

## **Transcript of the press conference by Lieutenant General Babacar Gaye, Head of UN Supervision Mission in Syria ad interim**

**Damascus, 13 August 2012**

**Spokesperson:** Good morning everybody, General Gaye will say a few words and then we will have two questions. Thank you.

**General Gaye:** Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

Since our last press encounter, UNSMIS continues to implement its mandated tasks as per Security Council Resolution 2059.

I have reoriented the activities of our Observers to monitor the level of violence and the use of heavy weapons.

It is clear that violence is increasing in many parts of Syria. The indiscriminate use of heavy weapons by the Government and targeted attacks by the Opposition in urban centres are inflicting a heavy toll on innocent civilians.

Our patrols are monitoring the impact of this violence, visiting internally displaced people and hospitals.

This is why we intensified our efforts to facilitate local pauses: to enable assistance to be provided to civilians.

I deeply regret that none of the Parties has prioritized the needs of civilians.

The fighting continues and I continue to remind the Parties of their obligations to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians. The conflict has gone on too long and far too many people are suffering.

Concerning the future, UNSMIS has six days to go. We will continue to the last minute of our mandate to urge the Parties to move from confrontation to dialogue. I call on the Parties to cease military operations and come to the table.

I'm just back from a meeting with the Government, I made this appeal and we had a team who visited the Opposition outside the country this week and made the same appeal.

The United Nations is ready to support political dialogue between and among Syrians.

Thank you.

**Spokesperson:** Let us take a couple of questions.

**Q: General, what is in your view the most concerning detail in this conflict?**

**A:** We need to look at violence in an entire way. The use of heavy weapons and the displaced persons, all these demonstrations of violence, are something we should condemn. These are demonstrations of a mindset, the mindset of a military logic and we are again appealing for this mindset to shift to a mindset of dialogue. All the demonstrations of violence those who are suffering from violence will tell you my violence is more worrisome. I will not make a difference between each of them. I will again make an appeal for the shift from confrontation to dialogue.

**Q: When Mr. Ladsous (Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations) was here he announced that there are 150 observes in Syria, we saw a number of observers leaving Syria. What is happening?**

**A:** What is happening is, as you know very well, we have reduced our footprint in some locations mainly in Aleppo because of the developments. At a later stage, we had no option but to relocate our people to Damascus. It is because of our limitations in our capacities since we have suspended the operations. We have reoriented our operations to monitor the violence, we need less people to do this monitoring and that is why we reduced our strength in this country. But the remaining 100 observers along with our civilian colleague will operate until the last minute.

**Spokespersons:** OK one last question in Arabic.

**Q: (In Arabic) what does UNSMIS plan to do about the kidnapped journalists?**

**A:** Shukran Sayidati (thank you Madame) what are your expectations vis-à-vis our mandate?

**Q: (In Arabic) There is an assault and an attack on the media, what is UNSMIS going to do?**

**A:** In every country, the United Nations is committed to the freedom of the press and the media. In this country, the press has a tremendous role to play and we cannot but condemn any violence against the media coming from any of the sides.

**Spokesperson:** OK, thank you very much ladies and gentlemen.