



*For immediate release*

**Statement of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, on the judicial process against the former Head of State and former Chief of Intelligence of Guatemala**

(New York, 23 April 2013) The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, urges the judicial authorities involved in the trial of former Head of State Jose Efraim Rios Montt and former Chief of Intelligence Jose Mauricio Rodriguez Sanchez to conclude the case and bring accountability for the atrocity crimes committed during the internal armed conflict in Guatemala, which lasted from 1960 to 1996.

Jose Efraim Rios Montt and Jose Mauricio Rodriguez face charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in relation to human rights violations and abuses committed against the Mayan Ixil population in the Quiche department of Guatemala between 1982 and 1983. The United Nations-backed Historical Clarification Commission, formed after the 1996 peace accord, described what happened as “acts of genocide.”

A decision by a first-instance judge on 18 April called for annulment of the trial, which is taking place at the Guatemalan Court for High Risk Crimes and was reaching its final stages. This decision is regarded as illegal by the panel of judges in charge of the trial, who suspended the process until, ultimately, the Constitutional Court decides as to whether the trial can continue.

“I appeal to the judicial authorities to act responsibly and prevent any attempt at interference, obstruction of justice or manipulation of the law, which would seriously undermine the credibility of the judicial system in Guatemala,” said Mr. Dieng. “The victims of the atrocities committed during the civil war in Guatemala and their families have waited many years for justice; I hope that they will not have to continue to wait. Justice delayed is justice denied.”

“I would like to pay tribute to the courage of survivors and witnesses who have testified during this trial,” said Mr. Dieng, “as well as the incredible work done to collect and analyse the information that serves as the basis for the charges.” Mr. Dieng acknowledged the instrumental role played by lawyers and civil society organisations in this regard. “I would also like to recognise the important work of the Office of the Attorney General and those members of the judiciary who have sought to end impunity for the crimes committed during the internal armed conflict.” Mr. Dieng also echoed calls for the authorities to continue to guarantee the security of all those involved in the proceedings.

Due to the significance of the present case, a representative of the Special Adviser was present during court sessions on 18 and 19 April 2013. “This is the first time that a former head of State has been indicted by a national tribunal on charges of genocide. With this process, Guatemala has established an historical precedent and should serve as

an example to those States that have failed to hold accountable those individuals responsible for serious and massive human rights violations.”

“Only in this way can Guatemala consolidate its peace process and build trust and confidence among its diverse populations. Such trust and the credibility of its institutions are indispensable for the prevention of future abuses.”

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