OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

UN Special Representative Pramila Patten Welcomes Historic Verdict in Germany on Sexual Violence in Syria

Press Release: For Immediate Release

New York, 14 January 2022: United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, welcomed the verdict by the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, against former Syrian colonel Anwar R. for crimes against humanity including acts of sexual violence.

"The reports of torture in Syrian government detention facilities, which include acts of sexual violence, have been gruesome. The verdict today provides a measure of justice for Syrian survivors who have waited so long to see the individuals responsible be brought to account for their crimes against humanity in a court of law," said Special Representative Patten.

Special Representative Patten further called on governments to use all forms of jurisdiction to provide survivors access to justice for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence in Syria and elsewhere: "Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence does not have to be the rule. When national governments are unwilling or unable to prosecute conflict-related sexual violence domestically, universal jurisdiction becomes one of the critical tools so that perpetrators of these crimes do not go unpunished."

Special Representative Patten also commended civil society and victims' groups for their advocacy to ensure that crimes of sexual violence were prosecuted in Koblenz. She also noted the importance of ensuring that no individual is stigmatized for being held in Syrian detention centres.

"Justice for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence and other international crimes in Syria has been very delayed, but we will remain committed that justice will not be denied."