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Statement

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان



Today is the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare: The Syrian Regime Must be Held Accountable

No fewer than 1,510 Syrian citizens have been suffocated to death by chemical weapons, including 205 children and 260 women. The victims' families and the 12,000 injured are still awaiting justice and for the Syrian regime to be held accountable

As approved in the 20th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in 2015, November 30 of every year is known as the [Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare](#). This occasion is a token of recognition and memorialization by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of the suffering of the survivors of chemical attacks and of their right to effective support and advocacy. On this day, the state parties to the OPCW reaffirm their commitment to bringing about a world truly free of the threat of chemical weapons.

On such an occasion, it is both appropriate and essential to remember the chemical attacks that Syria has seen in recent years, and more importantly to remember the victims and survivors of those attacks who are still awaiting justice and accountability to this day.

As SNHR's database attests, a total of 222 chemical attacks have been documented in Syria since the first documented use of chemical weapons on December 23, 2012 until November 30, 2022. These attacks are distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

- A. The Syrian regime has carried out 217 chemical attacks across Syria.
- B. ISIS has carried out five chemical attacks, all of which took place in Aleppo governorate.

We can also divide the attacks according to the UN Security Council resolutions that addressed the use of chemical weapons in Syria:

A. The Syrian regime has carried out 217 chemical attacks, divided according to Security Council resolution as follows:

- 1- Before Security Council Resolution 2118, issued on September 27, 2013: 33 attacks.
- 2- Since Security Council Resolution 2118, issued on September 27, 2013: 184 attacks.
- 3- Since Security Council Resolution 2209, issued on March 6, 2015: 115 attacks.
- 4- Since the establishment of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and Security Council Resolution 2235, issued on August 7, 2015: 59 attacks.

B. ISIS has carried out five chemical attacks, all of which were in Aleppo governorate, all of which constituted violations of Security Council resolutions 2118, 2209, and 2235.



As a result of these attacks, a total of 1,510 individuals; divided between 1,409 civilians, 94 armed opposition fighters, and seven prisoners from Syrian regime forces died. Of the 1,409 civilians killed by the attacks, 205 were children and 260 were women (adult female). All of the victims who died as a result of these attacks were killed in attacks carried out by the Syrian regime. Additionally, 11,212 people were injured in chemical weapon attacks, 11,080 of whom were injured in chemical attacks by the Syrian regime, while the remaining 132 were injured in chemical attacks by ISIS.

A task such as carrying out attacks involving the use of chemical weapons is one of great complexity. The Syrian regime is a highly centralized apparatus. As such, those attacks could not have been carried out without the knowledge and approval of regime head Bashar al Assad. Using chemical weapons is a calculated policy for the Syrian regime based on a central decision, in which the institutions of the military and intelligence are incriminated, in particular the leaderships of the General Military Intelligence Directorate, Air Force Intelligence Directorate, the National Security Bureau, and the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (especially Institute 1000 and Branch 450). Our data shows that no fewer than 387 individuals, all high-ranking military officers, as well as security officials and civil and military workers, were involved. All of these individuals have rightfully earned their place on the US and EU sanction lists.



We have included a lists providing details of some of the individuals involved in the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapon in [two previous reports](#), which we hope will be a precursor for exposing these individuals more widely and adding them to international sanction lists.

Despite all of this, however, the Syrian regime still possesses chemical weapons. In fact, we believe the regime has established new facilities for the storage of chemical weapons. The OPCW Executive Council's [monthly report](#) issued on January 24, 2022, underlines, in multiple paragraphs, the obstructions imposed by the Syrian government that are impeding the proper course of the organization's work, which has directly caused the Executive Council to distrust the Syrian authorities' declaration that they have destroyed its chemical stockpile. Among the obstructions cited in the report is the Syrian regime's repeated refusal to issue an entry visa for one member of the Deceleration Assessment Team (DAT). The report also notes that the Syrian authorities have not responded to communications from the OPCW Secretariat since April 2021 with regard to scheduling the 25th round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian regime. Furthermore, the report highlights, more than once, the absence of any response from the Syrian authorities to enquiries sent by the OPCW Secretariat, which leaves many issues suspended and delays their resolution.

On February 8, 2022, Foreign Policy Magazine published an [investigative report](#) that cited Gregory Koblentz, an expert on Syria's chemical weapon program, who said that the Syrian regime's obstruction of international inspectors has increased in recent years, including the Syrian authorities denying visa requests and destroying previous evidences of chemical attacks. Koblentz added that US intelligence has found that the Syrian regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own people.

On March 10, 2022, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High [Representative](#) for Disarmament Affairs, reported in a briefing to the Security Council "that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested further information and documentation from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the damage caused during the 8 June attack on a military facility housing a declared former chemical weapons production facility." She also added that no response has been received from the regime to a request from the secretariat for information with respect to an unauthorized movement of the remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical weapon attack that took place in Douma, Damascus suburbs, on April 7, 2018.



Based on the above, and specifically the reports by the [OPCW-UN Joint Mission \(or JIM\)](#), [the reports by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team](#)¹, [the reports by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic \(Col\)](#)², [the reports by Human Rights Watch](#), and [the reports by the Syrian Network for Human Rights \(SNHR\)](#), all of which prove the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, and in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 3 of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)³, we at SNHR call on the 27th Session of the Conference of the State Parties to take collective measures in accordance with international law. Moreover, this issue, and all of the related relevant data and conclusions, must be presented in a briefing to the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council in accordance with Article 12, Paragraph 4⁴.

¹ Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), [Investigation and Identification Team, First Report By The OPCW Investigation And Identification Team](#) Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), [Investigation and Identification Team, Second Report By The OPCW Investigation And Identification Team](#)

² United Nations General Assembly, [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#), dated January 21, 2021

³ "In cases where serious damage to the object and purpose of this Convention may result from activities prohibited under this Convention, in particular by Article I, the Conference may recommend collective measures to States Parties in conformity with international law." Chemical Weapons Convention, Article XII, Paragraph 3.

⁴ "The Conference shall, in cases of particular gravity, bring the issue, including relevant information and conclusions, to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council." Chemical Weapons Convention, Article XII, Paragraph 4.

Responsibility should be referred swiftly to the UN Security Council, which should be called on to implement its relevant resolutions and to intervene in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, considering that a state member has used weapons of mass destruction in a way that poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

The member states, especially those who pride themselves in being civilized nations such as France and the United States of America, need to invoke their rights enshrined in Article IX, Paragraph 8⁵ of the CWC and to request an on-site challenge inspection in the Syrian territories “for the sole purpose of clarifying and resolving any questions concerning possible non-compliance with the provisions of this Convention” by the Syrian government. Also, we recommend the invocation of rights established in Paragraph 12 (a)⁶ of the same article, by which a representative is sent to “observe the conduct of the challenge inspection” and to ensure the inspection is being carried out with no stalling.

⁵ “Each State Party has the right to request an on-site challenge inspection of any facility or location in the territory or in any other place under the jurisdiction or control of any other State Party for the sole purpose of clarifying and resolving any questions concerning possible non-compliance with the provisions of this Convention, and to have this inspection conducted anywhere without delay by an inspection team designated by the Director-General and in accordance with the Verification Annex.” Chemical Weapons Convention, Article IX, Paragraph 8.

⁶ With regard to an observer, the following shall apply: a. The requesting State Party may, subject to the agreement of the inspected State Party, send a representative who may be a national either of the requesting State Party or of a third State Party, to observe the conduct of the challenge inspection.” Chemical Weapons Convention, Article IX, Paragraph 12(a).