

UN chief reiterates call on Syria to allow on the ground probe of chemical weapons use

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The United Nations Secretary-General has reiterated his call on the Syrian authorities to allow UN experts to enter the country to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons.

Ban Ki-moon told reporters in New York on Friday that he had read a statement issued by the United States which says that the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad has used chemical weapons.

Mr. Ban said the United Nations fact-finding mission into the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, led by Dr. Åke Sellström, continues to collect and analyze information and material that have been made available by various Member States.

The Secretary-General stressed the need for an investigation on the ground in Syria that can collect its own samples and establish the facts.

"Our goal remains a fully independent and impartial inquiry. I have complete faith in the integrity and professionalism of Dr. Sellström and his team. The use of chemical weapons by any party would be a crime against humanity. Given the seriousness of the allegations and the potentially grave consequences, I again urge the Syrian Government to grant Dr. Sellström's team the access we have long sought." (29")

The Secretary-General said that each day of the conflict in Syria brings new depths of despair and sectarian polarization and every week the pace of killing grows more ferocious.

The United Nations latest estimate is that 93,000 people have died in just over two years, and there are indications that the number could be well above that.