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civilians trapped in the
fighting in Raqqah.

I am deeply disturbed by reports coming out of Raqqah of the horrendous situation faced by civilians caught up in the offensive to retake the city from the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The city is under intense bombardment by international coalition forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Raqqah still controlled by ISIL. In addition to the terrible situation they face in the city, ISIL is reportedly killing those who try to escape, and coalition forces are targeting boats on the Euphrates river, which had been one of the remaining escape routes for civilians. At the same time, civilians in the areas south of the Euphrates river are reportedly facing indiscriminate attacks by Syrian government forces and their allies during military operations to retake the area.

All parties to adhere to their obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular their responsibility to take all possible measures to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to ensure that any military action, including airstrikes, are proportionate and comply with international law. The legitimate aim of taking Raqqah must not be achieved at such a high cost to civilians. W K Halvorsen said.

The Special Advisor reiterated a call for a humanitarian pause to spare civilian lives as the offensive to retake Raqqah reaches its final stages. Fighting is likely to intensify as will the risks faced by civilians still trapped in the city. I urge all parties and the international community as a whole to ensure the protection of civilians trapped in Raqqah and to take all possible steps to

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