



**UNITED NATIONS
PRESS RELEASE**

Statement by Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Jennifer Welsh, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, on the situation in Yemen

(New York, - 16 February 2016) Amidst reports of continuing intense airstrikes and ground fighting in Yemen, including in the capital Sana'a, the Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect expressed concern at the heavy toll on civilians of the conflict in Yemen.

The two Special Advisers noted that “One year after the escalation of the conflict in Yemen, the world is witnessing the erosion of respect for international humanitarian and human rights law on a daily basis in the country. Civilians and civilian infrastructures continue to be targeted by all parties to the conflict, to the point that the attention of the international media has largely become saturated. We call on the international community - and notably on the Security Council - to take action to end this unacceptable situation”.

The Special Advisers underlined that serious abuses and violations of human rights law and of international humanitarian law by all sides and their allied forces have been extensively documented, including by the United Nations. Evidence gathered suggests that some of these violations may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

“We acknowledge that the parties have expressed regret at the number of civilian casualties and have committed to the principle of accountability,” the Special Advisers observed. “We now expect that commitments by the Yemeni authorities and by Saudi Arabia to conduct credible and independent investigations into all alleged violations and provide reparations to victims will be swiftly implemented. It is imperative that the international community also gives immediate consideration to the most effective means of supporting this goal, including the possibility of establishing an international independent and impartial mechanism to support accountability in Yemen”.

Noting the co-operation between State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Saudi-led coalition, the Special Advisers requested that these State Parties lead by example by fulfilling one of the treaty’s main purposes, which is to control arms flows to actors that may use them in ways that breach international humanitarian law.

Finally, Special Advisers Dieng and Welsh warned that the impact of the violence in Yemen is already spreading across the border with Saudi Arabia and within the broader region. They concluded: “The international community cannot afford to underestimate the risk of a spill-over of a conflict that is fuelling religious and sectarian divide. We must, collectively, make the protection of the civilian populations of Yemen our primary consideration if we are to avoid a catastrophe in this region”.

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For media queries please contact:

Davide Zaru

Political Affairs Officer

Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/>

Phone: +1 212 963 3573

Email: zaru@un.org