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## **Statement by Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the devastating one-year of fighting in Sudan**

**(15 April 2024)** – The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, strongly reiterates her call for peace in Sudan and for the international community to not let the Sudan crisis be forgotten, as this crisis is marking one year. “One year on, violence continues, and the suffering continues. The fighting has taken the lives of more than 14,000 people and injured thousands more. Millions of civilians, including children, remain exposed to violence. Women and girls continue to be exposed to rampant rape and other forms of sexual violence. Five million people are on the brink of famine. Over 8.5 million people were forced to flee, of which 1.8 million have crossed borders, desperately seeking protection. The numbers are staggering, and yet the action in response is limited. Meanwhile, the fighting rages on, without a sign of stopping. One year on, we are no closer to peace than when the crisis started. This is devastating. This is unacceptable,” she stated.

“During the last twelve months, despite multiple alarms being raised over prevailing signs of genocide and related crimes at risk of commission, or being committed, grave human rights violations and abuses continue to be reported against innocent civilian populations in front of our eyes. The warring parties continue their blatant and persistent disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law, and continue disrespecting, widely, their own expressed commitment in the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan of 11 May 2023,” the Special Adviser deplored, also echoing the strong call by the Secretary-General for an immediate ceasefire to prevent further violence.

In particular, Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu decries the repeated exploitation of ethnic and racial identity as basis for such vicious attacks, most particularly by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their allied militias against the Masalit and other non-Arab communities in the Darfur region, already marked by a decades-old cycle of violence, including over natural resources. The Special Adviser also expresses strong concern at reports of an imminent attack on El Fasher, North Darfur, which would have devastating consequences. In this respect, the Special Adviser recalls her previous statements from 8 September 2022, 3 November 2022, 13 June 2023, 5 September 2023, 14 November 2023, and 21 December 2023, in which she alerted of the presence of risk factors for genocide and related crimes. These include situation of armed conflict or other forms of instability, motives or incentives, capacity to commit crimes, record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, signs of an intent to

destroy in whole or in part a protected group and patterns of discrimination against protected groups, among others.

“People were attacked and are being attacked for who they are. They were also targeted and continue being targeted with words, derogatory and dehumanizing language and hate speech, used to incite discrimination and violence. Such verbal attacks have happened and are happening on social media platforms, allegedly alongside information operations supported by external actors. Messages of hatred and incitement to violence constitute powerful weapons. They are loaded and they are triggered with impunity. We have seen this across time and space. In Sudan, hate speech and incitement have entrenched longstanding divisions along identity lines, have created the conditions for, and have triggered, vicious violence. This continues happening before our eyes and has engulfed the entire country,” the Special Adviser stressed.

Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu calls on all those in position of influence to strengthen all possible diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to address this crisis and to create a conducive environment for a peaceful and durable resolution of the conflict. Also, praising admirable existing community-level efforts aimed at protecting vulnerable populations and promoting inter-communal reconciliation in Sudan, which continue in spite of sustained challenges, the Special Adviser urges all possible support to those who are working tirelessly to give peace a chance in the areas where such effort is most needed. “The international community, including key regional institutions like the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, must not only advance diplomatic efforts to find an end to this crisis. They must also support and join efforts to provide victims with a real opportunity to rebuild their lives, to speak out against hate and the incitement to violence, and to work together towards real and lasting peace.” Recalling her meetings with Darfurian refugees in Chad in November 2023, the Special Adviser emphasized the need to render all possible support to those who remain in the most vulnerable position.

Finally, the Special Adviser recalls her unwavering position on the imperative for full accountability to break the horrific cycle of violence in Sudan. “All violations and abuses must be immediately investigated. We need to demonstrate to the perpetrators that their acts will not go unpunished, which in itself is essential to prevent further violations. The impunity in the past is directly contributing to violence in the present and, if not halted, will plant the seeds for violence in the future. Refugees recently arrived in refugee camps in Chad, who fled Sudan as a result of the ongoing violence, find themselves next to refugees who fled Sudan twenty years ago. This speaks to the unacceptable cyclical nature of a violence that must be halted urgently. No effort can be spared to break this cycle. We must protect those who continue to be at risks of attack. We must provide the victims and survivors with the justice they deserve.”

“We are past the moment of urgency, and many lives have already been tragically and viciously taken, but we can still stop the violence of the present and halt the fighting of the future. We cannot and must not let Sudan and its people down. One year on, the call for peace remains as strong as ever, and the need to respond to it compels all those in a position of influence to take immediate action,” the Special Adviser stated.

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