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UN Says Mariupol Attack Was War Crime

By The Moscow Times

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A relative in mourning in the aftermath of a recent shelling in Mariupol.

UNITED NATIONS — The deadly rocket attacks on the government-held port city of Mariupol in eastern Ukraine last weekend were a war crime because they intentionally targeted civilians, a senior UN official said Monday.

UN political affairs chief Jeffrey Feltman told an emergency meeting of the 15-nation Security Council on Ukraine that crater analysis by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe indicated the shelling came from rebel-controlled territory.

"The entity which fired these rockets knowingly targeted a civilian population," he said. "This would constitute a violation of international humanitarian law."

Some 30 civilians were killed in the Mariupol attack, according to the Kiev government, which blames rebels for the assault. Moscow maintains Kiev is to blame for the latest fighting for refusing to pull its heavy weapons from the front and negotiate with the rebels.

"We also urge the leadership of the Russian Federation to use their influence to call on the rebels to cease hostilities immediately," Feltman said. "This will be a critical step in stopping the bloodshed."

In his speech, Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin repeated Moscow's position that Kiev caused the renewed fighting.

"Stop egging on the Ukrainian hawks," Churkin appealed to Western governments. "The only thing that will lead to is an even greater catastrophe."

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