Baghdad had highest level of civilian casualties in August – UN Iraq mission reports

2 September - Terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq killed more than 1,300 people and injured over 1,800 others last month, reflecting a “steadily increasing number of casualties,” according to casualty figures released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in the country (UNAMI).

The number of civilians killed was 585, and the number of civilians injured was 1,103 in August 2015, the Mission reported.

“Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate with 1,069 civilian casualties (318 killed, 751 injured),” according to the report. “Diyala suffered 108 killed and 162 injured; Ninewa 69 killed and 3 injured; Salah al-Din 23 killed and 13 injured and Kirkuk 17 killed and 15 injured.”

The UN Special Representative for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, acknowledged the immense sacrifices Iraqi civilians and security forces continue to make in the ongoing war against terrorism.

“With the steadily increasing number of casualties, internally displaced persons, and the alarming rate of Iraqis fleeing war, persecution and poverty to seek refuge abroad, the successful implementation of the government reform plan will be paramount to restore order, legality and social justice in the country and renew confidence in the fair participation of all in the society,” Mr. Kubiš said.

According to casualty figures released by UNAMI, “a total of 1,325 Iraqis were killed and another 1,811 were injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in August 2015.”

The report said the mission has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas, and that it “also received,
without being able to verify, reports of large numbers of casualties along with unknown numbers of persons who have died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care.”

“For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum,” the mission said.

In light of the above-noted limitations in methodology, UNAMI does not claim that the information it provides is complete, and it may well be that UNAMI is under-reporting the extent, nature or seriousness of the effect of armed violence and acts of terrorism on the civilian population.

**UN envoy hails opening of ICC trial against Congolese rebel leader as ‘victory for survivors’**

2 September - As the International Criminal Court (ICC) trial of Congolese rebel leader Bosco Ntaganda opened today, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict said that it served as a powerful reminder to military leaders accused of similar acts that justice will ultimately prevail.

Zainab Hawa Bangura called the ICC trial, which opened today in The Hague, Netherlands, “a victory for survivors of the savage attacks allegedly perpetrated under Mr. Ntaganda’s military leadership, and for the families of those survivors and human rights advocates fighting on their behalf.”

Mr. Ntaganda, the former Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Force Patriotiques pour la Libération du Congo (FPLC), stands accused of 13 counts of war crimes and five counts of crimes against humanity committed in 2002 and 2003. The charges against him include rape, murder, and the conscription of child soldiers. Mr. Ntaganda pled not guilty as the trial entered its first day.

Ms. Bangura commended the Court for pursuing the case, and praised the victims, witnesses and experts taking part the trial.

“Their courage and resolve to see justice done is inspirational for us in the international community, as we continue to fight together to eradicate sexual violence in conflict,” she said.

Ms. Bangura also noted that her Office, as well as the UN Team of Experts and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict continues to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Government to implement commitments made under Joint Communiqué on the fight to end sexual violence in conflict. The agreement, she said, includes ensuring accountability for such crimes.

“I was pleased today to hear that a military court charged 18 soldiers and police officers with murders and rape in connection with crimes committed in Kasindi, Mbau, Nobili and Kamango localities in the eastern province of North Kivu,” she said.

She also called upon the DRC Government to ensure the implementation of the armed forces action plan against sexual violence, to bring perpetrators to justice and to give reparations to victims.
Backing UN ‘Agenda 2030,’ parliamentary leaders pledge to place democracy at service of sustainable development

2 September - Parliamentary leaders from some 140 countries today declared that the United Nations must remain the cornerstone of global cooperation as an organization that embodies the ardent hope of people around the world and pledged to place “democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development for the world the people want.”

Meeting at UN Headquarters in New York since Monday, the more than 170 Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Parliament at the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament adopted a declaration today acknowledging that extraordinary efforts would be needed to build a world that people want by turning the tide against the many challenges that undermine democracy, peace and development.

“The world is at a crossroads. The enormity of the challenges that we and our planet face is daunting. We must have the resolve to overcome them. How political leaders respond to the crises that threaten us has perhaps never been as important to our future as now,” said Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) President Saber Chowdhury.

The world’s parliamentary leaders committed to bringing parliament closer to the people by tackling the growing public scepticism and disconnect with politics, social and political marginalization, gender inequality and an imbalanced power relationship with government.

They underlined the need for constitutional and institutional reforms in transition countries, social justice, good governance and the respect for human rights, including freedom of speech and assembly.

Meeting just as the United Nations General Assembly today approved a resolution sending the draft ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ to Member States for adoption later this month, the parliamentary leaders in their declaration welcomed the new Agenda and pledged “to do everything in [their] power to facilitate the consideration of relevant legislation and allocation of budgetary resources, and to hold governments accountable for the attainment of the goals.”

“The UN embodies the ardent hope of people around the world for peace and development,” the declaration said.

At the opening of the conference on Monday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had urged the legislators to help drive forward the new UN sustainable development agenda and ensure that civil society is an equal partner in “building the future we want.”

In an earlier interview with the UN News Centre, Mr. Chowdhury said that parliaments have a critical role in translating the new sustainable development agenda into real improvements for the lives of the world’s people.

Meeting against a backdrop of “the countless human tragedies unfolding as people flee wars, conflict, natural and human disasters,” the parliamentary leaders said “when they are forced to do so because their life is under threat the international community has an obligation to provide support.”

In their declaration, the parliamentary leaders called on all States to protect refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants and to help build stable and prosperous societies in their countries of origin.

On a positive note, the legislators also said they “remain optimistic about the road ahead.”

“The negotiations to secure agreement on a new development agenda are ample proof of a shared global commitment to address today’s global challenges,” the declaration read. “Here is a unique opportunity for all of us to work together.”
At the last day of the conference, the Speakers of Parliament adopted the wide-ranging 38-point declaration that covered the myriad challenges the world is faced with today, and pledged: “We, in our parliaments, will do our part by placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development for the world the people want.”

The Conference is part of the series of high-level meetings leading up to the UN Summit in late September 2015, at which the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be launched. It will be preceded by the Tenth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament, to be held on 29 and 30 August.

‘Tangible’ results on Libyan political agreement – UN envoy

2 September - “Tangible” results have been achieved for a political deal in Libya, but concrete solutions to the conflict will only be reached when all parties agree on a final draft, the United Nations envoy facilitating efforts to restore peace in the North African country said today.

Speaking to journalists in Istanbul after his meeting with a delegation of the Libyan General National Congress (GNC), Bernardino León, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), described the encounter as a “very frank and very open discussion.”

“We have been discussing the different elements, different remarks, different comments – in some cases differences – and the possibilities or the different ways that UNSMIL is proposing to address these differences,” he said.

It has been seven months since UNSMIL launched a political dialogue process to find a peaceful solution to the conflict which intensified one year ago.

Last week, the GNC did not attend a round of talks in Morocco organized by Mr. León, explaining that it needed to reorganize its negotiating team following the resignation of two members.

“This is the first meeting with an important number of [GNC] members in a more open format and this is something that should continue,” Mr. León stressed.

The UN envoy added that he encourages GNC members to continue to engage and discuss to find a solution as soon as possible.

He explained that although a draft agreement was initialled by some parties on 12 July, an agreement will only be reached when a final package “makes sense for everybody and will be signed by everybody.”

Mr. León said he hopes a final agreement is endorsed within the next two or three weeks so its implementation can begin on 20 October.

A two-day political dialogue on Libya is set to begin tomorrow in Geneva.
In Syria, UN agency discovers nine new suspected cases of typhoid near Yarmouk camp

2 September - Following humanitarian operations in the southern Syrian town of Yalda, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said it has identified nine new suspected cases of typhoid and one case of scabies.

UNRWA has been providing vital healthcare to civilians displaced from Yarmouk camp, where the lives of Palestinian refugees continue to be threatened by the conflict in the region.

A situation update issued by the agency said its medical personnel established a health point in Yalda yesterday, treating 330 patients.

As high summer temperatures and regular interruptions in water and food supplies continue to affect Yarmouk, Yalda, and other areas such as Babila and Beit Saham, communicable illness reportedly remains a source of profound vulnerability for civilians.

According to UNRWA, health services are extremely limited and lack the capacity to respond to major outbreaks and other serious health needs. For this reason, it warned that its medical assistance is vital and must continue on an indefinite basis.

It added that its latest humanitarian operations were conducted with the facilitation of the Syrian authorities.

Meanwhile, UNRWA is continuing to appeal for donors to increase their support. Only 31 per cent of funds needed for this year’s Syria Crisis Appeal have been received, while more than 95 per cent of Palestinian refugees rely on the UN for food, water and healthcare.

First-ever UN-backed summit opens to harnesses global momentum to eliminate viral hepatitis

2 September - Delegates from more than 60 countries are gathered in Glasgow for the first-ever World Hepatitis Summit that began today aiming to provide “a wake-up call to build momentum to prevent, diagnose, treat – and eventually eliminate – viral hepatitis as a public health problem,” the World Health Organization (WHO) has said.

According to WHO, which is co-sponsoring the summit with the World Hepatitis Alliance, some 400 million people are currently living with viral hepatitis, and the disease claims an estimated 1.45 million lives each year, making it one of the world’s leading causes of death.

Policymakers, patient groups, physicians and other key stakeholders attending the summit hosted by the Scottish Government in Glasgow are expected to issue a declaration underlining their belief that the elimination of viral hepatitis is possible. They aim to urge governments to work with WHO to define and agree on global targets for prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

And WHO said it is launching a new manual for the development and assessment of national viral hepatitis plans at the summit.

“We know how to prevent viral hepatitis, we have a safe and effective vaccine for hepatitis B, and we now have medicines that can cure people with hepatitis C and control hepatitis B infection,” said Dr. Gottfried Hirnschall, Director of the WHO’s Global Hepatitis Programme.
“Yet access to diagnosis and treatment is still lacking or inaccessible in many parts of the world,” Dr. Hirnschall said. “This summit is a wake-up call to build momentum to prevent, diagnose, treat – and eventually eliminate – viral hepatitis as a public health problem.”

The summit is the first high-level global meeting to focus specifically on hepatitis, attracting delegates from more than 60 countries. The aim is to help countries enhance action to prevent viral hepatitis infection and ensure that people who are infected are diagnosed and offered treatment.

Policymakers and other key stakeholders at the three-day meeting beginning today are also discussing a draft strategy paper, which sets targets for 2030. WHO said the targets include a 90 per cent reduction in new cases of chronic hepatitis B and C, a 65 per cent reduction in hepatitis B and C deaths, and treatment of 80 per cent of eligible people with chronic hepatitis B and C infections.

In sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia between 5-10 per cent of the population is chronically infected with hepatitis B. High rates of chronic infections are also found in the Amazon and the southern parts of eastern and central Europe. Hepatitis C is found worldwide. Infection rates are high in Africa and Central and East Asia, and approximately two-thirds of people who inject drugs are infected with hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B and C cause approximately 80 per cent of all liver cancer deaths, yet most people living with chronic viral hepatitis are unaware of their infection, the health agency said.

The summit is intended to become an annual event.

**Top UN relief official in Yemen condemns ‘despicable’ killing of two Red Cross workers**

**2 September** - The top United Nations relief official in Yemen, Johannes Van Der Klaauw, has strongly condemned today’s killing of two staff members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the Amran Governorate of the country.

“I condemn this despicable act,” said Mr. Van Der Klaauw, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen in a statement.

“This sad event proves once again the urgent need for all parties to respect their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to protect the lives and rights of civilians and providing aid workers with a safe environment to work in.”

He also sent his condolences on behalf of the entire humanitarian community to ICRC colleagues and the families of those killed.

Meanwhile, at the regular press briefing at UN Headquarters in New York, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric provided an update on Saudi Arabia’s funding pledge for humanitarian needs in Yemen.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) signed A Memorandum of Understanding last week with Saudi Arabia for the following amounts: $1.7 million (UNDP), $22.2 million (WHO) and $29.6 million (UNICEF).

Some programmes have already been started based on the pledged funds and will continue in the coming months to provide relief supplies to Yemenis. This funding constitutes part of the Saudi pledge of $274 million towards the Flash Appeal.

The Strategic Response Plan for Yemen calls for $1.6 billion dollars; $352 million has currently been funded.
Security Council adjusts Liberia sanctions; ends travel ban, keeps arms embargo in place

2 September - The United Nations Security Council today renewed an arms embargo on non-State actors in Liberia for nine months while terminating other sanctions on the country, including a travel ban and asset freeze on those deemed a danger to its stability.

Unanimously adopting a new resolution, the Council also renewed for 10 months the mandate of the Panel of Experts that assists the so-called 1521 Committee on Liberia to monitor the sanctions, reducing the panel membership from two experts to reflect the limitation of its purview to the partial arms embargo and the Government’s progress in arms and border management.

The Panel of Experts on Liberia’s final report and the Secretary-General’s letter of 31 July noted progress in arms and ammunition management, but also highlighted weaknesses in State institutions, persistent gaps in the legal framework for the security sector, and porous borders vulnerable to trafficking.

In today’s resolution, the Council urged the Government of Liberia to take further steps to combat the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition, prioritizing the timely adoption and implementation of an effective legal framework.

UN agency and MasterCard join forces to support refugees and small-scale farmers

2 September - Residents at the Kakuma refugee camp in north-western Kenya will soon be able to buy charcoal produced in an environmentally-friendly way by local farmers as part of an innovative new alliance between the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and MasterCard to support small farmers and poor families.

“FAO is extremely proud of this collaboration with MasterCard that will support small-scale farmers to become economically independent by advancing financial inclusion,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

A new partnership agreement, signed today by the FAO Director-General and Walt MacNece, Vice Chairman of MasterCard, at FAO headquarters in Rome, paves the way for a collaborative effort that will develop inclusive payment systems to support small-scale farmers and poor families, the agency said in an announcement.

“The partners’ first joint effort will be in the Kakuma refugee camp, in Turkana County, Kenya, currently home to 170,000 refugees who have fled wars and violence in neighbouring countries,” FAO said. “Camp residents will be provided with prepaid cards that will permit them to buy charcoal produced locally by the host community – charcoal that has been certified as being produced in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly way.”

The project “is designed to improve incomes of Turkana residents, reduce social tensions between those residents and the refugees, and relieve pressure on the environment,” the agency said.

According to the UN refugee agency, Kakuma camp is a melting pot of refugees from more than 20 countries. The majority are from South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The town of Kakuma has hosted the camp since 1992.
MasterCard will provide its technology expertise and a meaningful financial contribution, to kick-start the business chain by providing 1,240 host-community households with improved charcoal making kilns and 7,000 refugee households with energy efficient stoves and credit to purchase 25 per cent of their annual charcoal needs.

FAO said “the effort will benefit from the complementary strengths of each organization: MasterCard’s expertise in payments technology and FAO’s global reach and track record in combating hunger and malnutrition.”

FAO’s three main goals are: the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; the elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all; and, the sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

At UN Headquarters, commemorative plaque joins ‘Tree of Peace and Unity’ marking end of World War II

2 September - A ceremony to dedicate a commemorative plaque marking the end of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific was organized at United Nations Headquarters today.

The plaque was placed by the Tree of Peace and Unity, a weeping cherry tree planted last May on international soil to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe.

Speaking at the event, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said “the creation of the United Nations in 1945 was a bold step in a new direction […] after so much tragic human sacrifice from the worst side of humanity.”

“Since then, the United Nations has saved countless lives around the world,” he added.

Mr. Eliasson described the 193-member Organization as being “the midwife at the birth of many treaties,” such as those ending racism and discrimination against women.

He also highlighted the work of UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who sacrifice their safety and lives to bring stability and aid to others.

“Our work today is more important than ever,” he continued. “We have seven decades of proof at the United Nations that international cooperation makes us all stronger. We must continue to reform and work to make the United Nations better.”

At the end of his remarks, Mr. Eliasson said that the plaque dedicated today is as reminder of the past, but also an opportunity to “make a pledge for the future.”