

# UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE



*For immediate release*

## **Statement by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect on the situation of civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic**

(New York, 12 February 2016) The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, Jennifer Welsh, expressed alarm at the deepening humanitarian emergency and lack of protection of civilian populations in Syria, and welcomed the commitment made on 11-12 February by members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to immediately facilitate the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

“Civilian populations in Syria are in a dire situation and in desperate need of protection,” the Special Advisers stated. “They are subjected on a daily basis to indiscriminate air strikes, deliberate starvation, denial of medical care, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture. These acts must stop immediately. They represent a complete rejection of the protected status of civilians, who are being used as pawns by all parties to the conflict, with complete disregard for human life.”

The Special Advisers welcomed the decision of the members of the ISSG to use their influence to ensure that all parties allow immediate and sustained humanitarian access to populations throughout Syria and immediately and significantly reduce violence, with the goal of implementing a nationwide cessation of hostilities within one week.

“We are at a turning point. The measures identified by the ISSG are critical in order to alleviate the suffering of the civilian populations and ensure their protection. The attacks against Syrian civilians over the last five years, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is now time to restore their dignity and the protection they are entitled to under international law.”

The Special Advisers urged States not to fail the Syrian populations yet again and to uphold their commitment to protect populations from war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. “The protection of the populations of Syria is the primary responsibility of the Syrian state. However, in face of the state’s abject failure to do so, the international community has the responsibility to take timely and decisive measures to protect populations in Syria.” The Special Advisers reiterated their support for the positive steps taken by the ISSG and called upon members of the group to ensure that their decisions are more than commitments on paper but are implemented on the ground without delay.

\* \* \* \* \*

For media queries please contact:

Sarah Jacquier Nobel  
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect  
<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/>  
Phone: +1 212-963-3574  
Email: [jacquier@un.org](mailto:jacquier@un.org)