



An infant suffocated to death by the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun city, Idlib suburbs - April 4, 2017



A female child injured in the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attack on Douma city, Damascus Suburbs - April 7, 2018

The Fourth Anniversary of the Syrian Regime's CW Attack on Khan Sheikhoun City and the Third Anniversary of Its CW Attack on Douma City

Both Attacks Were Confirmed by UN Investigation Committees, Local and International Organizations, with the Perpetrator Now Preparing to 'Win' Presidential Elections

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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.



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I. The Syrian Regime Continues to Enjoy Total Impunity Despite Years of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction:

The memories of contemporary Syrian history are mixed at the beginning of April with recollections of the heinous crimes that took place in the cities of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib, and Douma in Damascus Suburbs; this year marks the fourth anniversary of [the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun city](#) on April 4, 2017, and [the third anniversary of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attack on Douma city on April 7, 2018](#).

The Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) team documented the deaths by suffocation of 91 civilians, including 32 children and 23 women (adult female), and the injury of about 520 individuals, when the regime used chemical weapons against Khan Sheikhoun city on April 4, 2017, with the team also subsequently recording the deaths of 39 civilians, including 10 children and 15 women (adult female), and the injury of about 550 individuals, when the regime used chemical weapons against Douma city in Damascus Suburbs on April 7, 2018.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) confirmed the Syrian regime's responsibility for both the [Khan Sheikhoun](#) and Douma attacks; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) also confirmed the events of the chemical weapons attacks in both [Khan Sheikhoun](#) and [Douma](#), though without identifying the perpetrator of these attacks; the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) established by UN Security Council Resolution 2235 of August 2015¹ confirmed [the Syrian regime's responsibility for the Khan Sheikhoun attack only](#), with Russia, through its veto, ending its mandate before the Douma attack took place².

It had been assumed that, after these accurate and highly credible investigations, the UN Security Council would move to take all forms of active measures, including the imposition of economic, political and military sanctions, against the Syrian regime, which has violated all the relevant Security Council resolutions - Resolution No. 2118 of September 27, 2013³, Resolution No. 2209 of March 6, 2015⁴, and Resolution No. 2235 of August 7, 2015; this has not happened to date, however, even after the passage of three and four full years respectively since the two attacks, with the families of the civilians who were killed and injured still waiting for justice and accountability for the perpetrators.

¹ Security Council Resolution 2235 (August 7, 2015), S / RES / 2235

² United Nations, Security Council, 8105th meeting, vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for 12 months, <https://undocs.org/ar/S/PV.8105>
United Nations, Security Council, 8105th meeting, vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for 12 months, <https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.8105>

³ Security Council Resolution 2118 (September 27, 2013), S/RES/2118

⁴ Security Council Resolution 2209 (March 6, 2015), S/RES/2209

II. The Direct Responsibility of the Commander of the Army and Armed Forces, Bashar al Assad, for Chemical Weapons Attacks:

The Syrian regime is very centralized, and a huge undertaking such as moving and using chemical weapons cannot be carried out without the knowledge and approval of its head, Bashar al Assad, who is at the same time the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces. Indeed, it is not even possible to carry out actions far smaller than this without his knowledge and approval. International Humanitarian Law takes into account the hierarchical nature of the armed forces and the discipline imposed by leaders and holds commanders criminally responsible at the personal level, not only for the actions and breaches they have personally committed but also for the actions committed by their subordinates⁵; the relation of the head of the regime and its leaders and the very strict and centralized chain of command all mean that the head of the Syrian regime Bashar al Assad and the senior leadership officials are all directly involved, through the use of chemical weapons of mass destruction, in committing violations that amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people. Despite all these facts, however, Bashar al Assad is currently preparing to 'win' the upcoming presidential elections; he is able to attain this sham 'victory' through the use of chemical weapons and the killing and displacement of civilians.

III. 222 Chemical Attacks Documented on the SNHR Database:

The Syrian Human Rights Network has documented a total of 222 chemical attacks on Syria since the first attack using chemical weapons documented by SNHR on December 23, 2012, up until April 7, 2021, with approximately 98% of these carried out at the hands of Syrian regime forces, and nearly 2% of them at the hands of ISIS. These attacks and the resulting deaths and injuries are distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

A. The Syrian regime carried out 217 chemical attacks on Syrian governorates since the first attack using chemical weapons which was documented by SNHR on December 23, 2012, until April 7, 2021, which collectively resulted in the deaths of 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 Armed Opposition prisons.

These chemical attacks also injured 11,080 individuals, including five Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in Armed Opposition prisons.

B. ISIS carried out five chemical attacks since its establishment on April 9, 2013, until April 7, 2021, all of which were in Aleppo governorate, and which collectively injured 132 individuals.

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 152, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152
International Committee of the Red Cross, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 153, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153

The attacks were distributed according to the UN Security Council resolutions on the use of chemical weapons in Syria as follows:

A. The Syrian regime has carried out 217 chemical attacks, distributed according to the Security Council resolutions 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.

B. ISIS carried out five chemical weapons attacks all in Aleppo governorate, which constitute a breach of Security Council Resolutions 2118, 2209, and 2235.

IV. The OPCW Should Take the Ultimate Measures Against the Syrian Regime at the OPCW's Upcoming Meeting This Month:

On December 11, 2020, Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), [confirmed](#) during a Security Council videoconference meeting that Syria's initial declaration of chemical weapons on its territory cannot be considered accurate and complete; on the same day, seven European countries, namely the UK, Germany, Belgium, Estonia, France, Ireland and Norway, [demanded](#) in an open session at the UN Security Council on the Syria chemical weapons program, ordering that arrangements be put in place to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and stressing that any party involved in using them will not be tolerated. On January 5, 2021, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [Izumi Nakamitsu](#), said during her regular monthly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 of 2013, that the outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile and program still cannot be considered "accurate and complete". On February 3, 2021, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefing the UN Security Council, [urged](#) Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW secretariat, and noted that there are 19 outstanding issues related to chemical weapons. On February 18, 2021, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Syrian Arab Republic issued [its thirty-third report](#), in which it stated that the COI had [documented 38](#) chemical attacks in Syria, and assigned responsibility to the Syrian regime in 32 of these attacks, and 1 to ISIS, while five attacks remained uncategorized, with the COI unable to assign definitive responsibility for them. According to the report, each of these uses of chemical weapons constitutes a war crime.

Based on all of the aforementioned information in this report, in addition to [the report by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team \(IIT\)](#), which confirmed the responsibility of the Syrian regime for three chemical attacks, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should take the ultimate possible measures against the Syrian regime at the upcoming meeting of the States Parties, taking place between April 20-22, 2021, given the regime's flagrant violation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Use of Chemical Weapons, should refer the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria to the Security Council with the recommendation that it take serious actions under Chapter VII, and should not yield to Russian pressure that supports the use of chemical weapons of mass destruction against the Syrian people; in the event that the Security Council fails to take effective and concrete measures, the OPCW should proceed by taking the case to the United Nations General Assembly and demanding intervention based on Resolution 337, aka the Uniting for Peace Resolution⁶, and finally it should request all member states, the vast majority of the world's nations, to impose multiple sanctions on the Syrian regime and to use their national judiciaries to hold the regime accountable for its use of Chemical Weapons of mass destruction.

⁶ United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution 377 (d-5) "Uniting for Peace", <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/55C2B84DA9E0052B05256554005726C6>



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