**Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General**

January 7, 2015

United Nations

http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/db150107.doc.htm

[Noon Briefings](http://www.un.org/press/en/type-document/noon-briefing)

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today’s noon briefing by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

\*\*France

I will start off with the [remarks](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16446.doc.htm) the Secretary-General made this morning.  The Secretary-General said that he was outraged by the despicable attack today against the French magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*.  He said it was a horrendous, unjustifiable and cold-blooded crime.  It was also a direct assault on a cornerstone of democracy, on the media and freedom of expression.  The Secretary-General extended his deepest condolences to the families of those who were killed and his best wishes to those who were wounded in the attack. He trusts that the French authorities will do all in their power to bring the perpetrators to justice quickly.

This horrific attack was meant to divide.  The Secretary-General said we must not fall into that trap.  This is a moment for solidarity around the world, he added.  We must stand for freedom of expression and tolerance and stand against forces of division and hate.

\*\*Yemen

I am also expecting shortly a [statement](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16447.doc.htm) on the attacks that took place in Yemen earlier today.

[He later issued the following statement:  The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms the attack against the police academy in Sana'a today.   He expresses his condolences to the victims' families and wishes a swift recovery to all those wounded.  The perpetrators and those who planned for this attack must be brought to justice.  The Secretary-General reiterates his previous calls to all Yemenis to work together to fight terrorism and to bring security and stability to Yemen.]

\*\*Palestine

Many of you have been asking over the last couple of days about the documents transmitted by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations relating to the accession of Palestine to 16 multilateral treaties in respect of which the Secretary-General is the depository, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

I can say that, in conformity with the relevant international rules and his practice as a depositary, the Secretary-General has ascertained that the instruments received were in due and proper form before accepting them for deposit, and he has informed all States concerned accordingly through the circulation of depositary notifications.  The information is public and posted on the website of the UN Treaty Section.

This is an administrative function performed by the Secretariat as part of the Secretary-General’s responsibilities as depositary for these treaties.  It is important to emphasize that it is for States to make their own determination with respect to any legal issues raised by instruments circulated by the Secretary-General.

\*\*Ebola

A quick note on Ebola:  Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the new Head of the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), was in Liberia today.  In a press conference, he stressed that there had been a lot of progress in the fight against Ebola, noting that Lofa County — the former epicenter of the outbreak — has been Ebola free for eight consecutive weeks.  However, he said, now is not the time to ease up on our efforts and that zero cases — in Liberia and the entire region — must be everyone’s goal.

\*\*South Sudan

From South Sudan, the UN Mission in that country (UNMISS) reports that there was shelling and firing close to Bentiu in Unity State yesterday morning.  The Mission noted as many as 43 explosions, as well as instances of small arms fire, not far from its compound outside of Bentiu, where it is protecting some 43,000 internally displaced persons.  After the shelling stopped, peacekeepers conducted a patrol to Bentiu and Rubkona to assess the security situation.  They said that markets in both towns were open, although with little civilian presence.

And on Monday, an UNMISS patrol in Rubkona County received reports that recent fighting has displaced more than 50,000 civilians in Bentiu.  The Mission also received reports of fighting between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and Opposition forces in Unity Oil Field area on Monday.  The Mission calls for an end to the fighting and for the leadership of both sides to immediately agree to an inclusive, power sharing arrangement to begin a transitional phase of governance and a road map that addresses the root causes of this conflict.

\*\*Refugees

Our colleagues at the UN refugee agency said today that the wars in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere had uprooted an estimated 5.5 million people during the first six months of 2014, signalling a further rise in the number of people forcibly displaced.

UNHCR's [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] new "Mid-Year Trends 2014" report says that of the 5.5 million people who were newly displaced, 1.4 million fled across international borders becoming refugees, while the rest were displaced within their own countries.  Syrians, for the first time, have become the largest refugee population, overtaking Afghans, who had held that position for more than three decades. At more than 3 million people as of June 2014, Syrian refugees now account for 23 per cent of all refugees being helped by UNHCR worldwide.  After Syria and Afghanistan, the leading countries of refugees are Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Iraq.

Pakistan, which hosts 1.6 million Afghan refugees, remains the biggest host country in absolute terms.  Other countries with large refugee populations are Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Chad.  There’s more information from UNHCR on their website.

\*\*Syria

UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund] and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched a winter cash assistance plan today to provide 41,000 vulnerable Syrian refugee children under the age of 14 in Za’atari and Azraq refugee camps with 14 Jordanian dinars each, to allow their families to get them winter clothes.  The one-time cash assistance from UNICEF will target children from nearly 13,000 vulnerable families in the two camps through the existing WFP electronic food voucher programme — otherwise known as e-cards, which we talked about here.  The UNICEF assistance can be used to buy winter clothes, such as boots, gloves, trousers, coats and scarves at WFP-contracted supermarkets in the camps until the end of January.

\*\*Appointment

A personnel announcement for today:  the Secretary-General announces today the [appointment](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sga1535.doc.htm) of Atul Khare of India as Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Department of Field Support.  He will succeed Ameerah Haq of Bangladesh, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for her commitment and dedicated service to the United Nations.  The Secretary-General is particularly appreciative of Ms. Haq’s exemplary leadership in the Department of Field Support.  Most recently, Mr. Khare has served as Assistant Secretary-General leading the Change Management Team (2011-2012) and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and Deputy Head of the Department from 2010 to 2011.  His bio is in my office.

\*\*Press Conferences

A couple of notes for tomorrow:  my guest is Amina Mohammed tomorrow, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning.  And as a reminder, the Secretary-General will speak to the General Assembly tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m., and he will have a short press encounter with all of you, or all of you who wish to be there, after that in front of the General Assembly stakeout.  Mr. Klein?

\*\*Questions and Answers

Question:  Yes.  Just with reference to the Secretary‑General's statement this morning regarding the attack in Paris:  Several world leaders, of course, including the President of France, [United States] President [Barack] Obama, have explicitly referred to it as a terrorist attack.  And I'm wondering if it was inadvertent or if there was any intention in the Secretary‑General's statement not to reference the attack as a terrorist attack?  He said it was a crime and deplored it but…

Spokesman:  I think, you know, it's clear that an attack like this, which is meant to silence a media outlet, one that has stood for freedom of expression is an act of terror.  Yes, sir.  Yes?

Question:  Thank you, Stéphane.  Before I ask you a question, I just want to make a short point of reference for the record that the media that I told to Secretary‑General… advise him today, that was raided by the police in Sarajevo is independent media klix.ba that portal, K‑L‑I‑X.ba.  And my question is now whether the… what is actually the procedure when somebody comes from — totally different topic — and somebody come from the Ebola region from Africa, works for UN what is the procedure for them in the next couple of weeks or days?  Are they under the special observance, self‑observance?

Spokesman:  We follow the procedures required by the host country, which includes reporting and checking of temperature twice a day.  The Secretary‑General and all our colleagues who came back from West Africa recently were briefed by CDC staff members upon return… by CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, upon return at the airport and they have been checking in twice day on their temperature, and that includes the Secretary‑General.  And we're following the requirements put in place here.

Question:  For how many days?

Spokesman:  I think is 20 days, if I'm not mistaken; I think it's about 20 days or 21 days.  Yes, sir?

Question:  Sure, Stéphane.  I want to ask about Libya and Sri Lanka.  But, first, I just wanted to ask you something.  These comments that the Secretary‑General made about *Charlie Hebdo* incident, I wanted to know why they weren't… why his appearance wasn't put in the UN Media Alert that many rely on to know… and I ask because, sadly, this probably won't be the last incident like this.  When your office knows that he's going to speak on an event like that, do you put it in the Media Alert, or you don't put it in the Media Alert?

Spokesman:  Well, I think, as we are not… we can't predict what will happen in the future.  This had been scheduled yesterday as just a meet-and-greet, and a wishing of best wishes for the journalists.  This morning, as you all saw, there was this horrendous attack in Paris.  The Secretary‑General expressed a wish to say something on that topic.  He did.  The journalists were… every journalist was clearly notified through the [public address] system that goes out throughout the building.  It was squawked at about 9:45 a.m.  I'm sorry.  And I know you were standing outside.  You were invited to join in.  You know, I think we did all we could to do… to act quickly to… there's often requests by journalists here for the Secretary‑General to react on the record quickly.  I think we did that.  His remarks were put out by text quickly after that.  They were put out by UNTV on video.  I think we're as transparent as we humanly can be.

Question:  My question is… I appreciate all this.  My question is about the Media Alert.  The State Department, when they know the Secretary of State is going to say something, they say to journalists:  “He’s going to say something.”  I also wanted to know why…?

Spokesman:  Matthew.  You asked me question.  Let me finish.  As I said, this was decided at the last minute for him to speak out on this issue and obviously make it very much of a news event.  The quickest way do it was just to do a quick squawk throughout the building.  And I apologize for anyone who didn't hear it.

Question:  And it wasn't in his daily schedule either.  I wanted to ask you this.  I'm noticing today's daily schedule has something called Rosen Partners, which maybe you can explain.  Can you say what that meeting is?  That's listed publicly, but this event wasn't.

Spokesman:  This was part of his internal walkabout throughout the building.  Matthew…

Correspondent:  I want to encourage you to put things in the Media Alert in the future.  I would appreciate that.

Question:  Could I add something?

Spokesman:  You can add whatever you want, but you need to use the microphone.

Question:  What I wondered about was, if it was to meet and greet journalists, shouldn't that be in the Media Alert?  Because that's not only UNCA [United Nations Correspondents Association] journalists but that's all the journalists.

Spokesman:  I trust that UNCA alerts all journalists that are accredited in the building.

Correspondent:  No, they don't.

Spokesman:  Let's move on to more newsy items.  We can come back to in-house at the end.  I'll come back to you, Matthew.  I guess I won't come back to you, because nobody else wants to ask a question.  Okay.  Linda.  Go ahead.  Please, microphone.

Question:  Excuse me if you've already addressed this, but customarily, the Secretary‑General goes down to [Washington, D.C,] to meet with Government officials in the early part of the year, and I was wondering if anything is scheduled or you think will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

Spokesman:  I have nothing to announce.  I have no Washington visit to announce today, but he's, you know, often in touch with officials from our host country.  Mr. Lee and then we'll come back.

Question:  Excellent.  On Libya, I wanted to ask you, the “official Government” there, at least one that I believe the Secretary‑General met with or the one that's recognized by the UN, has announced that nationals of Syria, Sudan and Palestinians are not allowed in.  They've also threatened to shoot at Sudanese planes and this seems like a pretty… I guess I don't know what it seems.  Is it newsy enough for you?  What is the UN’s response to the Government of Libya barring three countries’ nationals and threatening to shoot planes of another country?

Spokesman:  I will look into that report.  I had not seen that.  Yes, ma'am?

Question:  Thank you, Stéphane.  Yesterday when Angela Kane talked to reporters, she seemed to suggest that the third report of the OPCW [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] fact-finding mission was publicly available.  Is that so and if so, where can it be found?

Spokesman:  If it is so, it would be on the OPCW website, but we can also check for you.  I do want to… before I take another question, I was given a readout of the Secretary‑General's phone call with Joseph Kabila, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.  The Secretary‑General spoke to him earlier today.  The Secretary-General and the President reviewed the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the Secretary-General reiterated that the FDLR [Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda] has failed to deliver on its promise to disarm and that the deadline of 2 January had expired without significant results.  The Secretary-General called for decisive action against the armed group.  The Secretary-General welcomed the President’s assurance that his Government was ready to take action and noted that MONUSCO, the UN [Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo], was ready to engage with the FARDC [Congolese Armed Forces].  Anne?

Question:  Yes.  Concerning the 15 December 2014 report on deteriorating human rights situation in eastern Ukraine and Crimea issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), were there any official UN press briefings that followed this report by Ukrainian Ambassador [Yuriy] Sergeyev, Mr. [Ivan] Šimonović or any other UN officials?

Spokesman:  I can't speak for the Ukraine mission, but Mr. Šimonović, if I'm not mistaken, had a press briefing in Kyiv at the time of the release of the report.

Question:  Thank you, Stéphane.  In Kosovo… has been circulating a petition signed from over 100,000 women and the substance of it is Secretary-General's report last year for sexual violence and Kosovo was not… in last year's Secretary‑General's report on sexual violence, Kosovo was not included.  Though, in Kosovo during the war, were more than 20,000 women systematically raped.  I had not the pleasure, but opportunity to meet some of them and they really are very disappointed… furious why nobody is doing anything.  I had asked Farhan [Haq] a while ago for an official answer, why Kosovo was not included in that.  Can we hope that…?

Spokesman:  Sure.  I will check… I will check on you… I will check for and you get back to you thank you.  Ronda?  Your microphone, please.

Question:  Yeah.  Thank you.  I have a question about the reports that get made by the UN under the Secretariat to the Security Council.  Is there an obligation to be neutral in a situation?  For example, the report by the Assistant Secretary‑General of Political Affairs to the Security Council in September… in December was about the Sony hacking, said that the FBI [United States Federal Bureau of Investigation] had accused North Korea, but has the UN looked into that?  Because that's a very contested situation.  And then, similarly, Mr. Šimonović made a report and in his report, he listed a whole number of problem… of things about North Korea.  When we spoke to him afterwards in the stakeout, he said that none of that is evidence for a court of law.  But, he didn't say that as part of his presentation.  Is there any obligation to say… to make clear what the reality is in terms of real evidence or in terms of whether the UN…?

Spokesman:  I think, you know, first of all, the Security Council is not a court of law.  UN officials are asked to report to the Council, report observations, and that's what they do.  They report upon requests of the Security Council on situations around the world.  Not everyone may agree with what we report, but we stand by our reporting.

Question:  But is there an obligation of neutrality?

Spokesman:  I don't think it's an issue of neutrality.  It's an issue of fairness and reporting how you… in the best possible manner.  Yes, Erol, and then Matthew?

Question:  Stéphane, just to put a little more light:  Mr. Secretary‑General said before, earlier, that this is going to be a very important year for the humanity and he mentioned post-2015 agenda.  To clarify a little bit, what are the, at least few priorities of these, of the [Secretary-General] for this year?

Spokesman:  Well, I think maybe it was one of your colleagues asked yesterday.  The Secretary-General will speak tomorrow to the General Assembly on the year ahead.  I don't want to steal his thunder, but obviously, we're already seeing some of the issues we're going to have to deal with very early in the year, whether it's issues of terrorism, development, post‑2015, issues of refugees and war.  We're just seeing the highest number ever of people displaced by violence.  So, I think those are a number of issues obviously the Secretary‑General will talk about.  Mr. Lee, then Mr. Carpenter?

Question:  I want to ask still about Sri Lanka, but since you've brought up [the Democratic Republic of the Congo], I wanted to ask you this.  I've seen the strategic review, MONUSCO strategic review, prepared by the Secretary‑General, and it has this line about Minova, where it says too many perpetrators, particularly senior-ranking, FARDC and Police Nationale Congolese officers are not prosecuted, this includes FARDC elements involved in mass rapes in Minova.  And so, what I'm wondering is, if it's the Secretary's position that senior-ranking FARDC people are responsible for those rapes and weren't prosecuted, has any unit, as under the human rights due diligence policy, ever had any assistance suspended to it?  Because I thought the UN had concluded it was the best they could do and so continued to support the two units involved.  Now that I see this, I'm wondering, was there some silent suspension of aid or is there a contradiction between this statement and…?

Spokesman:  I don't think there's a contradiction.  I think the peacekeeping Mission reviews constantly the kind of support and assistance they bring to different parts of the FARDC.  And I think the Mission and its human rights component have spoken out against the actions of some of these soldiers.  Mr. Carpenter?

Question:  Stéphane, this UN refugee agency, the numbers on the refugees last year, do they also make projections of what they expect the refugees to be this coming year?

Spokesman:  I don't believe so.  But, you should check their report.  It's on their website.  Stefano?

Question:  Yeah.  About still freedom of the press, today, of course, was probably the most horrible day, but the CPJ, the Committee to Protect Journalists, just recently published a report where it states that the last four or five years were the worst ever for journalists killed around the world.  And so, in this… again, it's probably a repetition of a question before, but in those goals, the Millennium Goals, how much weight is on the freedom of press of expression to protect in any country?  And you don't need also to be killed.  We know that recently in countries there have been journalists arrested and so on.

Spokesman:  You can raise with Ms. Mohammed tomorrow.  Obviously, you should look at the synthesis report.  The Member States are still in discussion with the goals and their key indicators, but it is clear that for any society to flourish, there is a need for the freedom of the press.  Nizar?

Question:  Stéphane, the situation in Bahrain continues… the tension is continuing to rise.  Does the Secretary-General call for the release of Sheikh Salman and anything about the dialogue between the different various groups there?  Does the Secretary-General encourage any dialogue?

Spokesman:  The dialogue between whom?  I'm sorry.

Correspondent:  Between the opposition and the State.

Spokesman:  I think, you know, we've spoken out repeatedly on Bahrain and I think I told you, yes, the Secretary‑General has called for the release and the Secretary‑General continues to look… monitor the situation and fully backs what the High Commissioner has already said.  Matthew?

Question:  Sure.  Thanks.  I know you… I wanted to ask you this about the elections in Sri Lanka because the Secretary‑General had earlier made this call to G.L. Peiris.  Now, with the election right around the corner, one of the opposition supporters has now been killed.  And I wanted to know, are there any… do you have any… is he satisfied since this call this this election will be free and fair?  People say the north of the country is full of military and there's now death from an attack…

Spokesman:  I think… it's not a question of the Secretary‑General being satisfied.  It's a question of the Secretary‑General continuing to reiterate his call to the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the elections go about in a peaceful manner and are fully inclusive.  Ronda?

Question:  My question is about the office that the UN is setting up in Seoul, [Republic of] Korea, about human rights and trying to get evidence about human rights violations in North Korea.  And we asked Mr. Šimonović about that, because in South Korea, there's a national security law, and it's illegal to say anything in support of North Korea.  And so, the question is, what kind of impartiality can that office have to actually evaluate evidence when it's only going to be taking essentially…?

Spokesman:  You know, I'd have to take…  I'm not fully aware of the mandate of that office.  I'd have to take a look at it…

Question:  Could you let me know?

Spokesman:  Yes.

Correspondent:  I appreciate it.

Spokesman:  Great.  Thank you all.  We'll see you tomorrow.