

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

SOMALI WOMEN SEEKING REFUGE, FACING RAPE

(11 August 2011)

As the ongoing famine in Somalia worsens, I am deeply concerned about reports of sexual violence in the wake of the mass exodus from Somalia to Kenya. Conflict, drought, and displacement have heightened the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence.

During the long and perilous journey from Somalia to the camps in Kenya, women and girls are subjected to attacks, including rape, by armed militants and bandits. Once they cross the Somalia-Kenya border or reach Dadaab – the world’s largest refugee settlement - their hopes of finding a safe haven are often overshadowed by new dangers and hardships, including the risk of rape.

I commend the efforts of the Kenyan authorities in responding to the influx of tens of thousands of Somali refugees. I urge the donor community to ensure that greater resources and support are extended to the Kenyan Government, UN actors such as UNHCR and non-governmental organizations present in Kenya. There is an urgent need for services to be provided to survivors of sexual violence and for effective camp management to minimize the risks facing women and girls. We should also improve monitoring and reporting on sexual violence to better inform our actions.

My Office has also received alarming information about alleged rapes by Transitional Federal Government (TFG) allied militias in south-central Somalia and of Al-Shabaab abducting girls for forced marriage to fighters. I call on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease these gross violations of human rights.

Fighting impunity for conflict-related sexual violence is my top priority. We will continue to closely monitor the situation in the Horn of Africa and in other areas where sexual violence may occur.

For additional information, please contact:

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