

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

CONCERN OVER SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN LIBYA

(New York, 20 April 2011)

As fighting escalates in Misrata and other parts of Libya, there is an urgent need to focus on the prevention of sexual violence. This is also what I stressed in my briefing to the UN Security Council last week. Despite robust action by the international community to protect civilians in Libya we still hear reports of sexual violence. Although most of these reports of rape remain unconfirmed – and even brutally silenced – they have arrested the attention of the world. The name of Eman al-Obeidi is known to all. Reports from transit camps on the Libya-Tunisia border, from surgeons, doctors and international media representatives suggest that it is not plausible to consider her case an isolated incident. If we allow the lack of hard data to justify inaction, it will always be too late.

I condemn in the strongest terms the employment of sexual violence as a means to political and military ends. I call upon all parties to allow access for UN staff and humanitarian organisations in order for them to monitor such violations and deliver aid to civilians caught in the fighting. I would also like to recall that the Security Council last December reiterated its readiness to consider patterns of sexual violence when imposing sanctions against parties.

We continue to monitor the situation in Libya and in other conflicts where sexual violence may occur.