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## UN mission chief calls for Syria help

By Abigail Fielding-Smith in Beirut



*Picture courtesy to UN News Centre*

The commander of the UN's monitoring mission in Syria appealed to both sides for help in enforcing the country's threadbare ceasefire as he arrived in Damascus on Sunday, amid fresh allegations of violations by both sides. The Norwegian major-general appointed to head the mission, Robert Mood, told reporters in the Syrian capital that the monitoring move, which has been mandated by the Security Council to deploy up to 300 unarmed observers, "can make a difference".

But he admitted that it could not "solve all the problems".

"I call on everyone to help us and co-operate with us in this very challenging task ahead," added Major General Mood.

The small advance team of observers in the country are monitoring the regime's compliance with a UN-backed plan to end the protracted crisis in Syria, which is estimated to have claimed more than 9,000 lives as Bashar al-Assad's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protests has evolved in to a military campaign against a scantily-armed insurgency. Although daily casualty rates have lowered since the ceasefire came in to effect more than two weeks ago, activists say the regime has continued to shell rebel cities, and ongoing attacks on government forces have

been reported. On Friday, the government claimed a suicide bomber killed nine people, including law enforcement personnel, in central Damascus.

However, violence is reported to have decreased in the shell-blasted central city of Homs since two UN observers set up a monitoring post there.

A state news agency on Sunday reported on a statement by an NGO it regularly cites called the Syrian Human Rights Network urging Ban Ki-Moon, UN secretary-general, to condemn “recently made attempts at escalating the violence in Syria through smuggling arms and gunmen from Lebanon, Turkey and Libya”. This came a day after an editorial in a state-run newspaper branded Mr Ban’s condemnation of the government’s role in violence as “outrageous”.

Ban Ki-moon, speaking during a trip to Myanmar, on Sunday night reiterated his charges that the Syrian regime had failed to live up to its promises.

He said while he did not want to talk about failure of the ceasefire, if it did fail, “we will try to expedite the deployment of [truce monitoring] forces”.

“The problem is whether the Syrian govt will agree to deploying our own assets; to be frank, [the issue is] whether we can give full credit to their promise because they have not kept their promise . . .”

On Saturday, authorities in neighbouring Lebanon said they had intercepted a Sierra Leone-flagged ship containing heavy ammunition and rocket propelled grenades, some of which appeared in pictures released by the Lebanese army to have come from Libya.

The ship’s owner told Reuters that the vessel was bound for the northern Lebanese port city of Tripoli, parts of which are strongly sympathetic to the Syrian opposition across the border.

Syrian state media reported on the same day that gunmen on inflatable dinghies had launched a seaborne attack on government forces near the port of Latakia, 35km south of the Turkish border on Syria’s Mediterranean coastline.