



20 October 2014 – “Human rights are currently under greater pressure than they have been in a long while,” says UN High Commissioner Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, referring to the twin plagues of Ebola, which thrives at the intersection of chronic poverty and failures of adequate public services, and ISIL, the antithesis of human rights.

The UN High Commissioner expressed his deep concern while explaining the grim financial situation [OHCHR](#) is facing. It is estimated that for 2014, the Office will be at least \$25 million short of their needs although most of their funding depends on voluntary contributions.

“This comes at a time when our operations are stretched to breaking point in a world that seems to be lurching from crisis to ever more dangerous crisis,” Zeid explains.

Human rights are not an airy ideal

Current crises such as Ebola and ISIL didn't however arrive out of the blue. They fomented quietly, neglected by a world that knew they existed but misread their cruel potential.

Additionally, we are seeing the largest number of forcibly displaced people since World War II. Such refugee and migratory movements result mainly from human rights violations, including those that occur during conflicts, as well as persecution, discrimination, and poverty.

One mid-sized crisis averted would pay back the budget for decades to come

This also explains why much of the UN Human Rights Office's work is not just about intervening in crises or investigating allegations of abuses, but even more about contributing to prevention of violations, conflicts, and spread of diseases.

"When human rights go wrong, the price the people of the world pay in bloodshed, in wrecked economies and paying for humanitarian aid is simply titanic – in the tens if not hundreds of billions," the High Commissioner stated.

But according to Zeid, most Governments of countries with huge economies are devoting very little to the international human rights system, despite "talking loudly and proudly" about human rights in their foreign policy.

"They created the international human rights system and they should ensure we have the necessary resources to support it."

Did you know?

- The **amount spent on iPhones** during the 12 months ending 30 June 2014, would fund the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for **391 years**.
- The entire **annual budget** was the equivalent of **one day of iPhone sales** during that period.
- A single **new highway bridge often costs as much or more** than the overall OHCHR annual budget of around US\$ 250 million.
- Last year, people living in Switzerland **paid over 10 times** the amount allocated to OHCHR **on chocolate**.