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Statement of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, in response to the escalation of islamophobia and homophobia following the events in Orlando

[New York, 16 June 2016] The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, condemned the criminal attack that took place at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, United States, on 12 June, in which 49 people were killed and 53 injured. He offered his sympathy for the victims and expressed grave concern at the outpouring of hatred, homophobia and Islamophobia that followed this attack, which targeted the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) community.

Vitriolic messages were addressed at Muslims, immigrants and the LGBT community, in particular. “At a time when there was greatest need for sympathy and solidarity, I was appalled by the immediate and shameful efforts of some political and religious leaders to manipulate and politicise the events in Orlando to fuel fear, intolerance and hatred. I was particularly sickened to hear religious leaders commend the killings of members of the LGBT community”. Mr. Dieng referred to statements by some religious leaders, including one who labelled those killed in Orlando as “disgusting perverts and pedophiles” and calling on governments worldwide “to execute LGBT people”. Mr. Dieng also criticized calls by some politicians to cite radical Islam as the cause of the attack in Orlando, to ban Muslims from the United States and to label all Muslims as “terrorists”.

“Religious and sexual minorities are subjected to discrimination, human rights violations and violence worldwide, including in peaceful and democratic societies”, Mr. Dieng stated. “However, they are most vulnerable during difficult times.” “It is simply unacceptable that influential leaders, including political and religious leaders, spread the kind of dangerous homophobic and islamophobic messages that we have seen in public discourse and the media this week,” he said.

Special Adviser Dieng stressed that the deliberate spread of misinformation and the manipulation of people’s fears and concerns for political gain can only contribute to feeding division and hatred. He reminded political and religious leaders that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is prohibited under international human rights law as well as by the legislations of many countries.

Mr. Dieng reiterated his call to political and religious leaders to publicly counter lies, prejudice and fear, to act responsibly and with respect for both international and national laws.

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