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Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on the situation in Hudaydah, Yemen

(New York, 14 June 2018) The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, expressed grave concern at the potentially disastrous impact on civilians of the military offensive against the port of Hudaydah, launched on 13 June by pro-government forces backed by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE), against Houthi fighters who have been holding the port.

Yemen is currently considered to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 10.4 million people at risk of famine and Hudaydah is the entry point for seventy per cent of humanitarian aid. In addition to the destruction that the offensive is likely to cause – and the risk to the estimated 600,000 civilians who live in and around the port - closing the port for any length of time could have a disastrous impact on the ability of humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance to a population that desperately needs it.

“Starvation of civilians as a method of war is a war crime and was condemned by the Security Council in resolution 2417 of 24 May 2018. It seems that the first test of this resolution is Yemen: the Yemeni port of Hudaydah is a lifeline for the delivery of aid and the Coalition's air strikes can kill many more people over time through famine and hunger when damaging such civilian infrastructure.”

Special Adviser Dieng fully supports the call by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, for all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and to find a political solution to the conflict, stressing that there can be no military solution.

He called on the parties to uphold their obligations under international law in the conduct of hostilities, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. “Attacks that are indiscriminate or directly target civilians or civilian objects may constitute war crimes. All the parties to the conflict, as well as the international community, have a responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes in Yemen.”

The Special Adviser called for accountability for alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the conflict in Yemen.

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