

Security Council, UN Secretary-General and UN group condemn terror attacks in Egypt

9 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the Security Council today condemned the bombings of two Coptic churches in Tanta and Alexandria, Egypt, which killed at least 41 people and injured more than 100 others.

Speaking through his spokesperson, the Secretary-General said that he hoped the perpetrators of this horrific terrorist act will be swiftly identified and brought to justice.

In a separate press statement, the Council called the bombings heinous and cowardly, and reaffirmed that terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The bombings were also strongly condemned by the High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which noted that the attacks took place during Palm Sunday celebrations when both churches were packed with worshippers aimed at ruining the unity and diversity that characterize the Egyptian society.

Launched in 2005 through the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the UN, the Alliance maintains a global network of partners, including States, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.

Mr. Guterres, the Security Council and the UNAOC expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Egypt, and wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured, according to separate statements.

The 15-member Council also stressed the need to bring everyone responsible for the attacks to justice, and urged UN Member States to cooperate with the Government of Egypt and all other relevant authorities.

Syria: As US responds militarily to chemical attack, UN urges restraint to

avoid escalation

7 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today urged restraint to avoid any escalation of the situation in the Middle Eastern country, after the United States responded militarily to an alleged chemical weapons attack earlier this week.

“I continue to follow the situation in Syria closely and with [grave concern](#),” said Mr. Guterres in a statement.

According to the US, the launch of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles into the Shayrat Airbase was a response to what it states was the Syrian Government’s [use of chemical weapons](#) from the base. The alleged 4 April chemical weapons attack killed many civilians in the Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib.

Decrying the ‘abhorrent’ chemical weapons attack, the UN chief stressed the need for accountability for such crimes in line with existing international norms and Security Council resolutions.

In the wake of the reported US airstrikes, Mr. Guterres said: “Mindful of the risk of escalation, I appeal for restraint to avoid any acts that could deepen the suffering of the Syrian people.”

“These events underscore my belief that there is no other way to solve the conflict than through a political solution,” he said, calling on the parties to urgently renew their commitment to making progress in the Geneva [\[intra-Syrian talks\]](#).

Meanwhile, the Security Council convened an urgent session to hear an update on the situation in Syria.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman said that the 30 December 2016 Syrian ceasefire “brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey” had faltered in the last two months amid a steady escalation of military activity.

He said that in mid-February, Government forces escalated their military operations in several areas of Damascus and Homs, recapturing Wadi Barada and al-Waar in Homs.

In February and March, armed opposition groups, sometimes coordinating with al-Nusra Front, launched offensives in Daraa, Damascus and Hama.

On 4 April, as Government forces were fighting to regain territory recently lost to opposition offensives in northern Hama, disturbing reports emerged of an alleged chemical attack, in nearby Khan Shaykhoun in southern Idlib, Mr. Feltman said, adding that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has announced that its fact-finding mission is starting to investigate the alleged attack.

A statement from the Syrian General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces

called the US response a ‘blatant act of aggression’ which had caused six deaths and huge material damage.

Mr. Feltman said that Iran and Russia condemned the US attack, with the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and New Zealand expressing some support for the US strikes.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace and security, he said, urging the 15-member body to unite and exercise that responsibility to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun.

Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#) and the 2012 [Geneva Communiqué](#) remain the foundation of, and contain the core principles for, United Nations mediation efforts and ultimately a solution in this regard, he said.

'Horrible attack' in South Sudan town sends thousands fleeing across border – UN refugee agency

7 April 2017 – ‘Horrible attack’ in South Sudan town sends thousands fleeing across border – UN refugee agency

Host communities and aid agencies in Uganda are struggling to feed and shelter new refugees who have been displaced following a spike in violence in parts of neighbouring South Sudan’s Eastern Equatoria province, the United Nations refugee agency said today.

According to estimates, some 6,000 newly displaced have arrived in Lamwo district (northern Uganda) since Monday, after an attack on the town of Pajok, some 15 kilometres (about 9.5 miles) across the border, and there are fears that number could rise as fighting is reported in the bordering towns of Magwi and Oboo.

Describing the incident in Pajok as [a ‘horrible attack’](#), Babar Baloch, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) told journalists at a regular media briefing in Geneva that refugees claimed that the town came under an indiscriminate attack by the South Sudan armed forces.

‘[They] reported witnessing their loved ones shot dead at a close range, with many arrested or slaughtered, including children. Families fled in different directions; the elderly and disabled who could not run were shot dead,’ he added.

Furthermore, there are reports that many people are still hiding in the bush trying to find their way to safety and that their homes and properties were looted and burned.

Main roads out of the town are also reportedly blocked by armed groups, noted the UNHCR spokesperson.

UNHCR staff in northern Uganda are working to help women, children, elderly, and the disabled who are in dire need of immediate humanitarian assistance and trying to provide them with food, shelter, water and medical care but are reporting severe shortage of resources.

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This January, in light of the worsening crisis in the world's youngest nation, the funding appeal for the 'South Sudan Situation' that includes support for Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic as well as South Sudan was revised to nearly \$782 million, up nearly \$298 million (61 per cent) from the original appeal.

However, it is only 11 per cent funded.

Uganda currently hosts more than 832,000 refugees from South Sudan and its approach in dealing with refugees has been hailed as the most progressive, promoting self-reliance of refugees and their hosts, but the chronic under funding is putting such relief activities at risk.

Children in east Ukraine need urgent care to overcome trauma of conflict – UNICEF

7 April 2017 – More than 200,000 children, or one in four, in the two regions most severely affected by the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine require urgent and sustained psychosocial support to address their traumatic experiences, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said today.

The world has forgotten about this invisible crisis in eastern Ukraine, but hundreds of thousands of children are paying a heavy price, one that could last a lifetime without adequate support, [said](#) UNICEF Ukraine Representative Giovanna Barberis in a news release, stressing the urgent need for funding to reach these traumatized children.

These children live in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, within 15 kilometres of

each side of the 'contact-line' that divides government and non-government-controlled areas and where fighting is most intense.

They are in chronic fear and uncertainty due to sporadic shelling, unpredictable fighting and dangers from landmines and other unexploded ordinance.

Many risk their safety to get an education. Seven schools were damaged during the most recent escalation of violence in February and March, and more than 740 schools, or one in five, in eastern Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed since the conflict began in 2014.

Parents, teachers, school directors and psychologists continue to report striking behaviour changes in children as young as three years old. Symptoms include severe anxiety, bed-wetting, nightmares, aggressive behaviour and withdrawing from families and communities.

Dedicated social workers, psychologists and specially trained teachers are working around the clock. However, as the conflict drags on, additional investments are required to meet these children's needs.

UNICEF is appealing for \$31.2 million to support these children and their families.

Children should not have to live with the emotional scars from a conflict they had no part in creating. Additional support is needed now so that young people in Donetsk and Luhansk can grow into healthy adults and rebuild their communities,” said Ms. Barberis, calling on all sides of the conflict to recommit to the ceasefire signed in Minsk and end this senseless violence.

VIDEO: Ukraine: When a bomb shelter becomes a part of daily life | UNICEF

'Learn the lessons of Rwanda,' UN chief said, calling for a future of tolerance, human rights for all

7 April 2017 – Marking the twenty-third anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, during which Hutu and others who opposed the genocide were also killed, United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres today said the only way to honour the memory of the victims is to ensure such events never happen again.

The [1994 genocide](#) in the East African country saw the systematic murder of

more than 800,000 people. The vast majority were Tutsi, but moderate Hutu, Twa and other groups also suffered during the 100 days of violence.

In his [message](#) to commemorate the [International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda](#), Mr. Guterres said: “Preventing genocide and other monstrous crimes is a shared responsibility and a core duty of the United Nations. The world must always be alert to the warning signs of genocide, and act quickly and early against the threat.”

“History is filled with tragic chapters of hatred, inaction and indifference – a cycle that has led to violence, incarceration and death camps,” he added.

However, he warned that “the poison of intolerance” still existed around the world. “Even today, minorities and other groups suffer attacks and exploitation based on who they are.”

The Secretary-General noted that survivors of the genocide continue to face struggles, but praised their resilience and capacity for reconciliation.

He also called on society to “learn the lessons of Rwanda and work together to build a future of dignity, tolerance and human rights for all.”

A “[candle lighting ceremony](#) and a minute of silence will be observed at UN Headquarters in New York today to mark the Day of Reflection. The annual memorial ceremony will be moderated Maher Nasser, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications and feature a poetry performance by Malaika Uwamahoro, Artist and Rwandan student at Fordham University, as well as remarks by Carl Wilkens, Co-Founder and Director of World Outside My Shoes, Linda Melvern, journalist and author, and Valentine Rugwabiza, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations.