



## Statement

### **Participation in Intensive Training Course on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Organized by the Asser Institute of International and European Law and the OPCW**

The [Asser Institute of International and European Law](#) and the [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) recently held a specific training course on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The five-day training course, which ran from September 27 to October 1, 2021, included intensive daily working sessions which lasted from morning until evening. The training course was attended by Fadel Abdul Ghany, representing the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR).

Mr. Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the OPCW, delivered the opening speech at the event.

The training course dealt with the most prominent issues facing those working in the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and analyzed weapons of mass destruction from the geopolitical point of view, as well as examining the implementation and enforcement of international law.

The training focused on chemical weapons in particular since the course content centered on developments and scientific progress in the field of disarmament of chemical and biological weapons. In addition, the training addressed the Conference on Chemical Disarmament and the Conference on Biological Disarmament, as well as analyzing the mechanisms of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' work, the work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the dangers of terrorism using chemical weapons, and methods of response.

Dr. Gareth Williams, Head of Safety and Analytical Chemistry Cell at the OPCW, spoke about the classification and types of chemical weapons, and talked about the challenges posed by the continued use of chemical weapons, especially in Syria, where this threatens the principles of the Chemical Disarmament Convention in particular with regard to a member state (the Syrian regime's government) using chemical weapons.

Mr. Santiago Onate, Coordinator of the Investigation and Identification Team, spoke about the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the tools available within the convention that protect the team's credibility, and the team's role in implementing the convention.

Mr. Onate also spoke about the steps taken by the OPCW and Member States to confront the use of chemical weapons in Syria, referring to the establishment of the Fact-Finding Mission, which confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and spoke about the valid doubts concerning the Syrian regime's declaration of its chemical weapons arsenal, as well as addressing the methodology of the IIT's two reports, confirming the findings that the chemical attacks in al Latamena addressed in [the first report](#) were carried out using helicopters belonging to the Syrian regime's Air Force, and in [the second report](#) that the use of chlorine gas via dropping two gas cylinders was also proven to have been perpetrated by helicopters belonging to the Syrian regime's Air Force.

Mr. Onate also referred to the challenges facing the IIT, stating that the Syrian regime "**refuses any communication with IIT,**" and adding that the Syrian regime government "**did not grant the investigators permission to travel for the team to conduct its investigations, which forced the team to work remotely.**" He further noted: "**Working remotely requires the team to rely on the samples collected by the Fact-Finding Mission and communicate with the victims and doctors who supervised the treatment of the injured.**"

"**We believe we are working not only to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention but also to bring justice to a conflict that has left thousands of victims and injured,**" said Mr. Onate.

Mr. Onate stressed the credibility and quality of the IIT's reports' methodology, stating that "**The information and evidence collected are ready and preserved for use in any future judicial proceedings.**" He also emphasized the IIT's impartiality and stressed that the team's investigations included all accounts, including those of the regime and Russia about attacks.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, referred to his Master's degree thesis, in which he focuses on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and said that Syria is the only country in the world that has used chemical weapons extensively since the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as after Syria's ratification in September 2013, and after UN Security Council Resolutions [2118](#), [2209](#), and [2235](#). He noted that although the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons has been confirmed by [the Independent International Commission of Inquiry \(COI\)](#), the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) established by the UN Security Council, and the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the Syrian regime has not been held accountable for any of these uses.

The training concluded with discussion of the current challenges facing the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the future of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Through its participation in such training courses, the Syrian Network for Human Rights seeks to transfer the experience and knowledge it has acquired to wider society via the reports and statements SNHR issues, as well as through other training courses which it provides.