

A top U.N. official is warning that action must be taken to prevent conflicts in several African countries from turning into genocide. Juan Mendez tells VOA the situation is particularly dangerous in Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Uganda, and Sudan's conflict-ridden province of Darfur()

Mendez says early warnings of a genocide include the spread of religious intolerance, racism and xenophobia. He says his job is to monitor countries to see whether these signs are present and to issue warnings to the world community to prevent genocide.

Besides the Darfur region of Sudan, Mendez says another danger area is the Ivory Coast, where there are signs of growing intolerance against immigrants. The intolerance extends even to people who have been born in the country, but are not considered true Ivorians.

"The problem as well is that the tension is so high and there are armed militias and there is extensive hate speech, all of which creates a situation of tension that can quickly derive into mass violence and mass violence in which these so-called non-Ivorians are at risk," he said()

U.N. genocide expert Mendez says other countries of concern include northern Uganda, Myanmar, West Papua in Indonesia, Central Asia and the Caucasus and Colombia, where, he says, indigenous populations are at risk of extinction.