

**JOINT STATEMENT BY KEVIN KENNEDY AND ZAINAB HAWA BANGURA**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Amman, New York, 25 November 2015

*This statement is attributable to Kevin Kennedy, Assistant-Secretary-General and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, and Zainab Hawa Bangura, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.*

Nearly five years since the start of the unrest in Syria, conflict-related sexual violence is ever-present in the daily lives of women and girls throughout the country. Women and girls report being in fear of sexual violence at border crossings, checkpoints, during house searches, and in detention centres.

In areas controlled by Islamist extremist groups, women and girls fear arrest and physical punishment for not adhering to rules imposed by these groups. Islamist extremist groups, notably ISIS, have abducted and subjected women, particularly from minority groups, to horrendous abuse, including sexual slavery.

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, the United Nations and its partners have documented numerous cases of women tortured or ill-treated while in detention by parties to the conflict, including many cases of sexual violence. At least hundreds of women are believed to be detained as a result of the hostilities. Some women have been arbitrarily detained because of their peaceful activism or humanitarian work, or as a result of their personal ties to others.

“As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we unequivocally condemn all violence targeted at women and girls across Syria, in particular the use of conflict-related sexual violence. We call on all parties to prevent these crimes, and urge that all perpetrators be held to account and that survivors get adequate medical, legal and psycho-social support.

We call also for the release of women who have been arbitrarily detained, and for parties to the conflict to permit the United Nations access to people in detention.”

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