



For immediate release

Statement by Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on Mission to Burundi

(Bujumbura, 30 May 2015) At the conclusion of a two-day visit to Burundi, Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, warned of increased tensions and the risk of further violence, especially in Bujumbura unless all parties engage in open and constructive dialogue to resolve the crisis and take all possible measures to calm tensions. He urged the Government to guarantee respect for human rights, including freedom of opinion and expression, noting that the absence of independent voices through non-State media was contributing to tensions.

During his visit to Burundi, Special Adviser Dieng held meetings with the President of Burundi and senior government officials, political party leaders, civil society, including representatives of the media, the international community and other key actors to discuss the escalating tensions in Burundi in the pre-electoral period and the risk that what has been primarily a political crisis could escalate to a level that would pose a high risk of atrocity crimes being committed.

Given Burundi's history of ethnic violence and in light of ongoing fears of attacks based on ethnicity, the Special Adviser strongly encouraged Burundian parties to use their influence to prevent the spread of false rumours and any action that could increase the risk of violence against individuals or groups on the basis of their identity, including political affiliation, religious and ethnic identity. Special Adviser Dieng emphasized the critical importance of ensuring respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law, particularly during periods of tension, in accordance with international human rights obligations.

The Special Adviser recalled that the primary responsibility for protecting populations from atrocity crimes lies with the Government of Burundi. He warned that those responsible for serious human rights violations and atrocity crimes would be held accountable by competent national and/or international judicial bodies including, if relevant, by the International Criminal Court as the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, stressed in her statement on Burundi on 8 May 2015.

Special Adviser Dieng reiterated the continued commitment of the international community, including regional actors, to support Burundi to secure peace and create conducive conditions for free and transparent elections.