

Syria: 'Critical that civilians be protected' says UN chief amid fresh attacks in Eastern Ghouta

Following a period of relative calm in Syria's Eastern Ghouta, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed deep concern on Sunday over renewed, intensive violence in Douma.

"The Secretary-General calls on all parties to [cease fighting](#) and restore the calm that had been in place and adhere fully to Security Council resolution 2401 (2018)," said Stéphane Dujarric, his spokesperson.

"He reiterates there is no military solution to the conflict," he added.

Through his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres explained that over the last 36 hours, he has received reports indicating sustained airstrikes and shelling on Douma that have killed civilians, destroyed infrastructure and damaged health facilities.

There has also been shelling on Damascus city, reportedly killing civilians.

Mr. Dujarric underscored that the Secretary-General is particularly alarmed by allegations of chemical weapons used against civilian populations in Douma.

While the UN is not in a position to verify these reports, he continued, "the Secretary-General notes that any use of chemical weapons, if confirmed, is abhorrent, and requires a thorough investigation."

"It is critical that civilians be protected," Mr. Dujarric stressed.

"The Secretary-General calls on all sides to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, including humanitarian access across Syria to all people in need, as per relevant Security Council resolutions," he concluded.

Since 11 March, some 25,000 people have reportedly left East Ghouta, seeking shelter in the rural Damascus villages of Dweir, Adra and Herjelleh.