

STATEMENT ON THE NEED TO PROTECT CIVILIANS IN MULTIPLE CRISES
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(New York: 16 November, 2011) In recent weeks, there has been an alarming escalation in several crises with severe consequences for the safety and well-being of millions of men, women and children.

Worryingly, in many cases this trend has been accompanied by a reduction in the ability of humanitarian organisations to help them. This means that those who need help cannot get it.

In **Somalia**, the intensification of the conflict between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, Al-Shabaab, and other armed factions, and the involvement of Kenyan armed forces threatens to increase internal displacement just as people hoped to start planting their crops. It may also reduce the ability of aid organizations to provide life-saving assistance to people coping with a famine.

The conflict has also led to a sense of rising insecurity in neighbouring **Kenya**, raising fears of attacks against civilian targets. Meanwhile, insecurity has already limited the ability of aid organizations to help refugees in Dadaab.

Escalating tensions along the border between **Sudan** and **South Sudan** have put millions of people at risk. In South Sudan, it is vital to ensure that those fleeing across the border for safety are accommodated in areas at a safe distance from the border, and that all necessary steps are taken to preserve the civilian character of these settlements.

And in Sudan, humanitarian agencies must be given safe and unimpeded access to vulnerable civilians, so that they can assess their needs and provide life-saving assistance.

In **Yemen**, fighting with heavy weaponry is taking place in urban centres throughout the country, putting civilians at risk, leading to the breakdown of essential public services – including healthcare – and contributing to an intensifying humanitarian crisis.

In **Syria**, the excessive use of force by the security forces against demonstrators has cost over 3,500 lives.

In these and many other crises, civilians are bearing the brunt of conflicts over which they have no control. I remind all parties of their obligations, under international humanitarian law, to respect and protect civilians, and to spare them from the effect of hostilities.

Aid agencies must also be granted free and unimpeded access to people in need, so they can do their work.

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