

Joint Statement

The Security Council must vote immediately to investigate the attack on Khan Shikhoun and bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, April 7, 2017

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



We, the undersigned organisations, strongly condemn the developments of the armed conflict in Syria. The last development was the air raids against the town of Khan Shikhoun in Idlib's countryside, which took place on Tuesday, April 4th, 2017. The attacking planes launched indiscriminate weapons that amount to weapons of genocide, in addition to using weapons, ammunition, equipment and methods of warfare which in their nature cause excessive damage or unnecessary suffering. The aim of such tactics, or the expected result from using them, is to cause significant, widespread, and long lasting harm to the natural environment.

This attack caused the death of at least 94 civilians including 27 children and 27 women, in addition to injuring at least 200 civilians who suffered from suffocation, according to documentation undertaken by Syrian organizations^[1] and statements from the health directorate. The number of losses is not yet final, as there are many injured still undergoing treatment in Turkey. We call on the Security Council to take immediate action to confront the ongoing brutal crimes committed daily in Syria for more than six years.

The town of Khan Shikhoun is witnessing a mass exodus after the attack. The medical staff working in the area, such as SAMS and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), were unable to provide assistance to all those infected with the chemical agent, due to the deliberate shelling of medical centers in Idlib's countryside, the overcrowding of hospitals, and the shortage of materials and medical personnel. This attack coincided with an unwarranted attack in several areas of the Damascus countryside and Deraa, leaving many civilian casualties.

We affirm that these violations are contrary to international laws and will not be the last violations, in light of the silence of the international community and the failure of international efforts to push the UN Security Council to take clear action to confront these brutal crimes committed daily by the Syrian regime and armed groups and militias for more than six years.

In September 2013, Syria officially accepted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, and on 14 September 2013 it submitted the instrument of accession to the Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. The Syrian Government announced that it would comply with and respect the provisions of the Convention^[2].

[1] Among these organizations: Syrian Centre for Statistics and Research, Syrian Institute for Justice and Accountability, Al Raqeeb Center

[2] <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2017/04/05/37809/>



On 27 September, the Security Council adopted [resolution 2118](#) endorsing the decision of the Executive Board of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which includes special measures to accelerate the dismantling of the chemical weapons program and subject it to strict investigation. Article 22 of the Security Council resolution stipulates that the council would impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in the event of non-compliance by Syria with this resolution.

This attack, which is considered the biggest attack since the chemical attacks by the Syrian government against Eastern Ghouta in August 2013, comes shortly after the Security Council adoption of [resolution 2209](#) which condemned in the strongest terms “any use of any toxic chemical, such as chlorine, as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic”.

We, the undersigned organizations, demand the activation of the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria, and the implementation of resolution 2118 by intervening under Chapter VII for the purpose of protecting civilians and preventing the recurrence of the use of prohibited weapons. We also emphasize that access to attack sites must be guaranteed to the investigators of the Commission on the Use of Chemical Weapons to conduct a thorough and objective investigation into the incident. A report in that regard should be submitted to the Security Council as soon as possible. We also demand that all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria be brought to justice within the available mechanisms. We also demand an immediate ceasefire in the countryside of Idlib and allow immediate relief to the affected areas and treat the injured.

If the UN Security Council fails to uphold international law and previous resolutions because of the veto, which has been used more than once, to stop killing and fighting and to protect civilians in Syria, the cycle of impunity and the suffering of the Syrians will not end and they will not be protected from other violations.

Members of the UN Security Council and all UN member states should take action to hold perpetrators accountable and put an end to attacks on civilians. We also remind the European Union of its repeated commitments to combat impunity in Syria, especially after its recent efforts in Brussels to consider its reconstruction. Syrians deserve the truth, and the international community needs to hold the culprits accountable so as not to allow the parties of the conflict to escape accountability and punishment.



Signatories

AlKawakibi Organization for Human Rights

AlRaqeeb Center

Assyrian Human Rights Network

Democratic Republic Studies Center

EuroMed Rights

Fraternity Center for Human Rights

Justice for Life

Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research

Syrians for Truth and Justice

Syrian Institute for Justice and Accountability

Syrian League for Citizenship

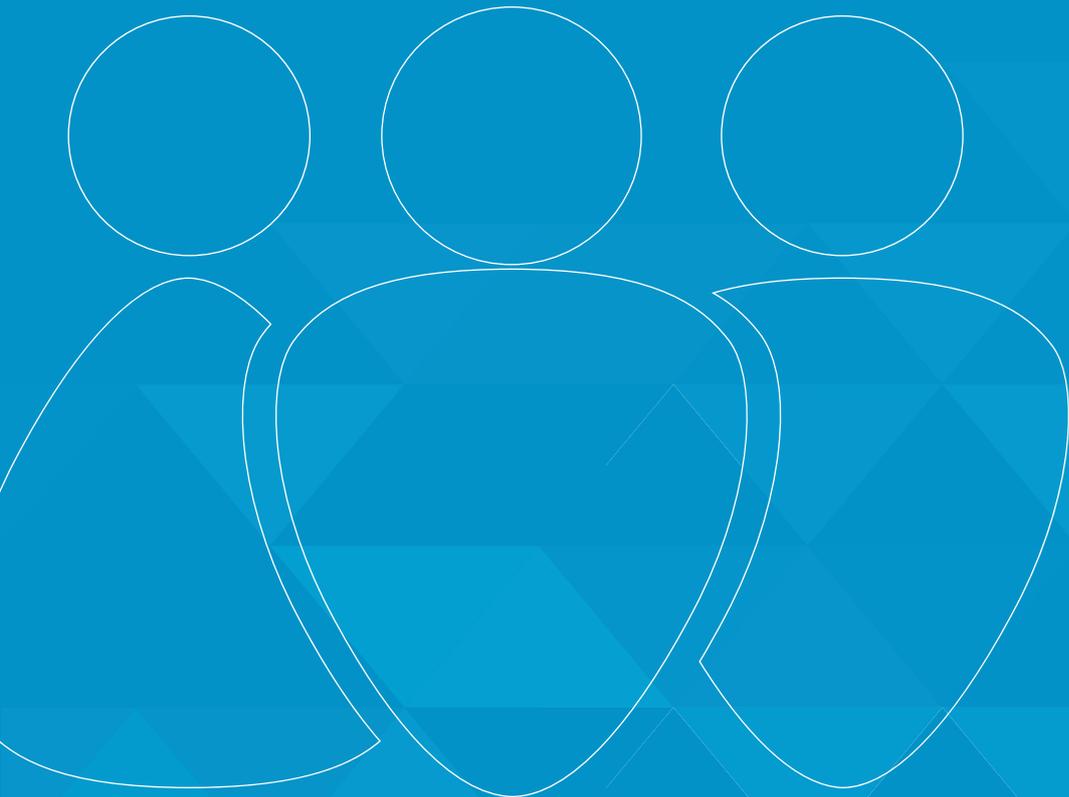
Syrian Network for Human Rights

The Syrian Centre for Statistics and Research

The Day After

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@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

