

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

**CONCERN OVER SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN
CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

(26 January 2011)

Following reports of rapes in Côte d'Ivoire, I condemn in the strongest possible terms the employment of sexual violence as a means to political ends. From preliminary information, it seems that the assaults follow carefully selected political targeting.

Since I expressed grave concern about the post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire last year, the security situation for women and girls unfortunately has deteriorated in the western parts of the country.

I call for urgent steps to be taken to avert the risk of increased sexual violence and to ensure the protection of civilians, especially women and girls. I would also like to recall that the Security Council last December reiterated their readiness to consider patterns of sexual violence when imposing sanctions against parties.

I expect the authorities to investigate these incidents swiftly and thoroughly. It is important not only to get an accurate picture of what has happened, but also to clarify who has perpetrated the suspected human rights violations. Ultimately, it is crucial that the perpetrators are held accountable and that the victims of all forms of sexual violence in Côte d'Ivoire see justice done.

The UN will continue to closely monitor and follow up on alleged sexual violence and other human rights violations in Côte d'Ivoire.

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