

# The Syrian Regime Has Used Chemical Weapons Five Times after Khan Sheikhoun Incident

All Attacks were in Damascus  
and Eastern Ghouta

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, August 14, 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



## Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Chemical Attacks in Damascus and Suburbs
- III. Conclusions and Recommendations

---

### I. Introduction

On June 29, 2017, the OPCW released its [report](#) on Khan Sheikhoun chemical attack which confirms that Sarin gas was used on April 4, 2017. However, the OPCW didn't assign responsibility, as investigations regarding the identity of the perpetrator became part of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism which was established in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2235 that was adopted on August 7, 2015.

And even though the American administration bombed the military airbase from which the warplanes that targeted Khan Sheikhoun took off, the Syrian regime never stopped using chemical weapons in small-scale attacks that didn't result in a great number of victims and injuries in a manner that would have embarrassed the decision-makers and compelled them to take action. SNHR team has recorded no less than five attacks with poison gases. Most of these attacks involved the use of hand grenades loaded with a gas we believe it was chlorine in the context of military progress on battlefronts of which the Syrian regime seeks to take control from armed opposition factions.

According to 27 extensive and brief reports released by SNHR, the Syrian regime carried out no less than 207 attacks that involved the use of poison gases between March 2011 and July 31, 2017, as follows:

- No less than 33 attacks before Security Council Resolution 2118 – adopted on September 27, 2013.
- 174 attacks after Security Council Resolution 2118, which includes:
  - o 105 attacks after Security Council Resolution 2209 – adopted on March 6, 2015
  - o 49 attacks after Security Council Resolution 2235 – adopted on August 7, 2015



These attacks resulted on the killing of no less than 1,420 individuals, as follows:

- 1356 civilians, including 186 children and 224 women (adult female)
- 57 armed opposition fighters
- Seven Syrian regime forces captives who were at a prison for the opposition.

Additionally, 6,672 individuals at least were injured

**Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:**

“The Syrian regime has broken all the red lines and the warnings the current American administration has issued, and even in a worse manner in the time of the previous administration. In addition, the Syrian regime has ignored the French president’s warnings and breached all the Security Council Resolutions even though they refer to Chapter VII. Failing again to come up with a serious, deceive deterrent will undoubtedly lead to more disrespect and insolence.”

**Methodology**

In the course of the ongoing monitoring for incidents and developments by SNHR team through a wide network that include tens of various sources that have been built over an accumulation of extensive relations since the start of our work. When we receive information, or hear some news about a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work on following-up on this news and try to verify and collect evidences and data. In some cases, the researcher is able to visit the incident location at the soonest. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the human and material resources. Therefore, the possibility to access evidences vary from one case to another, and, hence, the degree of its classification. Usually, what we do, at SNHR, in such cases is relying on accounts from survivors who experience the violation firsthand, where we try to access those directly, and, to a second degree, who saw or filmed the violation, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the internet and media outlets. Thirdly, we try to speak to medical personnel who treated the wounded, and then assess the symptoms and identify the specifics of the geographical site, temperature, and the speed and direction of the wind.

This report contains six accounts that were collected by talking directly to eyewitnesses, and not from open sources. We have explained the purpose of the interviews for the witnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided in this report without offering or giving them any incentives. Additionally, SNHR tried to spare them the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and we also gave insurances to conceal the identities of any witnesses who preferred to use an alias. This report doesn’t cover the social, economic, and psychological damages and ramifications.



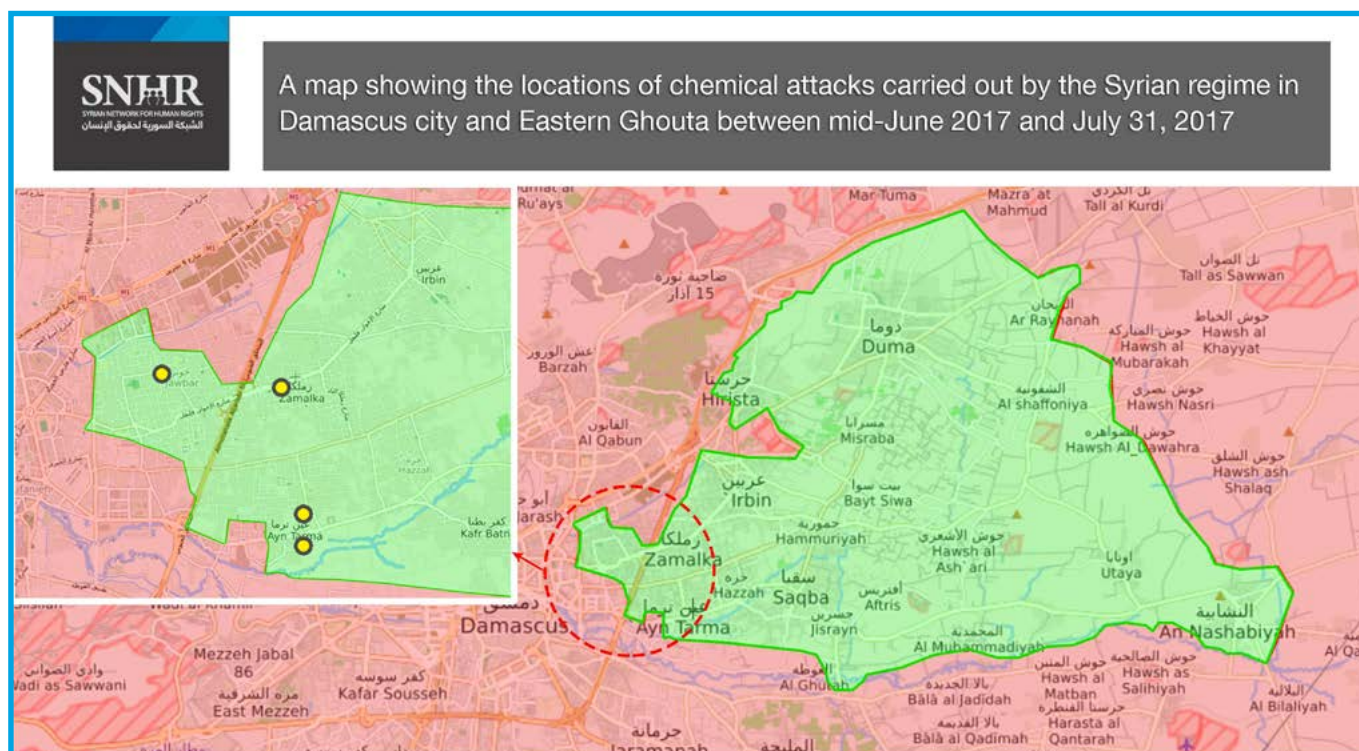
Some of the videos that were broadcasted by activists not too long after the attack showed wounded exhibiting symptoms such as suffocation, breathing difficulties, blurry vision, and muscle weakness. Other pictures showed other symptoms such as pupil constriction and burning redness in the eyes. The severity of the symptoms depended on the degree to which the victim was exposed to the chemical substance. We tried to acquire some of the shrapnel from the used weapons, but we are yet to receive those samples. Also, we weren't able to take blood samples from the victims for analysis.

Furthermore, we used the website “www.wunderground.com” to evaluate the weather conditions, temperature and windspeed, in the locations where the chemical attacks took place. Considering that no detailed data were available on Damascus neighborhoods and Eastern Ghouta areas, we used the weather conditions for Damascus city, as the locations where the attacks took place are in its vicinity.

## II. Chemical Attacks in Damascus and its Suburbs

Since mid-June 2017, Syrian regime forces have escalated their military operations in Joubar neighborhood and Eastern Ghouta towns in order to separate Joubar neighborhood from Ein Tarma town in the hopes of taking over the neighborhood and deplete and demolish its resources which would be the ground for a new coerced settlement that displaces its neighborhood in a scenario that we have seen frequently.

We recorded no less than four chemical attacks on the battlefronts of Joubar neighborhood and the towns of Zamalka and Ein Tarma between mid-June 2017 and July 31, 2017. These attacks injured no less than 27 individuals who were mostly armed opposition fighters.



## Incidents' details

### **1- Joubar neighborhood, Damascus – Thursday, June 22, 2017**

Between 13:30 and 14:00, Syrian regime forces used a number of hand grenades loaded with a poison gas on the battlefield of Qeta' Tayba in northern Joubar neighborhood, eastern Damascus city, which injured five armed opposition fighters and one media activist. According to wunderground, the temperature on June 22 in the vicinity of Damascus city was at an average of 23 Celsius, while the windspeed was over 17 km/s.

We contacted Mr. Mohammad Abu al Yaman<sup>1</sup>, a media activist from Joubar Media Office -a media group in Joubar neighborhood. Mohammad told us that he was contacted by the fighters on the frontline of the battlefield of northern Joubar neighborhood about them being exposed to poison gases: **“They described the smell of the gas by saying it is similar to chlorine’s or acetic acids’ (a substance used in the kitchen) They told me that they suffered from suffocation, dizziness, and breathing difficulties, and some of them lost their balance. Among the injured were the media activist Dahham al Mazzawi, who was hit by a tank shell that injured him following him being exposed to gases.”**

Abu al Yaman said that the injuries were mild and were treated by only spraying their bodies with water behind the battlefield. He explained this by the backward windspeed which reduced the concentration of the gases in the targeted area.

Abdul Mun'im Eissa<sup>2</sup>, a local media activist who headed for the attack area after the attack, told SNHR: **“I saw five of the fighters who were exposed to poison gases and they confirmed that it was chlorine, because they were exposed to it in the past. The symptoms included breathing difficulties and coughing. They were treated behind the battlefield using water as there was no need to take them to the medical point.”**

Abdul Mun'im and Abu al Yaman both confirmed that the attack took place after 13:30. While Abdul Mun'im assured that Syrian regime forces used hand grenades, Abu al Yaman said that he can't conclusively identify the weapon used in the attack because of the severe shelling that targeted the area, as he said that no less than seven tanks were trying to advance on Tayba battlefield.

<sup>1</sup> We contacted him on Joubar Media Office Facebook page on June 23, 2017

<sup>2</sup> We contacted him via Facebook on June 23, 2017





## 2- Zamalka town, Damascus suburbs – Sunday, July 2, 2017

Around 01:35, Syrian regime forces used hand grenades loaded with a poison gas on the western battlefield in Zamalka town, Eastern Ghouta. No less than nine armed opposition [fighters](#) were [injured](#) and suffered from suffocation and coughing.

Average temperature on that day in the vicinity of Damascus city was 32 Celsius, while windspeed was at six km/s.

Noor Adam <sup>3</sup>, a local media activist from Damascus Media Center, said that he visited the attack site and identified a smell that is similar to the smell of cleaning supplies and chlorine: **“As soon as I got there, my eyes started to tear, and I was affected by the smell, and suffered from suffocation and breathing difficulties. One of the injured rebels told me that the regime threw hand grenades loaded with a poison gas at them after midnight. They were treated using oxygen and sprayed water.”**



A [video](#) published by a local media activist showing some of the injured at a makeshift hospital. The media activist says that they were injured by poison gases after the town was targeted with chlorine-loaded bombs

<sup>3</sup> We contacted him via WhatsApp on July 3, 2017



### 3- Ein Tarma town, Damascus suburbs – Thursday, July 6, 2017

Around 09:20, Syrian regime forces used hand grenades loaded with a poison gas at a military point belonging to the armed opposition in western Ein Tarma town to the east of the capital Damascus. No less than [eight](#) armed [opposition fighters](#) were injured, where two of the injured had to be transferred to a medical point in Joubar neighborhood. The injured suffered from suffocation, nausea, and coughing.

Average temperature on that day in the vicinity of Damascus city was 31 Celsius, while windspeed was at 21 km/s.

We contacted Abu Mohammad <sup>4</sup>, a media officer who works at the medical point of Joubar neighborhood. Abu Mohammad told us that two of the injured were transferred to the medical point, where he works: “The two injured who got to the medical point told me that bombs loaded with poison gases targeted a group for them in western Ein Tarma town from the side of Sunbul Gas Station on the south road at about 09:30. They described the smell as being similar to the smell of cleaning supplies. They exhibited symptoms such as breathing difficulties, coughing, nausea, burning in the eyes, and irritated respiratory tract. The doctors gave them an extender for their trachea and enhanced their breathing with oxygen.”

Abu Mohammad provided us with a video he recorded at the medical point. The video is of a paramedic talking about the cases they received and the symptoms the injured exhibited. Also, the [video](#) shows the injured receiving first-aid.



<sup>4</sup> We contacted him via Facebook on July 6, 2017



#### 4- Ein Tarma town, Damascus suburbs – Friday, July 14, 2017

Around 11:00, Syrian regime forces used hand grenades loaded with poison gases on the lines of the western battlefield in [Ein Tarma town](#), Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs. Four fighters from Failaq al Rahman, an armed opposition faction, were injured. The doctors who examined the [injured](#) said that the symptoms were suffocation and irritated respiratory tract, while one of the injured suffered from a pinpoint pupil.

Average temperature on that day in the vicinity of Damascus city was 30 Celsius, while windspeed was at 14 km/s.

Dr. Obada <sup>5</sup>, works at a medical point in Joubar neighborhood to the east of Ein Tarma town, examined the injured after they were rushed to Joubar neighborhood. Dr. Obada told SNHR: **“Three of the injured were transferred to Joubar. Two of them exhibited slight symptoms – irritated respiratory tract and a burning in the eyes, while the third injured suffered from an unresponsive pupil (pinpoint pupil) which is something I have never seen since the targeting of Ghouta using sarin gas in 2013. I can’t conclusively say that sarin was used yesterday though.”**

Dr. Obada said that an injured described the smell of the gas as being similar to the smell of chlorine. However, the other two injured couldn’t distinguish a particular smell, but they confirmed that they were targeted by small hand grenades that released a white gas. Dr. Obada added that the treatment started by washing the injured’s faces with water, enhancing their breathing via an oxygen mask, and pulling the released substances from their respiratory tract.

We spoke to Abu Malik <sup>6</sup>, another doctor who also works at the medical point in Joubar neighborhood. Abu Malik told SNHR: **“I was able to distinguish the chlorine smell, which was very explicit. The clothes on one of the injured were reeking of it. The remaining injured didn’t confirm that they were targeted with chlorine.”** Abu Malik said that he examined two injured that he said they were injured in the same attack, but exhibited different symptoms such as a skin rash at the neck area, dizziness, red eyes, and a pinpoint pupil. Abu Malik added: **“Those injured couldn’t distinguish any absurd smell from the bombs that exploded near them”**

---

<sup>5</sup> We contacted him via WhatsApp on July 15, 2017

<sup>6</sup> We contacted him via WhatsApp on July 14, 2017







A pinpoint pupil for one of the injured in the chemical attack that was carried out by Syrian regime forces in Ein Tarma town – July 14, 2017



الغوطة الآن | صور إصابات بحالات إختناق جراء استنشاقهم غاز السارين جرعة مخففة، حالة حدقة دبوسية مع أعراض إختناق مع تهيج جلدي . حيث تم استهداف بلدة عين ترما مرتين خلال ال 24 ساعة الماضية

[facebook.com/GhoutaNow](https://facebook.com/GhoutaNow)

[twitter.com/GhoutaNow](https://twitter.com/GhoutaNow)

[telegram.com/GhoutaNow](https://telegram.com/GhoutaNow)

One of the injured in the chemical attack that was carried out by Syrian regime forces in Ein Tarma town – July 14, 2017



### III. Conclusions and Recommendations

All of this information suggests that there has been a possible use of poison chemical substances, therefore the Syrian regime has violated, through the use of chemical weapons, the customary international law, which unconditionally prohibits the use of chemical weapons. Secondly, the Syrian regime has unequivocally breached the “Chemical Weapons Convention” (CWC) which the Syrian government agreed to in September 2013, where the CWC provides for the cease of chemical weapons use and the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpiles. Thirdly, the Syrian regime has breached the relevant Security Council Resolution – especially Resolution 2118 in 2013, 2209 in 2015, and 2235 in 2015. Furthermore, the use of chemical weapons constitutes a war crime according to the International Criminal Court’s Rome Statute.

The CWC, which the Russian government had agreed to, strictly prohibits any form of assistance or encouragement on the contribution to any prohibited activities on any state party. Many evidences have suggested that the Russian forces were involved in providing a preliminary and subsequent assistance for the Syrian regime forces.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **Security Council**

The Syrian regime have violated three Security Council Resolutions, even though all of these Resolutions refers to Chapter VII.

The four permanent members have to apply pressure on the Russian government in order to stop its support for the Syrian regime who uses chemical weapons, and expose its involvement in that regard.

##### **Russian government**

Cease the use of veto for the sake of protecting the Syrian regime who has been involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes, and using chemical weapons.

Cease the hindering of the referral of the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

##### **Commission of Inquiry**

Directly investigate these incidents, the preceding bombardment incidents and the ones that followed, and determine the perpetrator party.

##### **Human Rights Council**

Shed more light on the use of the chemical weapons by the Syrian regime.



## **European Union and the United States of America**

Support the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism that was established in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/248, which was adopted on December 21, 2016, and activate the courts that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and work on the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

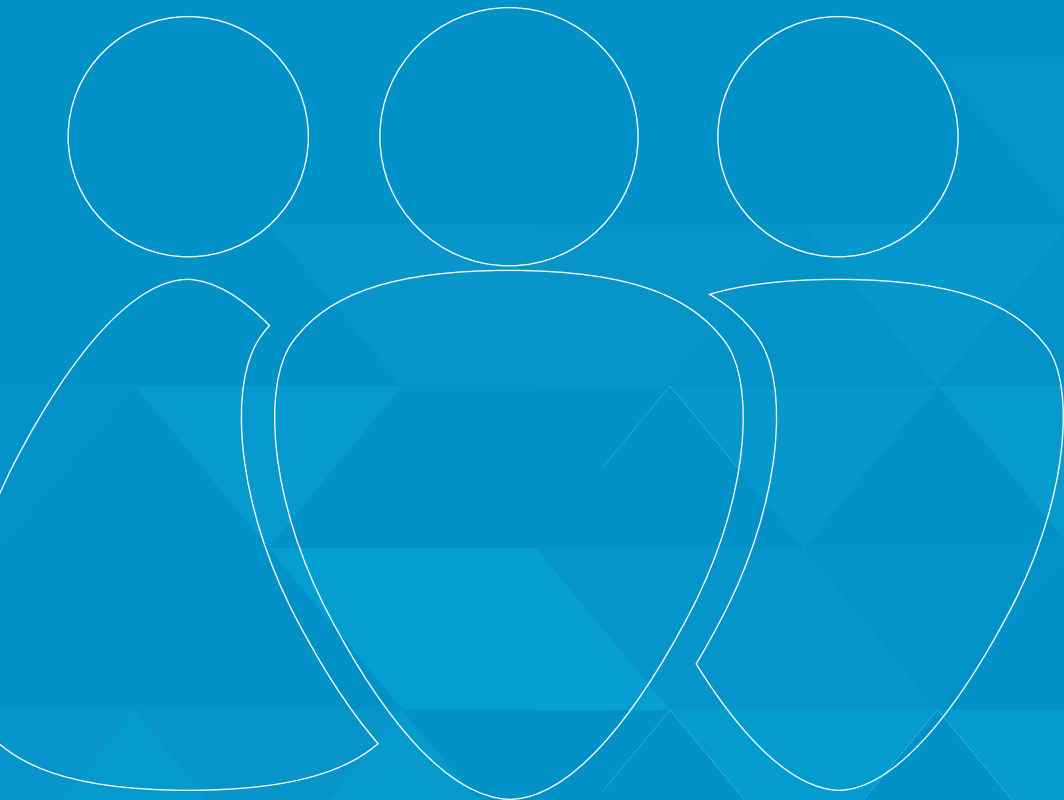
## **Friends of Syria Group**

Provide the areas that might be targeted with poison gases (in light of the Security Council's inability to end these attacks) with protection masks- SNHR estimates that 20,000 masks at least are needed in these areas - in addition to the necessary equipment for the removal of the effects of the chemical contamination.

## **Acknowledgment and Condolences**

Our most heartfelt condolences for the victims' families. We also would like to thank the families and activists who effectively contributed to these investigations.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

