

In promoting negotiations to return to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, the Biden administration has argued that Trump's withdrawal from the deal, which sharply limited Iran's nuclear activities and brought it under international monitoring in exchange for the lifting of U.S. nuclear sanctions, has undermined U.S. security by bringing Iran closer than ever to producing a nuclear weapon.

This is no longer a thought experiment. What might happen if the nuclear shackles of the JCPOA were lifted and we tried something different in the form of maximum pressure? State Department spokesman Ned Price said Thursday. The Trump administration, he said, promised a so-called better deal with Iran, an Iran whose proxies were cowed whose support for terrorism would be diminished whose ballistic missile program would be checked, all of those things turned out not only to be not true, but in almost every case the exact opposite has come to fruition.

At the same time, while continuing to deny it seeks a nuclear bomb, Iran has vastly expanded the quality and quantity of uranium enrichment and is believed now only weeks away from assembling enough to fuel a weapon. It expanded other aggressive activities even as Trump reimposed sanctions that had been lifted by the Iran deal and imposed more than 1,500 more. Between 2019 and 2020, Price said, the number of attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq by Iran-backed groups went up 400 percent.

Much of the Vienna negotiations over the past year were devoted to disagreements between Iran insisting that all U.S. sanctions be lifted, and administration insistence that a return to the deal involved only those that were nuclear related. Those issues, along with questions of sequencing and the unfreezing of certain Iranian assets, have now been largely resolved.

But as word spread that the biggest remaining issue on the table was the terrorism designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, opponents of the deal, including virtually all Republicans vowed to redouble their efforts to stop the agreement, and a number of Democrats expressed worries.

We are highly concerned about reports indicating the potential lifting of the foreign terrorist organization designation of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, a bipartisan group of 21 House members wrote Biden last month, saying that the combination of not adequately addressing Iran's role as the world's leading state sponsor of terror, and providing billions of dollars in sanctions relief would provide a clear path for Iranian proxies to continue fueling terrorism.

Any administration action is further complicated by reported U.S. intelligence indicating ongoing Iranian plots to target Pompeo and other former U.S. officials whom Tehran holds responsible for the drone strike in 2020 that killed Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard Corps branch specializing in unconventional warfare. But others have warned that Iranian and U.S. leaders have painted themselves into a corner by allowing the issue to become what may ultimately kill any prospect of a deal.

Failure to secure the nuclear deal will very likely lead to unpredictable and possibly uncontrollable escalation, and almost certainly skyrocketing oil and gas prices, Trita Parsi, an Iran expert and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft wrote Thursday. The political costs to both the United States and Iran of either delisting the Revolutionary Guard Corps or dropping the demand to delist, respectively, pale in comparison.

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Piracy

First Piracy Boarding in Months Reported in Gulf of Guinea (The Maritime Executive)

April 4, 2022

The first vessel in more than three months was boarded in the Gulf of Guinea on Sunday, April 3 with analysts suggesting that it was a random event. The vessel and crew are both being reported as safe today.

MDAT-GoG, the monitoring and reporting cooperation between the British Royal Navy and the French Navy issued the first alert to the incident. They placed the ship approximately 300 nautical miles south of Lagos, Nigeria reporting that unknown persons had boarded a vessel. Today, they updated saying that the incident had been completed with the crew and vessel safe.

Details remain vague but Dryad pointed out that is marked an apparent break after the significant hiatus in reports. They said that the crew was understood to have made it to the citadel aboard the vessel. Pirates were reported to have been onboard the vessel for approximately for four hours, during which time they are understood to have attempted to access the citadel, Dryad wrote in its alert.

The pirates are believed to have left the vessel but it is not known if they left when they were unable to find the crew or if they were frightened away by the increased security patrols and military support in the region.

The vessel is being identified as an eight-year-old bulker, the Arch Gabriel, registered in the Marshall Islands. Her AIS data shows the 61,300 dwt bulker as having been laying off West Africa since mid-March. She had departed Houston in mid-February and was likely waiting for her next contract, meaning that she could have been seen as a target of opportunity having been idle for such a long period.

The most recent incident again highlights that the area of activity has also moved further out from the coast. Dryad points out that it was more than 110 nautical miles outside the Nigerian EEZ.

The security analysts at Dryad in the groups newly issued annual report point out the dramatic decline in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea that started in 2021. They highlight the Nigerian security effort known as Deep Blue as one contributor saying however that there were likely several elements contributing to the decline including an increased international presence. A Danish frigate that drew attention when it engaged pirates late in 2021, for example, was part of the increased security but the vessel was withdrawn last month after the invasion of Ukraine.

The number of vessels boarded throughout the region fell by more than half according to Dryads report with incidents of vessels being boarded and crews kidnapped declining by 60 percent in 2021. Overall, they report that actual and attempted attacks and vessels being fired upon dropped by more than 85 percent.

MDAT-GoG in its tracking highlights mostly incidents of theft from vessels in 2022 and only this one boarding in the past 30 days. At the end of January 2022, pirates fired upon a ferry in Equatorial Guinea but the onboard security forces returned fire and were able to scare away the pirates. There was also an incident in late January further north in a region between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire where a small product tanker was boarded. The pirates reportedly stole oil from the vessel and left, with the last significant incident being at the end of 2021 when pirates killed one crewmember and kidnapped as many as six others from a Chinese-owned fishing vessel operating near Equatorial Guinea.

Experts however warn that despite the decline in activity that extra security measures need to be maintained. The pirate groups remain in the region and can continue to approach opportunistic targets.

Piracy, sea robberies in the Singapore Strait on the rise: Anti-piracy group (The Straits Times)

By Osmond Chia

April 5, 2022

Cases of piracy and sea robberies among trading ships and oil tankers have been on the rise in major shipping lanes near Singapore, which have been flagged as areas of concern by sea crime watch group ReCaap.

The Singapore Strait, which is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, recorded 17 cases of sea robberies between January and March this year - more than double that of the same period in 2021.

The increase was likely due to the economic impact of Covid-19, which may have led people to resort to crime on the high seas, said ReCaap Information Sharing Centre (ISC) assistant director of research Lee Yin Mui on Tuesday (April 5).

Piracy and armed robbery cases in the Singapore Strait hit a six-year high in 2021 when 49 incidents were reported.

Ms Lee was speaking at the Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference conducted by ReCaap, which is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

These incidents were relatively low between 2016 and 2019, but reports of sea robberies and piracy started to climb in 2020.

According to the official definition, piracy refers to attacks in international waters, while armed robbery refers to attacks within a state's territorial waters.

She said to some 150 audience members who attended online: "The pandemic has also made enforcement more challenging, which is why there must be greater cooperation during this time."

Ms Lee said perpetrators were armed with knives in six of the cases in the Singapore Strait. She added that no crew were harmed in any of the incidents, which involved mainly tankers and carriers.

Items stolen included engine parts and welding equipment, though some left empty-handed.

There were no serious incidents, such as cases that involved guns or resulted in serious injuries, among the 17 incidents reported, Ms Lee added.

She urged nearby states to increase patrols and share surveillance findings with their neighbours as part of a collective effort to fight sea crimes.

The Malacca Strait was also flagged as an area of concern by the secretary-general of the International Maritime Organisation, Mr Kitack Lim, in his keynote address, with 69 cases of piracy and robbery reported last year, compared with 48 in 2020.

In his presentation on safety measures against piracy and sea robberies, general manager of the tanker management team of HMM Ocean Service Joo Sung-kuk urged shipping companies to have a security plan before their ships enter areas prone to sea crimes.

He advised shipping companies to monitor piracy-related websites and to report incidents and findings to ReCaap and other databases promptly.

Ship masters should also brief the crew and conduct drills to prepare for emergencies, he said.

Vessels should be designed with multiple layers of defence, including hardened doors, gates and comprehensive surveillance camera coverage and communications, said Mr Joo.

He recommended that Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia strengthen cooperation over maritime security to tackle the problem.

ReCaap ISC executive director Krishnaswamy Natarajan said the fight against sea crimes against ships is a shared responsibility and that cooperation among countries surrounding the Singapore Strait is key to reducing piracy and sea robbery.

When asked about the possibility that sea robberies were being over-reported, Ms Lee said ReCaap does its part to verify with sources such as the ship master.

Although many cases were considered petty thefts, the situation could get worse if it is not dealt with, she added.

Said Ms Lee: If it is unreported, perpetrators could become bolder over time. Even if nothing is stolen, it is one incident too many.

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Gender-Based Violence

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Commentary and Perspectives

Embracing Autocrats to Help Ukraine Is a Losing Proposition (Human Rights Watch)

By Kenneth Roth

March 25, 2022

The last time a broad alliance was built to oppose a major act of violence - the global war on terrorism in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks - it was a human rights disaster. Following the US example, governments worldwide learned that

pledging support for that effort gave them greater latitude to shred international norms against arbitrary detention, torture, and even summary execution. The Cold War featured a similar Western willingness to sacrifice democratic and human rights principles in the name of building an alliance against a dictatorial foe.

Today, the global solidarity being shown for Ukraine risks becoming a comparable cover to turn a blind eye to authoritarian repression. We should beware. The lawless approach to fighting terrorism often fueled more terrorism. The embrace of Cold War autocrats undermined the appeal of democracy. In rejecting rule by the increasingly repressive Russian government, Ukrainians have been clear that theirs is a fight for democracy. Downplaying human rights in the name of building an alliance to oppose Russias invasion risks strengthening the global autocratic threat of which the Ukraine conflict is only a part.

We already see the risk of this tradeoff in the quest to increase the global supply of oil and gas to compensate for the loss of Russian sources. As a condition for helping, the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reportedly want renewed US assistance for their disastrous campaign of bombing and blockading Yemeni civilians. The Saudi crown prince reportedly has added that he wants immunity from lawsuits in the United States for his governments murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The US government should firmly reject this amoral, transactional approach all the more so from governments that depend on the United States to defend them from Iran.

President Joe Bidens administration recently sent, for the first time, a high-level delegation to meet with the government of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. Adopting measures to address the profound humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan people, such as ensuring that overcompliance with US sanctions does not undermine access to food and medicine, would be laudable. But resetting relations should not mean diminishing the Venezuelan governments responsibility for creating the countrys human rights and humanitarian disaster. If oil sales are allowed, guarantees should be put in place to ensure that resulting revenue benefits the Venezuelan people and not corrupt officials.

The European Union faces similar choices, not only when looking to diversify gas supplies from the likes of Azerbaijan and Algeria, but also within its own membership. The Polish and Hungarian governments are undermining the checks and balances needed in a democracy to protect rights. The European Court of Justice recently upheld the EUs ability to condition its generous subsidies to these governments on an end to their attacks on the rule of law. Both countries are under scrutiny by the EU Council, representing all EU leaders, over the risks they pose to fundamental EU values.

EU institutions should continue to focus on such democratic backsliding. Hungary and Poland, as countries that border Ukraine, have had bitter experience as members of the former Soviet bloc, so they have plenty of incentive to stand up to Russia without the EU going slow in addressing the threats they pose to democratic institutions.

The Turkish government has already significantly muted EU protests over its intensifying repression as a condition of preventing asylum seekers from reaching Greece. Its frontline role in Ukraine will most likely increase the pressure for the EU to downplay that repression as pivotal national elections approach next year. The EU should focus on upholding the rights of the Turkish people the most important EU relationship rather than the efforts of their autocratic president to retain power.

China presents perhaps the greatest risk of trading human rights for help on Ukraine. The rationale for that tradeoff lies in the hope that Beijing might be reluctant to endorse a blatant affront to a nations sovereignty. But the Chinese government has shown little such concern when it acts against such neighbors as India or Bhutan. In any event, Beijing trumpets sovereignty mainly to deflect human rights criticism, even though since at least 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has made a countrys human rights record an appropriate topic of international concern.

More to the point, the Chinese government is hardly eager to strengthen a global coalition on Ukraine that might be mobilized in defense of Taiwan should Beijing pursue a military takeover or to address Beijings own repression. That repression has been most intense in recent years against the Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims of Xinjiang, where Beijings mass detention, cultural persecution, highly intrusive surveillance, and forced labor amount to crimes against humanity.

Nonetheless, the Biden administration may be tempted to downplay Xinjiang in return for Beijings refusal to help Moscow evade sanctions imposed for the invasion. That would wrongfully sacrifice the rights of Chinas Turkic Muslims for the rights of Ukrainians. It would also ignore the threat to democracy worldwide represented by the Chinese government, with its active undermining of global rights standards and institutions.

Some might argue that selective attention to rights is demanded by the gravity of Russias invasion of Ukraine. That devalues the importance of the larger struggle between democracy and autocracy now playing out around the world. Indeed, Ukraine has been on the frontline of the struggle for many years. Compromising democracy in the name of opposing Russias invasion risks losing the war to win a battle.

But even if one looks narrowly only at Russia, there are strong reasons not to go wobbly on rights. Far reaching as the

sanctions imposed on Russia have been, Vladimir Putin is perhaps the last person in the country to feel the heat directly. Yet Putin has long feared the possibility of a color revolution of people rising up against the autocrat. He remains sensitive to pressure from the Russian people, which is why he is going to such lengths to keep them in the dark about what is happening in Ukraine.

Yet so far, the Kremlins censorship, disinformation, propaganda, and threats of lengthy prison terms have not stopped Russians from learning about the war in Ukraine and registering their opposition. Although many Russians may still settle for the Kremlins line as spouted by state media, a significant number of Russians are learning the truth, whether by using virtual private networks to circumvent the censors, turning to still-functioning social-media platforms such as Telegram and YouTube, or simply telephoning friends and contacts in Ukraine or the rest of Europe. The evidence that word is getting through can be seen as Russians by the tens of thousands in 150 cities across the country have taken to the streets to oppose the war. More than 1 million Russians have signed anti-war petitions.

Whether these Russian protests wax or wane will depend in part on the nature of the global response to the invasion. A global alliance that ignores human rights as the price of enticing new members is more easily portrayed as anti-Russian and thus less likely to attract the Russian people. But a response that upholds democratic principles and speaks to the autocratic rule that has led to this crisis and is weighing with greater intensity on the lives of Russians today is more likely to succeed in enlisting the Russian people as they try to restrain Putins depredations in Ukraine.

Japan and Australia Should Sanction the Myanmar Military (Human Rights Watch)

By Elaine Pearson and Teppei Kasai

March 27, 2022

Days after the Myanmar military coup on February 1, 2021, the Japanese and Australian governments publicly confirmed they would closely coordinate together regarding the situation in Myanmar. Since then, they have repeatedly expressed grave concerns about human rights abuses in Myanmar while pledging to work together closely.

On March 3, Australia adopted new regulations that give it the ability to sanction Myanmar entities and individuals connected to the junta. This is long overdue given that in the past year Myanmar's military has killed 1,700 people and arbitrarily arrested thousands. Sadly, its still an open question whether Australia or Japan will do much more than continue to talk tough and do little about the regions deepening human rights crisis.

The two regional partners have taken some small steps on Myanmar. Japan issued statements condemning the coup and froze new non-humanitarian aid, while its Diet passed a resolution calling for the restoration of a democratic system. Similarly, Australia redirected its aid program away from junta-related entities and suspended its defense cooperation with Myanmar. A parliamentary committee examining Australias response to the coup urged the government to further pursue the restoration of civilian rule as a foreign policy objective.

However, Tokyo and Canberra have failed to coordinate with democratic allies such as the United Kingdom, United States, European Union, and Canada in taking further concrete action to pressure the Myanmar military, or Tatmadaw. Rather than imposing targeted sanctions on military leaders and military-owned entities, as the four allies have done, Japan and Australia have effectively bet all their chips on the Five-Point Consensus of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the principle of ASEAN centrality. Its been a losing bet.

Since ASEAN released its five-point consensus last April, there has been no progress on any of the listed issues. The junta has been unwilling to meet even ASEANs low bar, and instead has exploited the international communitys deference to ASEAN to keep delaying any substantive action. Meanwhile, Tokyo and Canberra conveniently hide behind the ASEAN fig leaf, refraining from enacting targeted sanctions, and thus undermining the international communitys efforts to hold the Tatmadaw accountable for its atrocities.

In late March 2022, Cambodias foreign minister and ASEANs special envoy, Prak Sokhonn, met Myanmar military leader Min Aung Hlaing to advocate for the five-point consensus, including a ceasefire. However, Prak Sokhonn himself claimed there was little progress. Myanmar's junta barred Sakonn from meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi and other imprisoned leaders of the National League for Democracy party, which won the November 2020 election in a landslide. In January, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, said that the actions taken by the U.N. Security Council and by ASEAN have been insufficient to convince Myanmar's military to cease its violence. Tokyo and Canberra should heed her call.

Since early 2021, Japans ruling and opposition lawmakers have discussed passing a U.S. Magnitsky-style law, which would allow the Japanese government to sanction violators of international human rights outside of the country. Late last year, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio said he will continue to consider such a law. Lawmakers have also advocated using the Foreign

Exchange and Foreign Trade Act, predominantly used to sanction human rights violators in response to U.N. Security Council resolutions.

But the Japanese government remains passive about imposing sanctions. Last April, then-Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu disparaged the idea of coordinating with other countries to sanction Tatmadaw leaders, claiming without evidence that it would not lead to a productive outcome.

Australia, meanwhile, passed the Autonomous Sanctions Amendment Act in late 2021, enabling the government to impose targeted financial sanctions and travel bans. The government said that the new law will allow it to respond more flexibly and swiftly to a range of situations of international concern, including in collaboration with Australias close allies and partners when in the national interest. Despite pressure from civil society groups and opposition politicians, the government has been unwilling to use the new measures against the Myanmar junta.

The Australian government has said that Myanmars junta is impervious to international pressure and that sanctions would provide very little, if any, positive impact to the people on the ground. But this ignores calls by Myanmars people for targeted sanctions and the tangible role that sanctions played in the previous decade in pressuring the military to embark on the reform process. In their decision to embrace Myanmars shaky democratization, other governments eased the pressure too early.

Past blanket sanctions were devastating for ordinary people in Myanmar, meaning that coordinated and targeted sanctions with robust enforcement will be key. The militarys financial interests and relationships have become more integrated into the global economy, offering even greater opportunities for effective sanctions.

With the necessary laws in place, the stage is set for Japan and Australia to do more than simply deflect and defer to ASEAN. Tokyo and Canberra should swiftly place targeted sanctions against Tatmadaw leaders and military-owned entities. In addition to sanctions, the two democracies should also push other governments to support a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for an arms embargo on Myanmar. Myanmars junta needs to be shown there are both immediate and longer-term consequences for their grievous abuses.

A lament for the children of war (Winnipeg Free Press)

By John R. Wiens

March 31, 2022

The images from Ukraine are startling, horrifying and heart-wrenching and so senseless and wrong. More than three million children displaced by war, and hundreds killed.

It has often been said that the measure of our regard for humanity is reflected in our attitude toward our children. Recent, enduring and past atrocities visited on the worlds children would suggest we have little respect for the human condition, the gift of human life and humane living. The Ukraine atrocities are just the latest cause for justified rage.

Its time the world took more seriously the responsibility we have for our children, which is significantly different than that we adults have for each other. While we watch the lives of children wantonly snuffed out and their futures irreparably compromised, I perceive little will to consider their suffering as crimes against humanity, which they undoubtedly are.

We know the consequences of adult actions regarding childrens lives. Children living with loving caring adults in safe homes and schools usually thrive and flourish, themselves turning into great friends, good neighbours and contributing citizens. Children surviving wars, exploitation and abuse often do not, too often suffering from mental health issues and substance abuse, perpetuating abuse, engaging in criminal activity and resorting to other forms of violence visited on themselves and others, including their own children.

In his 1982 book *The Disappearance of Childhood*, American media theorist and cultural critic Neil Postman attributed the difficulties children are experiencing to their being thrust into the adult world before they were ready. Even before the era of social media, he worried about the indiscriminate exposure of children to the adult world.

In 2006, in the same vein, teacher and sociologist Sue Palmer wrote *Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World Is Damaging Our Children and What We Can Do About It*. In it she outlined how our worlds are not preparing our children, by teaching or through example, to maintain the mores, norms and values of healthy societies, also emphasizing the devastating effects of adult childhood experiences.

Although neither of them touched on children as survivors of wars, residential schools or sexual exploitation, both were clear that when childhood is compromised, not just the children suffer so do present and future generations. It is not just the children directly impacted by adult actions, or prematurely thrust into adult situations, but also those children who observed what was happening to other children. And in our world, there is lots to see and fear.

From Ukraine, media images show thousands of children, some killed by random bombing, some walking to the border unaccompanied by adults, some crying as they leave their fathers behind, and busloads of orphans being transported to safety.

Cancer patients are being moved back and forth to wards and shelters, children taken from their schools and separated from their friends, all traumatized by the wail of sirens and the destruction of their homes and schools. And mothers traumatized because they cannot shield their children from the present horrors, further traumatizing children who sense, more than understand, their parents desperation and despair.

There seems no end in sight to the human tragedy being visited on the young in this war, as in all conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Yemen the list goes on.

There are ongoing consequences for those who survive, and for their parents and families. And of course, the consequences of war for children and young people will not end if, and when, the war does, just as it did not end for those subjected to residential-school abuse when the schools were forced to close. Missing healthy childhoods causes unhealthy, dysfunctional adulthoods.

Interrupting childrens lives and education, and compromising their safety and well-being for questionable, unjustifiable adult whims, is simply wrong and destructive of humanity, including our own.

Meanwhile, our children are watching adults indulge ourselves with unwarranted wars, overblown mandate grievances, intercultural and racial hatred, religious intolerance and gender discrimination, justifying violence toward them and each other, and lying to cover our toxic inclinations while pretending to do so for their sakes. Even if they dont articulate it, children feel their unfairness, wrongness and indifference.

Safeguarding all children and supporting healthy childhoods is the moral obligation of every adult. The current inhumanity perpetrated on children in Ukraine and elsewhere deserves global international attention and condemnation.

Africa: 28 Years Later, the African Union Remembers Rwanda (All Africa)

By Bankole Adeoye and Hope Tumukunde Gasatura

April 4, 2022

April 7 marks the start of Kwibuka, the commemoration period of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, a cataclysmic event which saw one million killed in barely 100 days.

As this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the African Union, it is an apt time to reflect on what the genocides legacy means for the African Union. Two decades ago, the failure of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to prevent or halt the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda was a major factor in the establishment of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

While the AU has registered progress since 1994, on the occasion of this milestone it is important to note that more can still be done to prevent atrocities on our continent.

Rwanda matters for all of Africa

The genocide against the Tutsi is not just a Rwandan story. Both the genocide and the countrys rebirth since 1994 symbolise the worst and the best of Africa our failures and our hopes.

Among other factors, the genocide was made possible by the failures of African and international actors to take preventive measures, as documented, in 2000, by the Organization of African Unities (OAU) report, The Preventable Genocide.

Yet some Africans played an admirable part, including Amb. Ibrahim Gambari, who lobbied for intervention in Rwanda as Nigerias representative to the Security Council, or peacekeepers like Captain Mbaye Diagne, a Senegalese soldier who risked his life to save hundreds of children, women and men. This solidarity in the face of adversity and tragedy is a value which lies at the very foundation of the African Unity.

Lessons from the genocide have also been crucial. It served as a devastating reminder of the dangers of weaponized ethnic identities and social injustices, which can be found all over our continent. It also illustrated the importance of being alert to warning signs and acting on them a crime of this magnitude did not come out of nowhere.

Following 1994, Rwanda has also proved a valuable lesson for Africa. Rebuilding a country in the aftermath of violence, particularly a devastating and traumatic genocide, is one of the biggest challenges anywhere in the world.

Rwanda has not only overcome this danger but prospered as a nation by pushing a broader vision of reconciliation

encompassing socio-economic and educational inequalities. The Rwandan government strived to facilitate the healing process of the nation, by improving Rwandans living conditions and encouraging people to think for them and to be open-minded through schooling.

Need for concrete measures

Since its inception in 2002 the African Union has been taking steps to resolve extensive peace and security challenges facing the continent. The harsh lessons from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi were at the root of the dramatic normative shift from the OAU's dogmatic principle of non-intervention to the AU's principle of non-indifference.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC), the highest standing decision-making body on matters of peace and security in Africa, has had several success stories. Since its establishment, the PSC has launched several mediation and peace-making efforts, including in Kenya, Sudan (Darfur), Sudan, and South Sudan.

The PSC also deployed military peace support operations, in Darfur, Somalia, the Comoros and in central Africa against the Lord Resistance Army (LRA). The African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) made considerable progress against al Shabaab.

Despite these great strides, the AU still faces challenges to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity. The anniversary of the 1994 genocide serves as a stark reminder that the AU cannot be a spectator in the face of violence of this nature.

Preventative measures are also crucial. We cannot stress enough the importance of education in preventing the recurrence or occurrence of genocide. Young people must be taught about the dangers of any form of discrimination for instance, through the elaboration of a continental curriculum on preventing genocide.

Equally, there must be a renewed emphasis on the fight against impunity. Even in the Rwandan case, 28 years later, perpetrators of crimes against humanity still roam free across our continent. We must send a united message to anyone who has committed such crimes, or may do so in the future, that there is absolute solidarity among our nations, and that we will stop at nothing to deliver justice. All countries should establish legal frameworks that punish genocide perpetrators, whatever their nationality. Failure to do so will only increase the likelihood of future atrocities.

Looking to the Past and the Future

On April 7th, we are reminded that genocide represents the most flagrant crime against humanity and negates everything the African Charter and our African values stand for.

As we approach three decades after the genocide against the Tutsi, let us reflect on steps that the continental body needs to take to be able to move from aspirations to actions. In this regard, all AU Member States and all African citizens should seize this occasion to raise awareness on the threat of genocide and to ensure that Never Again becomes a reality. As a continent, we must show solidarity and resolve by bearing primary responsibility for legislative, institutional and educational measures to prevent and to intervene against genocide and other mass atrocities.

The 28th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda will take place in a hybrid format, at the Nelson Mandela Hall of the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and through the Zoom online platform. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) will also hold an Open session in May 2022 on the prevention of the ideology of hate speech, genocide and hate crimes in Africa. Other public activities will punctuate these statutory events to mark the #Kwibuka28 campaign.

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Aiding and Abetting

Can Weapons Manufacturers Be Held Responsible for War Crimes? (Inkstick)

By Jake Romm
April 4th, 2022

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has been conducting airstrikes in Yemen as a part of its intervention into the country's brutal civil war. And since 2015, these airstrikes have killed numerous civilians and destroyed or damaged critical civilian infrastructure. As

legal scholars, international bodies, and nongovernmental organizations have asserted, many of these strikes are almost certainly war crimes.

But despite the almost routine criminality of Saudi Arabia's bombing campaign in Yemen, US-made weapons continue to flow, and US weapons manufacturers continue to profit off the death they help produce. Indeed, as Responsible Statecraft reported, Raytheon CEO and Chairman Greg Hayes appeared to celebrate a potential war over Ukraine and Houthi drone attacks on the UAE as good indicators for future weapons sales in a January 2022 earnings call.

While executives from other arms manufacturers made similar remarks during the earnings call, I mention Raytheon in particular because Raytheon-manufactured weapons have been used in Saudi mass-civilian casualty strikes with unnerving frequency. Most recently, Amnesty International reported that Raytheon had manufactured the bomb used on a detention center in Saadah, northwestern Yemen, which, according to Doctors without Borders, killed at least 80 people and injured over 200. Even though Saudi Arabia bears primary responsibility for criminal strikes, such as the one in Saadah, Hayes may also bear criminal responsibility as an aider and abettor.

HOW TO CONVICT AIDERS AND ABETTORS

There is a long history of convicting corporate actors as aiders and abettors in international criminal law dating back to the post-World War II trials. In the Trial of Bruno Tesch and Two Others (Zyklon B Case), three defendants were charged by a British tribunal with aiding and abetting the murder of Allied nationals by supplying the SS with Zyklon B, the chemical used in the Nazi gas chambers. Two of the three defendants were convicted on the theory that they supplied the means for the commission of the offense (the *actus reus*, or action) and that they knew that the gas was to be used for the purpose of killing human beings (the *mens rea*, or mental state). Similarly, in the Trial of Friedrich Flick and Five Others, an American tribunal convicted two former Nazi industrialists of financial support to a criminal organization (i.e., aiding and abetting) for contributing money to the SS. The two were convicted under the theory that one who knowingly by his influence and money contributes to the support thereof must be deemed to be, if not a principal, certainly an accessory to such crimes.

The knowledge *mens rea* standard set by these cases a defendant need only know that their aid would in some way contribute to the principal crime was followed as well by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Under the International Criminal Courts Rome Statute the only operating international criminal law instrument with potential applicability to the Yemen conflict however, aiding and abetting liability only kicks in if a person renders aid with the purpose of facilitating the underlying crime.

This purpose requirement introduces a more stringent *mens rea* than the knowledge requirement of the post-World War II trials, and the element becomes even more difficult to prove in the case of corporate actors. Corporations have one underlying motivation: to make money. Thus, Hayes could reasonably and convincingly say that only the reason Raytheon rendered aid to Saudi Arabia was to turn a profit, and so what the Saudis do with it is their business. Such a strict interpretation of the Rome Statute would, however, seem to foreclose the possibility of ever convicting a corporate actor for aiding and abetting. Fortunately, purpose is not as restrictive as it seems.

INTERPRETING PURPOSE

In a 2008 article for the Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights, Professor Doug Cassel of Notre Dame Law School offers a novel and useful interpretation of the Rome Statute's purpose requirement. He writes, purpose in the ICC Statute need not mean the exclusive or even primary purpose. A secondary purpose, including one inferred from knowledge of the likely consequences, should suffice. Cassel uses the Zyklon B case as an example, writing that if Tesch's primary purpose was to make a profit by selling Zyklon B, one could infer from his knowledge of how the SS was using the Zyklon B that his secondary purpose was to encourage mass murder. That is, if Hitler were to cease gassing Jews, the Nazis would no longer buy so much gas. As Cassel writes, if the object and purpose of the Rome Statute is to ensure that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished, it is difficult to believe that the drafters would have intended that those who knowingly supply gas to the gas chambers, for the primary purpose of profit, should escape punishment.

At the first glance, the idea of secondary purpose sounds almost identical to a knowledge standard, but it can be distinguished by flipping the aider/principal relation on its head. If, as Cassel explains about the Zyklon B case, Tesch's primary purpose was to make a profit and his secondary purpose was that the gasings continue so that the Nazis would continue to purchase Zyklon B in such high quantities, then we can say that the secondary purpose had a causal relationship with the primary purpose. That is, the criminal action of the secondary purpose (murder) promotes or furthers the primary purpose (profit), much in the same fashion that, for the principal, the rendered aid promotes the primary criminal purpose.

While international criminal law may be a poor tool with respect to garnering a conviction here, it is not a conviction that should be the primary goal; it is an end to the war, and an end to impunity for those trafficking in death.

We can add to this an even higher level of causal connection (a necessary relationship), one in which the criminal action (the secondary purpose) is the sole cause of the primary purposes success. In the Zyklon B case, this necessary relationship between the primary and secondary purposes would appear if the only reason that the SS ever purchased Zyklon B in such numbers was for its use in the gas chambers. That is, Tesch, in order to achieve his primary purpose of making a profit, must have also acted with the secondary purpose of facilitating murder because it is only because of this murder that he was able to sell Zyklon B in the first place. With either the necessary relationship or even the lesser causal relationship in place, one could infer that Tesch acted with the purpose to aid in the crime of murder because the secondary purpose is either what made the primary purpose possible in the first place (thus rendering them inextricable) or facilitates the success of the primary purpose.

With respect to Raytheon's criminal responsibility in Yemen, an isolated incident of its bombs being used to kill or harm civilians is one thing, a pattern is another. Saudi Arabia's intervention has been marked by such widespread and publicly known criminality, largely facilitated by Raytheon munitions, that it would be unreasonable for Hayes to claim that he did not have the knowledge that arms sold to the Saudis would be used for a criminal purpose and that he did not act with a secondary purpose of facilitating the Saudis' criminal bombing campaign. On top of that, as Hayes remarks at the investor call makes clear, war is good for business, and the Saudi war on Yemen is particularly good (by October 2018, sales to Saudi Arabia constituted 5% of total revenue for Raytheon for that year alone). This is as clear an illustration of the idea of secondary purpose as one could ask for: If Saudi Arabia were to cease its criminal intervention in Yemen, it would no longer buy so many bombs. What's more, the destabilization caused by the criminal nature of the war only serves to draw it out, increasing both human misery and Raytheon's profits in direct relationship. While seemingly short of a necessary relationship, Saudi criminality and Raytheon profits appear to exist in a sufficiently causal relationship to pass this primary-secondary purpose test.

DONT HOLD YOUR BREATH

All that being said, it would be unwise for people to hold their breath for a criminal conviction, or even a charge. No international court currently has jurisdiction over the situation in Yemen, and we should not be so naive as to think that the US or any other country will convict, let alone bring charges against Hayes, who stands atop one of the giants of the military-industrial complex.

Furthermore, even if a conviction were plausible, the legal form, focused as it is on individual perpetrators and individual instances of criminality, cannot address the underlying causes and ongoing horrors of the Yemen conflict writ large, and indeed, risks obscuring those causes, subordinating them to the symptomatic manifestations of violence. As legal scholar Tor Krevier writes: in the case of international criminal law, the preoccupation remains with the abnormality of conjunctural violence, rather than with the normality of the forces including economic and legal structures that lurk beneath. Laying out the legal argument against Hayes, however, can lead to a denaturalization of arms sales so routine and integral to the US global presence and, in turn, help provide the language required for political pressure. Thus, while international criminal law may be a poor tool with respect to garnering a conviction here, it is not a conviction that should be the primary goal; it is an end to the war, and an end to impunity for those trafficking in death. And one step we can take to help curb the bombings and hasten Saudi Arabia's exit from the conflict is to call those who deal arms to the Saudis by their proper name that is, war criminals.

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WORTH READING

The Qualification of the Activities of (Returned) Foreign Fighters under National Criminal Law

Thomas Van Poecke and Hanne Cuyckens

March 18, 2022

National prosecutors and courts usually qualify the activities of foreign fighters (FFs) as terrorist offences. However, the groups FFs join tend to have a "dual nature": they usually qualify as both terrorist groups under counter-terrorism (CT) instruments and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) under international humanitarian law (IHL). Hence, the activities of (returned) FFs are situated at the confines of CT instruments and IHL, which complicates the qualification of their activities under national criminal law. These activities may qualify as serious violations of IHL, namely war crimes, but also as other international crimes, namely crimes against humanity or genocide. Furthermore, some of the activities committed by FFs can also be qualified as "common" offences under

domestic criminal law. Ultimately, we conclude that national prosecutors and courts should consider all relevant legal frameworks when qualifying the activities of (returned) FFs. FFs should be prosecuted and punished for international crimes and common offences in addition to, or instead of, terrorist offences if necessary or appropriate.

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