

Press release

SNHR Signs Principles of Cooperation Agreement with the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team and Shares Data

The Findings of the First Report on al Latamena City Match the Findings of the SNHR

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



I. The SNHR's Database on the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria Is at the Disposal of Justice and Towards Accountability:

In January 2020, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) formally signed a Principles of Cooperation agreement with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), enabling SNHR to contribute to the investigations into the incidents that the team is currently conducting and will conduct in the future; the SNHR possesses an extensive database documenting the use of chemical weapons in Syria, having monitored their use extensively since the SNHR first documented use of this weapon in December 2012 until the last attack in al Kbaina in Latakia suburbs on May 19, 2019.

The mandate of the OPCW was expanded in June 2018, enabling it since then to identify the perpetrators of chemical attacks, after its previous mandate since its founding on April 29, 1997, remained limited to confirming or denying the use of chemical weapons without identifying the perpetrators.

The SNHR fully supports the mandate and work of the IIT, and confirms that these investigations are an essential part of the process of holding those involved in the use of weapons of mass destruction in Syria accountable and prosecuting them, as well as ensuring that they do not enjoy impunity and exposing their lies and crimes, and ensuring that the international community takes responsibility for punishing them, as stipulated in Article 8 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The OPCW's Committee and its working groups have been subjected to relentless and violent defamation and slanderous accusations led by Russia in several political, diplomatic and media levels, with Russia harnessing great material capabilities for this purpose, with the aim of protecting its ally the Syrian regime, which is involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and even of protecting Russia itself since it supports the Syrian regime and justifies the violations perpetrated by the regime over the course of the past nine years and up to the present moment, which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes; this diplomatic, political, and military protection of a regime involved in the use of weapons of mass destruction and war crimes means that anyone supporting or defending it is a partner and accomplice in these crimes and is thus subject to prosecution in accordance with international law.



II. The IIT's First Report on al Latamena City, Accusing the Syrian Regime of Three Attacks, Consistent with What SNHR Previously Documented:

The IIT began its investigation into three incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in al Latamena city which took place on the following days: March 24-25-30, 2017; before the expansion of its mandate, the OPCW had confirmed in its reports that chemical weapons had been used in these attacks in al Latamena city on those days without identifying the perpetrators.

Yesterday, the first report was issued by the OPCW's IIT, whose mission is to identify the perpetrator using chemical weapons, with the report demonstrating in detail and providing strong evidence of the responsibility of the Syrian regime for the three attacks. The IIT's high-quality capabilities and laboratories are considered among the best in the world.

III. Multiple Memoranda of Understanding:

The SNHR has already signed a number of memoranda of understanding with United Nations bodies, the most prominent of which is the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible, according to international law, for the most serious crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The IIIM, which was established by UN General Assembly resolution 71/248 of December 21, 2016, has received a large quantity of data extracted from the SNHR database.

In October 2019, the SNHR and the Government of the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing for the establishment of a coordination and cooperation mechanism to share information and data documented by SNHR on human rights violations in Syria and on those involved in such violations in order to participate in the investigations carried out by the Government of the United States of America into some of these violations, and to place the greatest possible number of those involved in these violations on the lists of economic and political sanctions; this will constitute a major impediment to any effort to rehabilitate the Syrian regime and all its organs, and serve as an important form of accountability that was previously unavailable.

In February 2020, the SNHR signed a memorandum of understanding with Humanitarian Outcomes on contributing to its [Aid Worker Security Database \(AWSD\)](#) project, which is accredited by the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and numerous humanitarian NGOs around the world. The AWSD is the most comprehensive global database of the major incidents of violence recorded against aid workers since 1997 to date. The MoU stipulates the building of a joint coordination and cooperation mechanism aimed at doc-



umenting and archiving violations and violence affecting aid workers. This will effectively assist in the study, analysis and description of aid work in Syria, providing comparisons with the rest of the world based on the AWSD's findings.

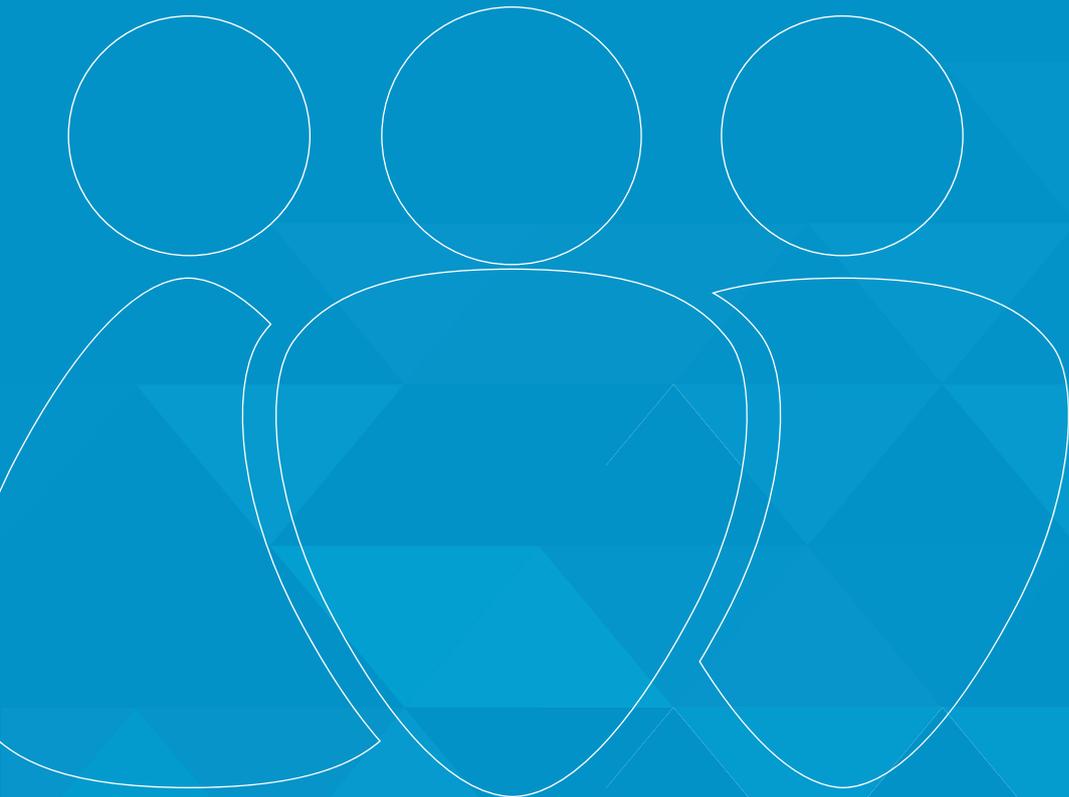
In addition, the SNHR has signed a wide range of bilateral agreements with a number of research centers for the purpose of data-sharing, [most notably: the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) and [the Global Public Policy Institute \(GPPi\)](#), with our policy providing that we should not share any data without first co-signing a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding detailing the criteria for the use of this data; the general terms for data-sharing can be found on [our website](#).

IV. Recommendations:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights supports the findings of the IIT, and affirms that the Syrian people have the right to know exactly who are the criminals responsible for killing their children and for polluting the environment in their country. We strongly condemn the ongoing Russian denial of the regime's crimes and its own complicity in these, along with its blatant hostility to the truth, no matter how clear, and its shameful alliance with a regime that repeatedly uses weapons of mass destruction. We also strongly condemn Russia's reprehensible demands for the lifting of sanctions on the Syrian regime rather than condemning its use of chemical weapons and supporting sanctions on those who use them.

The international community should form a civilizational alliance of multiple countries to combat the use of chemical weapons effectively and seriously, which should build on this report and take serious steps forward in order to hold the Syrian regime and its allies accountable for this heinous crime that constitutes a war crime, which is one in a recurring pattern of such crimes by the Syrian regime, making it a crime against humanity. If the international community fails again to hold the Syrian regime and its allies accountable after the issuance of this report, this will constitute a severe blow to the victims of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, and a great victory for the Syrian regime and Russia.





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