

UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE



Statement of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on the situation in Mali

(New York, 1 February 2013) Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, warned today of the increasing risk of reprisal attacks against ethnic Tuareg and Arab civilian populations in the Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao regions of northern Mali.

“While the liberation of towns once under the control of the rebel and extremist groups has brought hope to the populations of northern Mali, I am deeply concerned at the risk of reprisal attacks against ethnic Tuareg and Arab civilians. There have been serious allegations of human rights violations committed by the Malian army, including summary executions and disappearances, in Sevaré, Mopti, Niono and other towns close to the areas where fighting has occurred. There have also been reports of incidents of mob lynching and looting of properties belonging to Arab and Tuareg communities. These communities are reportedly being accused of supporting armed groups, based simply on their ethnic affiliation,” said Mr. Dieng.

“I call on the Malian army to discharge its responsibility to protect all populations, irrespective of their race or ethnicity,” stated Mr. Dieng. “I am deeply disturbed by reports of violations committed by the army, and by reports that the armed forces have been recruiting and arming proxy militia groups to instigate attacks against particular ethnic and national groups in northern Mali.”

“I urge all actors, including the Malian army, to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. Targeting of ethnic or religious groups in an armed conflict and if such abuses are carried out in a widespread and systematic way, could constitute atrocity crimes,” stated Mr. Dieng.

Mr. Dieng welcomed the decision of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to open investigations into the situation in Mali.

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