

## By Invitation



Miroslav Lajčák

## A New Approach to Peace

When the United Nations was created, its founders envisioned a different kind of world.

A world in which disputes were resolved in meeting rooms and not battlefields. A world in which wars were stopped before they broke out. A world that didn't wait for lives to be lost before springing into action.

But violent conflicts are on the rise in many parts of the world today. They're becoming more drawn out, complex and deadly. Civilians are no longer killed in cross-fire; they are now the targets of direct attacks. We are also seeing an unprecedented number of people leaving their homes, out of fear and desperation.

And that is why the UN needs a new approach to peace.

I will convene a High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in New York on 24 and 25 April. It will bring world leaders together to focus on conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue and diplomacy. This is part of a wider effort by UN Member States to help our Organisation do better at fostering peace.

And when I say peace, I'm talking about the kind of peace that can be taken for granted. The kind of peace that won't disappear at the next election cycle. The kind of peace that is measured not in months or years, but in generations.

This is what we call "Sustaining Peace". And this is what we should be working for – rather than scrambling for solutions, once conflict has broken out.

Some might say that true lasting peace is impossible in certain parts of the world. But it is not. I have seen this firsthand. When Montenegro split from Serbia, peace was not a given. In fact, some people were predicting serious violence. But through intense diplomatic efforts, and real political will, peace persevered. And it has lasted – with no signs that it will waver in the future.

Last month, I travelled to western Colombia and was inspired to see indigenous communities working with the UN to build peace through strengthening social bonds. I was inspired to see villagers, some of whom had suffered through more than 50 years of war, excited about their futures. One woman told me about her people's determination not to slide back into conflict.

These are the examples of Sustaining Peace, which are taking place now – all around the world. We may have the bulk of our discussions in New York. But they should be led by experience from the ground. We need to highlight what the real peacebuilders are doing – from those running women's peace huts in Liberia, to those organising mediation workshops in Kyrgyzstan. That's why the High-Level Meeting will pool actors from across different countries, sectors and societies, and allow them to share their insights.

Of course, it won't matter that everyone buys into Sustaining Peace if there are no funds to make it happen. We need more investment in prevention. When conflict causes societies to collapse, social fabric tears. Buildings are destroyed, and no one fixes them. Salaries stop getting paid. Water stops flowing out of taps.

So then we spend money on rebuilding – but so much more than what we'd spend on preventing conflict in the first place. Aside from the suffering that we're failing to avert, that just doesn't make financial sense. Increasing investment in even a handful of countries can result in billions of dollars of savings for the international community.

At the end of the day, what we can't forget is that the UN was founded for peace. That's what its flag should stand for. Its success in preventing conflict should be the norm – not the exception.

It must be the world's broker for peace.

(Miroslav Lajčák is the President of the United Nations General Assembly.)

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

# Terrorist wedding undermined PR efforts: UAE minister

## Dubai

UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash has hit out over Qatar's Prime Minister recent attendance of a terror suspect son's wedding saying Doha undermined the efforts of dozens of law and PR firms it hired to polish its image.

"The attendance of the Qatari prime minister during the marriage of the son of the terrorist al-Qaeda financier Abdulrahman al-Nuaimi, and in his presence, has undermined the efforts of dozens of law firms and public relations companies in Washington, and stressed that the Qatar crisis is based on Doha's support of extremism and terrorism," Gargash tweeted yesterday.

"Doha cannot get out of its crisis through public relations companies and waste its money on polishing its image in international conferences. It must change its policy of supporting extremism, terrorism and destabilizing the countries of the region," Gargash added.

"How can a country that seeks to convince Western capitals that it has renounced its past practices in support of extremism and terrorism allow official attendance and public celebration of a person who is designated on their own terror list? Many questions cast doubt on the credibility of the Qatari rhetoric directed at Washington and Western capitals," he asked in another tweet. (Al Arabiya)



UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash

## Yemen forces clash with jihadists after Red Cross worker killed



The governor of Tazeh has launched an operation against jihadists in the city after a Red Cross worker was shot and killed while riding in an ICRC vehicle

## Aden

Pro-government soldiers and jihadists clashed yesterday in Yemen's southern city of Tazeh following the killing of an aid worker with the International Committee of the Red Cross, police said.

Fighting in the city's Jahmaliah district came after the governor of Tazeh launched an operation against jihadists that were behind the murder of the ICRC employee over the weekend.

Jahmaliah is controlled by pro-government forces but there is a jihadist presence in the area, a police officer told AFP.

A large portion of Tazeh, Yemen's third-largest city,

is held by pro-government fighters but the entrances to the city are controlled by Huthi militia.

Fierce clashes broke out after the operation was launched yesterday morning, according to the officer, who was unable to provide further details.

On Sunday, Tazeh governor Amin Ahmad Mahmud, loyal to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, created a special force of police and army units tasked with launching an operation against jihadists who killed the ICRC employee on Saturday.

The Lebanese aid worker, Hanna Lahoud, was shot in Tazeh by unidentified assailants. (AFP)

## Van runs over Toronto pedestrians

### Toronto

A white van killed at least two people and injured seven when its driver plowed through a busy Toronto sidewalk on a sunny Monday afternoon, according to police, hospital officials and a Reuters witness.

The incident occurred just before 1:30 p.m. (1730 GMT) as large crowds of office

workers were on lunch breaks. At least one witness described the driver as appearing to deliberately target victims on his roughly mile-long (1.6 km-long) rampage. The driver was in custody, police said.

Police in Canada's largest city initially said eight to 10 people had been injured but later said it was unclear

exactly how many had been hurt or the extent of their injuries.

A Reuters witness said there were at least two bodies at the site of the incident. At least seven people were brought to nearby Sunnybrook Health Services Centre's trauma center, the hospital said on Twitter.

It was not immediately clear

if the incident was a deliberate act by the driver or a traffic mishap in a mixed commercial and residential area.

The crash occurred at the corner of Yonge Street and Finch Avenue in the north end of the city, where a van drove onto the sidewalk and hit several people, said Toronto Police spokeswoman Meaghan Gray. (Reuters)