

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

**GUINEA-CONAKRY: POLITICAL RAPE
UNPUNISHED TWO YEARS ON**

(New York, 28 September 2011)

Two years ago today, the massacre of peaceful protesters by security forces in Guinea-Conakry shocked the world. Women were particular targets of the violence. Dozens of public rapes and gang-rapes of women in broad daylight dramatically showed that sexual violence is not only a weapon in times of war. Whether it serves as a tactic of conflict or part of the repertoire of political repression, the effect is the same: to silence, intimidate and punish the victims.

The UN Commission of Inquiry verified that in addition to the massacre of at least 150 unarmed protesters, 109 women suffered rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Despite the Commission's finding that these widespread and systematic attacks likely constitute crimes against humanity, the quest for justice has been painfully slow. Not a single perpetrator has been convicted. Some even retain prominent political positions.

I call upon the political authorities to break the vicious cycle of violence and impunity. A critical step is to support the work of the independent panel of judges, which has reportedly led to three arrests. Known abusers must also be removed from positions of power. Guinea's new democratic government has a responsibility to prosecute all those suspected of abuse in accordance with international standards and to ensure the safety of victims, witnesses and judicial staff.

On 28 September 2009, the protesters were calling for democracy and civilian rule. It was precisely the absence of accountability that created the conditions for appalling violations of their rights. Significant strides have since been made towards democratic governance in Guinea-Conakry. However, any attempt to bury these atrocities along with the dead will only impede reconciliation, durable peace and faith in the rule of law. The recent resurgence of street violence is a disturbing sign that events left unaddressed can be repeated.

Justice has been delayed, but it cannot be denied. We will continue to monitor the situation in Guinea-Conakry and anywhere else that sexual violence may occur.

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