

29 Shameful States, Led by Russia, Voted against the OPCW's Decisions

The 'Tiger Forces' Responsible for the Saraqeb Chemical Attack Are Supported by Russia

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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.

Content

| | |
|---|---|
| I. 184 Chemical Attacks Despite the Syrian Regime’s Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention..... | 2 |
| II. The Two OPCW’s Decisions on Syria..... | 3 |
| III. The Shameful States That Voted One or More Times in Favor of the Syrian Regime’s Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria..... | 5 |
| IV. The Majority of the World’s States Vote in Favor of the OPCW Decisions, and Deliver a Stinging Blow to Russia, the Syrian Regime, and Iran..... | 6 |
| V. Conclusions and Recommendations..... | 7 |

I. 184 Chemical Attacks Despite the Syrian Regime's Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention:

The Syrian regime [ratified](#) the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in September 2013; however, the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database confirms that the Syrian regime has carried out 184 chemical weapons attacks since its ratification of the CWC, with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Syrian Arab Republic confirming dozens of incidents since 2013 in which chemical weapons were used, and noting in [its thirty-third report](#), issued on February 2021, that the COI [had documented](#) 38 chemical attacks in Syria, and assigned responsibility to the Syrian regime in 32 of these, and to ISIS in one, while five attacks remained uncategorized, with the COI unable to assign definitive responsibility for them. As the report notes, each of these uses of chemical weapons constitutes a war crime.

The mandate of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), established by UN Security Council Resolution 2235 of August 2015¹, was to assign responsibility to the perpetrator of the chemical weapons attack; JIM investigated nine attacks, and identified the perpetrator in six attacks (four by the Syrian regime and two by ISIS), before [the end of its mandate in November 2017](#). Russia prevented the renewal of the JIM's mandate [by using its veto at the Security Council](#) in November 2017 on two consecutive occasions² within 24 hours.

The total number of chemical weapons attacks carried out by the Syrian regime on various Syrian governorates, according to the SNHR database, has now reached 217 chemical attacks, between the first documented use of chemical weapons in Syria on December 23, 2012, and April 29, 2021. These attacks are distributed, according to the Security Council Resolutions on chemical weapons in Syria, as follows:

First: Prior to Security Council Resolution 2118 of September 27, 2013: 33 attacks.

Second: After Security Council Resolution 2118 of September 27, 2013, to date: 184 attacks.

Third: After Security Council Resolution 2209 of March 6, 2015: 115 attacks.

Fourth: After the formation of the United Nations Mechanism and Security Council Resolution 2235 of August 7, 2015: 59 attacks.

These attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 1,510 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 1,409 civilians, including 205 children and 260 women (adult female).
- 94 Armed Opposition fighters.
- Seven Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in an opposition prison.

Furthermore, these attacks also injured at least 11,080 individuals, including five Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in an opposition prison.

¹ Security Council Resolution 2235 (August 7, 2015). [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2235\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2235(2015))

² The UN Security Council, in a draft resolution to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for 12 months, submitted on November 16, 2017. <https://undocs.org/en/S/2017/962>

The UN Security Council, in a draft resolution to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for 30 days, submitted on November 17, 2017. <https://undocs.org/en/S/2017/970>

II. The Two OPCW's Decisions on Syria:

As noted above, the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons represented a great challenge to the international community, and the Syrian case was a primary motive and inspiration for a large number of countries in the world to expand the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the first step of its kind since the OPCW's establishment. The states parties met and issued two decisions in this regard:

A. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 - Wednesday, June 27, 2018:

On Wednesday, June 27, 2018, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons adopted [Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3](#), which provided for extending the OPCW's mandate so that it would include identifying the perpetrators of attacks using chemical weapons. This came as part of the fourth special session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The draft decision was submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland³ with the support of 30 CWC member states, including France, the United States of America, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Turkey. 82 states voted in favor of the decision, while 24 states voted against it, with the participation of 106 present and voting states parties⁴.

The decision condemned the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, which had been confirmed by the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. The decision added that the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons confirms that Syria failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), and demanded that the Syrian regime immediately cease all use of chemical weapons and declare all of the chemical weapons in its possession, including sarin and its precursors, as well as CWPFs. The decision indicated that chemical weapons had been used in Syria in al Latamena on March 24, 25 and 30, 2017, and in Saraqeb on February 4, 2018, and that the perpetrators of these attacks had still to be identified.

Expanding the OPCW's mandate to include identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons was an important legal and human rights achievement, with the beneficiaries to a great extent being the victims who were killed or injured by the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against them.

The expansion of the mandate has resulted in the publication of two highly accurate and important reports by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which confirmed the Syrian regime's responsibility for four chemical attacks, with three of these cited in [the first report](#)⁵ issued in April 2020, namely al Latamena on March 24, 25, and 30, 2017, while the fourth was cited in [the second report](#)⁶ issued in April 2021, namely Saraqeb on February 4, 2018; the most prominent feature of this latter report was the identification of the 'Tiger Forces' as bearing responsibility for leading the chemical attack.

³ OPCW, Report of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 3 (4), https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CSP/C-SS-4/en/css403_e_.pdf

⁴ OPCW, Report of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 3 (15), https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CSP/C-SS-4/en/css403_e_.pdf

⁵ OPCW, the first report of the IIT, <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/s-1867-2020%28e%29.pdf>

⁶ OPCW, the second report of the IIT, <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/s-1943-2021%28e%29.pdf>

The 'Tiger Forces' are directly supported by Russia, which makes Russia a direct accomplice in contributing to this chemical attack, not only, as previously, a logistical and military supporter with political cover and absolute protection at the Security Council. This report confirmed conclusively that Russia had turned into a full accomplice in the use of weapons of mass destruction against the Syrian people, a fact which explains the extent of Russia's desperation to distort the report's findings, politically and in media, through the yellow press, and paid journalists, and its attempts to question the investigators, and demand that countries loyal to it vote against the OPCW's decisions.

B. Decision C-25/Dec.9 - Wednesday, April 21, 2021:

On Wednesday, April 21, 2021, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons adopted [Decision C-25/DEC.9](#), under which it suspended some of the rights and privileges of Syria as a member state of the OPCW. This came as part of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

France⁷ submitted the draft decision on behalf of the 46 member states of the CWC, also including the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Denmark, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Japan, Australia and Turkey. The decision obtained a majority of two-thirds of the votes of the states that voted, with 87 states voting in favor of the decision, while 15 voted against it⁸. The decision, which concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons, and condemned their use, was pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article XII⁹ of the CWC, which stipulates "in cases where a State Party has been requested by the Council to take measures to redress a situation raising problems with regard to its compliance, and where the State Party fails to fulfil the request within the specified time, the Conference may, inter alia, upon the recommendation of the Council, restrict or suspend the State Party's rights and privileges under the Convention until it undertakes the necessary action to conform with its obligations under the Convention." The decision was also pursuant to subparagraph 21(k) of Article VIII¹⁰ of the Convention, which stipulates "The Conference shall take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the Convention and to redress and remedy any situation which contravenes the provisions of the Convention, in accordance with Article XII."

⁷ OPCW, the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 9 (17), <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/c2505%28e%29.pdf>

⁸ OPCW, the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties, paragraph 9 (24), <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/c2505%28e%29.pdf>

⁹ OPCW, Chemical Weapons Convention, Article XII, <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-xii-measures-redress-situation-and-ensure-compliance>

¹⁰ OPCW, Chemical Weapons Convention, Article VIII 21(k), <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-viii-organization>

Based on the above, the decision stipulated the suspension of the following rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic:

- (a) to vote in the Conference and the Council - this was the first measure of its kind ever since the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in 1997;
- (b) to stand for election to the Council; and
- (c) to hold any office of the Conference, the Council, or any subsidiary organs.

The decision added that the rights and privileges that it decided to suspend will be reinstated once Syria has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of [Council decision](#) issued on July 9, 2020¹¹, and that this suspension does not contradict the obligation of Syria to abide by its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

III. The Shameful States That Voted One or More Times in Favor of the Syrian Regime's Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria:

It is always necessary to know the states that voted in favor of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, and thus against the expansion of the powers of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and against the strict methodological reports issued by it, and most of all against the victims who were killed or injured as a result of the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons of mass destruction.

These states generally share the characteristics of dictatorship and hostility to human rights, with some being blindly loyal and wholly subordinate to Russia and Iran, the Syrian regime's two principal allies. These states remain a minority and were defeated twice in the vote, because they support a cause that contradicts the most basic principles of human rights. Syrian society must become familiar with the states that stood and voted against it, and we must expose these states and condemn their vote in favor of the Syrian regime, whose use of chemical weapons has been confirmed.

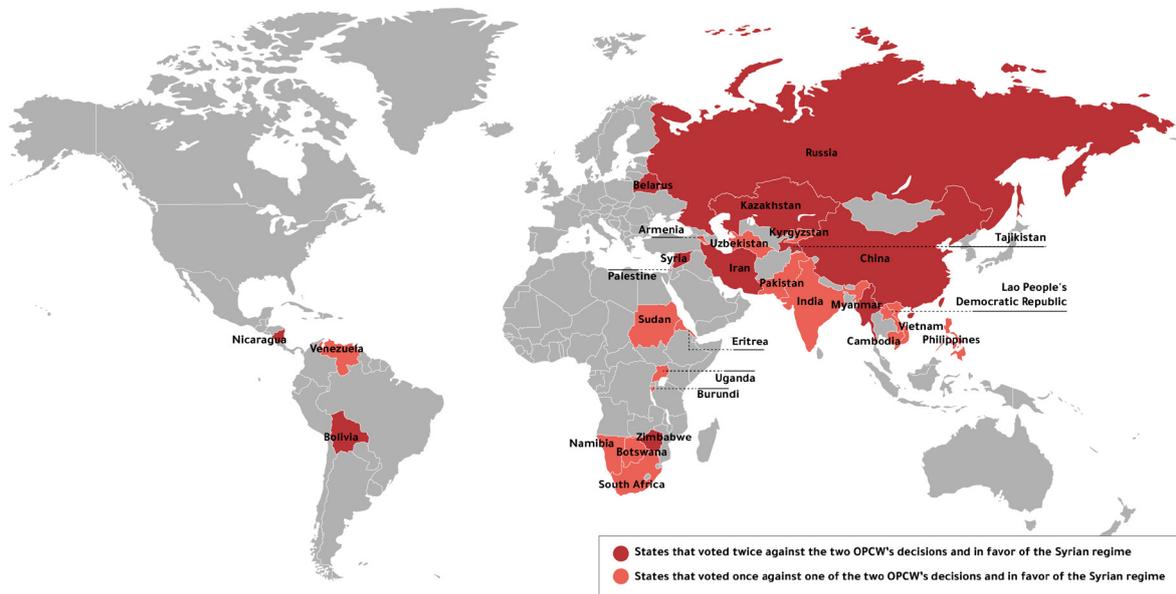
The total number of these states in the two decisions is 29, divided into two parts:

- A. 12 states voted twice in favor of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons.
- B. 17 states voted once in favor of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons.

¹¹ OPCW, the Ninety-fourth Session of the Executive Council, Decision Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, Paragraph 5, <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020/07/ec94dec02%28e%29%20%282%29.pdf>

Map shows the states that voted in favor of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, and against two OPCW decisions related to this use:

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IV. The Majority of the World's States Vote in Favor of the OPCW Decisions, and Deliver a Stinging Blow to Russia, the Syrian Regime, and Iran:

Each of the two decisions of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issued on Syria received a majority of two-thirds of the votes of the Member States - present and voting - with a total of 100 states voting in favor of the two decisions, divided into two parts:

A. 69 states voted twice in favor of the two decisions issued by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on Syria.

B. 31 states voted once in favor of one of the two decisions, including two states, namely the Philippines and Botswana, which each voted one time in favor of one of the two decisions, and one time against the other decision.



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