



**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on
Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström**

***APPREHENSION OF GENERAL LOPEZ FUENTES SENDS STRONG SIGNAL THAT
JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL***

(New York, 23 June 2011)

I welcome the arrest of General Hector Mario Lopez Fuentes by Guatemalan authorities. General Lopez Fuentes was Chief of Staff of the Guatemalan armed forces from March 1982 to October 1983. He faces allegations of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. These allegations include directing a policy of wide-scale military attacks on civilians – particularly indigenous Mayans – in which entire villages were destroyed, inhabitants of all ages were killed and women and young girls were systematically raped.

International law demands that those in the highest positions of power must be held accountable when they are responsible for acts of violence committed by military subordinates. But this is not only a legal obligation; the United Nations recognizes that ending impunity is essential if a society is to come to terms with past abuses against civilians. Therefore, the apprehension of General Lopez Fuentes sends a strong signal to all perpetrators that conflict-related sexual violence is not acceptable, and that justice will ultimately prevail.

Sexual violence thrives on silence and impunity. Women have no rights if those who violate their rights go unpunished. For almost 20 years, the victims and survivors of atrocities in Guatemala have been waiting for redress. Since bringing their case to their national authorities in 2000, the survivors group the Association for Justice and Reconciliation has continued to fight impunity. I urge the authorities to ensure the protection of victims, witnesses, human rights defenders and justice operators throughout this legal process, and to continue its important efforts in order to guarantee the rights of all victims of sexual violence.

We continue to monitor this and other incidents of alleged sexual violence in conflict, wherever they occur.

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