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Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide following OHCHR's report on the situation in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar

(New York, 6 February 2017) The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, stated that he was shocked and alarmed to read the accounts of serious human rights violations being committed against Muslim Rohingya in northern Rakhine State by Myanmar's security forces, as set out in the report published on 3 February by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). According to the findings of the report, human rights violations committed by the security forces include mass gang-rape, extra judicial killings – including of babies and young children - brutal beatings and disappearances. These attacks have taken place in the context of an escalation of violence in northern Rakhine State since border security posts were attacked by armed assailants in early October 2016.

There have been allegations that security forces were committing serious human rights violations against the civilian population of northern Rakhine State from the very beginning of the recent escalation of violence. "I and many others have been urging the authorities to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into these allegations. The investigation conducted by OHCHR gives further credibility to those accounts and describes a level of dehumanization and cruelty that is revolting, and unacceptable. This must stop right now!"

The Special Adviser welcomed the Government's commitment to investigate the matter immediately. The commission previously appointed by the Government to investigate allegations of human rights violations in northern Rakhine state, which was led by Vice-President U Myint Swe, reported just a few weeks ago that it had found no evidence, or insufficient evidence, of any wrongdoing by Government forces.

"I am concerned that the Government Commission, which had unhindered access to the location of the incidents, found nothing to substantiate the claims, while OHCHR, which was not given access to the area, found an overwhelming number of testimonies and other forms of evidence through interviews with refugees who had fled to a neighbouring country" stated the Special Adviser. "The existing Commission is not a credible option to undertake the new investigation. I urge that any investigation be conducted by a truly independent and impartial body that includes international observers. If the Government wants the international community and regional actors to believe in their willingness to resolve the matter, they must act responsibly and demonstrate their sincerity."

According to the Special Adviser, "There is no more time to wait. All of this is happening against the background of very deeply rooted and long-standing discriminatory practices and policies against the Rohingya Muslims and a failure to put in place conditions that would support peaceful coexistence among the different communities in Rakhine State. If people are being persecuted based on their identity and killed, tortured, raped and forcibly transferred in a widespread or systematic manner, this could amount to crimes against humanity, and in fact be

the precursor of other egregious international crimes. The Government has a responsibility to protect its populations against these atrocious and punishable acts.”

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