

UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE



Statement by Mr. Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Ms. Jennifer Welsh, United Nations Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, on the situation in Egypt

(New York, 15 August 2013) - The Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, express their serious concern on yesterday morning's violence, allegedly involving the excessive use of force by Egyptian security forces against demonstrators in the city of Cairo. While the final number of casualties and injured is still to be confirmed, the Special Advisers regret the large loss of life and express their concern at the continuous escalation of violence in the country.

In particular, they note with alarm that a number of Christian churches and institutions have been targeted, including in the provinces of Assiut, Fayoum, Minya and Sohag, reportedly in retaliation to the incidents in Cairo. "We urge all Egyptians to act responsibly during these difficult moments and refrain from using violence to express their grievances, in particular by targeting religious minorities and institutions, or by using language and inciting behaviours that may escalate tensions." The Special Advisers note that Christian communities have been subjected to violence in the past, most recently on 5 July in Luxor, and alert of the risk of increased violence against these communities if no measures are taken to ensure their protection. "We call all political and social actors to abandon strategies of confrontation, engage constructively to ensure respect for diversity, and take all possible steps to facilitate peaceful resolution of disputes in the country."

The Special Advisers also call on the Egyptian authorities to conduct prompt, independent and effective investigation into the circumstances of the tragic events in Cairo and the attacks on religious minorities and institutions, and reiterate that all those responsible for perpetrating violence must be held to account.

"Egypt is at a critical juncture. In order to prevent any further escalation of violence, it is paramount to ensure the respect for human rights and equal protection of all persons, regardless of their political and religious affiliation."

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For media queries please contact:

Mario Buil-Merce
Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect
<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/>
Phone: +1 917-367-5001 Email: buil-merce@un.org