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Statement by Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Jennifer Welsh, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, on the escalation of incitement rhetoric in response to the murder of Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh

(New York, 6 February 2015) – The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Jennifer Welsh, condemn the murder of Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). “This appalling and brutal murder is yet another example of a deliberate grave abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law by ISIL.”

The murder of Moaz al-Kasasbeh most likely constitutes a war crime and represents the latest in a pattern of inhumane acts perpetrated by ISIL. “As we speak,” said the Special Advisers, “thousands of civilians remain at the mercy of this group; members of minority groups continue to be killed and threatened in a systematic way; tribal leaders and others who dare to oppose ISIL in the areas it controls continue to be murdered; women and children are being specifically targeted, and religious and cultural symbols are being destroyed.”

The Special Advisers support all efforts by national authorities and the international community to ensure the protection of populations in these areas, and call on Member States to do everything in their power to ensure that perpetrators of grave abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law face justice. “Members of ISIL need to know that they will be held accountable for their crimes,” they added.

The Special Advisers also call on all those with influence, including political and religious leaders, to exercise and encourage restraint and to refrain from incitement to hostility or violence, even in moments of outrage. “At this time, we must unite in the fight against terrorism and uphold international law. The use of hate speech by influential personalities at a moment like this may only trigger further violence. An escalation of inflammatory rhetoric could ultimately serve the interests of terrorists.”

The Special Advisers call on all influential leaders to reject hate speech and incitement and counter such speech with messages of tolerance, respect and peace. “We urge all religious leaders to act responsibly and refrain from using or condoning any language that may escalate tensions,” they stated.

The Special Advisers noted that the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document commitment by Member States to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity includes a commitment to prevent the incitement of these crimes. They reiterated their call for “a concerted effort by a variety of actors, both regional and global, to prevent incitement to violence and to avert the risk of atrocity crimes in the current crisis.”

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For media queries please contact:

The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect
<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/>
Mario Buil-Merce
Phone: +1 917-3675001
Email: buil-merce@un.org
866 UN Plaza, Suite 600