

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT MISSION IN LIBYA (UNSMIL)

Press Release

UN Special Representative in Libya appeals for respect for human rights and reconciliation as Sirte battle approaches its end

Tripoli, 7 October 2011 – As the battle for Sirte approaches its end, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ian Martin today appealed to all parties to respect human rights and humanitarian principles and to look ahead to the task of national reconciliation. Mr Martin called upon the political and military leadership in Libya to ensure that their responsibility under international law to protect civilians in areas of conflict is conveyed to those now in the heat of battle.

“Libya’s revolution is based upon the demand for human rights and dignity,” he said. “I appeal to all to respect the calls made by the National Transitional Council (NTC) that there should be no revenge even against those responsible for war crimes and other grave violations, who should be detained and brought to justice by due process of law. This will lay the foundation for national reconciliation and the future unity of the people of Libya.”

Returning from leading a joint humanitarian assessment team in Misrata and the outskirts of Sirte, the Humanitarian Coordinator Georg Charpentier said he was "impressed by the strong resilience and coping mechanisms demonstrated by the Libyan people."

The Humanitarian Coordinator expressed his concern for the condition of civilians still left inside Sirte and reiterated the responsibility of parties to respect the safety of civilians and of those providing assistance and medical support inside the city.

Fighting in Sirte has led to the temporary and transitory displacement of civilians. While most residents have been taken in by host families in other Libyan towns, some have chosen to remain in sites closer to Sirte and are receiving relief assistance until the situation allows them to return.

Mr Charpentier said "Local communities and charities are taking the lead in providing assistance to [have come together to provide support] to the vulnerable; UN Agencies and NGOs are supporting their efforts as and where needed [contributing to these efforts]."

The joint assessment team included representatives of the UN humanitarian agencies, including the UN Childrens’ Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), and the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), as well as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).