



*[For immediate release]*

**Statement of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on the situation in Syria**

(New York, 20 December 2012) Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, warned today of the increasing risk of sectarian violence in Syria.

“I am deeply concerned that entire communities risk paying the price for crimes committed by the Syrian Government,” said Mr. Dieng. As the situation in Syria deteriorates further, there is a growing risk that civilian communities, including Alawite and other minorities perceived to be associated with the Government, its security forces, militias and allies could be subject to large scale reprisal attacks.

“I urge all parties to the conflict to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, which prohibits the targeting of individuals or groups based on religious or ethnic identity as well as attacks against civilians not taking direct part in hostilities.”

“I also call on all actors to condemn hate speech that could constitute incitement to violence against communities based on their religious affiliation,” stated Mr. Dieng. “Reprisal attacks, hate speech and incitement to violence against a particular community have, in the past, been precursors to serious and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.”

“I urge armed opposition forces to protect and respect the rights of all individuals in their custody, as well as civilians residing in territory under their control, without discrimination,” stated Mr. Dieng.

“The Government of Syria is manifestly failing to protect its populations. The international community must act on the commitment made by all Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, including their incitement,” said Mr. Dieng.

“I also reiterate the calls of the international community for the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and stress the importance of taking steps now to facilitate future transitional justice processes in Syria to reduce the risk of retribution, promote reconciliation and provide all communities with a sense of justice and dignity.”

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For media queries please contact:

Mallory Mroz  
Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect  
<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/>  
Phone: +1 917-367-4961 Email: [mroz@un.org](mailto:mroz@un.org)