

**Mozambique: UN Officials Alarmed at Escalating Violence against Civilians, Including Women and Children, Call to increase Protection and Assistance**

*Joint statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid*

*Press Statement: For Immediate Release*

(New York, 31 March 2021) The three United Nations (UN) High-Level Officials express serious concerns about the rapid degradation in the humanitarian situation in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, due to insecurity and escalating violence caused by fighting between State security forces and armed elements and groups, with recent reports of horrific attacks on villages and killings, beheading, kidnapping, rape and abduction of civilians including women and children. The protection and humanitarian needs of the civilian population, especially women and children, must be urgently addressed, said the three UN High-Level Officials who strongly condemn the brutal and horrific acts of violence reported.

“The gruesome reports about the unprecedented levels of violence especially the killings, beheading and kidnapping of civilians, including women and very young children, are absolutely shocking. We urge all extremist and other armed groups operating in Mozambique to forthwith cease all acts of violence against the civilian population, especially children and women. The Government of Mozambique must exercise its duty of due diligence to protect girls and boys, women and civilians from atrocities and acts of violence as well as prevent, investigate and punish all such acts of violence. We further urge all parties to ensure safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations for the provision of much-needed assistance,” they said.

The escalation of the conflict in Cabo Delgado in recent months has caused a serious humanitarian crisis forcing almost 700,000 people from their homes according to UNHCR, half of whom are children. Boys and girls are particularly affected by the crisis and are at heightened risks of suffering grave violations, with reports of recruitment and use by armed groups, sexual violence, abduction and disrupted access to humanitarian assistance and education. The three UN Officials further urge the authorities to ensure that all survivors especially children and women are provided with timely medical and psychosocial help they need to recover.

They further urge all parties to the conflict to prevent the spread of hostilities and to uphold the protection of all human rights, in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The three UN Officials recall that regional organizations have a crucial role to play in building peace in the region and call on the international community to initiate and support regional

peace efforts and provide critical assistance to the vulnerable population in need. They emphasized that they stand ready as the United Nations to provide support to the authorities as needed.

*Note to editors:*

Insecurity and access restrictions to areas in the north-east of Mozambique are only allowing for limited information to be verified.

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