

Accountability Remains Absent on the Sixth Anniversary of the World's Largest Chemical Weapons Attack Since the Chemical Weapons Convention

The Syrian Regime Encourages Other
Regimes in the World to Use Chemical
Weapons of Mass Destruction



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.



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I. Syrian history and society will not forget what the Syrian regime has done against the people of the two Ghoutas of Damascus, no matter how many years pass

Today marks the sixth anniversary of one of the most horrific tragedies suffered by the Syrian people in their modern history. In the early hours of Wednesday August 21, 2013, the Syrian regime launched the largest chemical attack known to Syrians and the world since the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which entered into force on April 29, 1997. This attack, together with the number of munitions loaded with gases used and the high toll of victims, shocked the whole world. The Syrian people expected the international community to act and to collectively demand the overthrow of the government and regime that used weapons of mass destruction, because under international law this is a threat to international peace and security. Following the attack, all the world's countries that had ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention were supposed to be tireless in their opposition to the regime that used this weapon, and would work on punishing it politically, economically and militarily up to replacing it with a regime that respects international law and contributes to its defense. In reality, however, the reaction of the inter-



national community, led by the United States, was limited to demanding the surrender of the weapon used to commit this particular crime while the perpetrator was allowed to maintain his status and to continue with his crimes, encouraging the criminal not to surrender all the quantities of these weapons in his possession, and indeed to use it many times thereafter, with the support of countries that don't care about the rule of law and human rights such as Iran and Russia.

The chemical attack in the two Ghoutas was not the first of its kind, but it was the greatest and largest in terms of the level of casualties and the size of the geographical area targeted. In the course of the SNHR's work since 2011, we have taken it upon ourselves to document on the SNHR database all the incidents in which we believe chemical weapons were used ever since the very first chemical attack we documented against the residents of al Bayyada neighborhood in Homs city on December 23, 2012, up until the most recent attack we documented on al Kbaina village in Latakia suburbs on May 19, 2019. SNHR's database contains the details of all the incidents we were able to document, such as the time and place of the attack, weather conditions, victim toll, both deaths and injuries, and the type of weapon used, as well as contacting eyewitnesses and survivors of incidents and saving their contact information, in addition to creating a large archive of photos and videos that we have received, examined, and verified, along with other evidence. We have been unable, however, to conduct special analysis such as analyzing soil and blood sample, although we managed to analyze the details of the attack and to attain an extensive understanding of the form and pattern of these attacks based on the accounts of survivors, as well as on pictures and videos. We have also created detailed vertical and horizontal photos that show the locations where the shells landed in each attack and their impact, as well as providing other details. The following link contains reports documenting 222 attacks using chemical weapons carried out by the Syrian regime, which has been responsible for 217 chemical attacks to date, and ISIS, which was responsible for five others. These reports contain the all the details we mentioned above.

<http://bit.ly/2Z7KoSG>





<p>Nearly 191 Chemical Attacks in Syria Must Be on the OPCW's... February 6, 2019 The SNHR announced in its report released today that at least 191 chemical attacks in Syria should be on the agenda of the OPCW...</p>	<p>On the Anniversary of the Ghouta Massacre, SNHR Outlines Data on... August 20, 2018 The Syrian Regime Has Carried out 216 Chemical Attacks, Including 183 Attacks after the Attack on Ghouta As five years have passed since the most...</p>	<p>After 221 Chemical Attacks, It's Time to Correct the Travesties on... June 25, 2018 The Democratic States Meeting in The Hague Have to Overcome States Supporting the Use of Chemical Weapons The Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons...</p>	<p>Following Khan Sheikhoun, the Syrian Regime Must be Stopped from Perpetrating any more Massacres with any kinds of Weapons No more than 72 hours have passed since the... April 9, 2017 The Syrian Regime Must be Stopped from Perpetrating any more Massacres with any kinds of Weapons No more than 72 hours have passed since the...</p>	<p>No less than Nine Chemical Attacks since the Beginning of 2017 April 5, 2017 The Syrian Regime has Breached Security Council Resolutions 167 Times In its 4th report which was published on October 21, 2016, the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative...</p>	<p>Despite the U.N. Confirming its Responsibility, the Syrian Regime Uses Chemical... February 20, 2017 No less than 20 Chemical Attacks after the New Joint Investigative Mechanism's Report, and 158 Breaches of Security Council Resolution 2118 SNHR Calls for the...</p>
<p>Additional Evidences and Investigations Prove that the Syrian Regime was Probably... May 11, 2018 SNHR has released a report entitled: 'Additional Evidences and Investigations Prove that the Syrian Regime was Probably Implicated in Attacking Douma City Using Chemical...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Uses Chemical Weapons against the Residents of Douma... April 8, 2018 An Urgent, Serious Action Has to be Taken against the Syrian Regime's Crimes by the 193 States that Have Signed the CWC Nearly 50 days...</p>	<p>The First Anniversary of Khan Sheikhoun Chemical Attack April 4, 2018 The Syrian Regime Has Carried out 214 Chemical Attacks, including 11 after Khan Sheikhoun Attack, and yet no Accountability in a report released today on...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Uses Chemical Weapons again in Hama Governorate October 9, 2016 138 Uses of Chemical Attacks after Security Council Resolution 2118 On Saturday 1 October 2016 at approximately 19:30, a government forces helicopter dropped two barrel...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Uses Chemical Weapons again and Insults the Security... September 8, 2016 137 Uses of Chemical Weapons after Security Council Resolution 2118 On Monday 6 September 2016 around 1:30 PM, government forces helicopters dropped a barrel bomb...</p>	<p>The Third Anniversary of the Chemical Massacres in Ghouta August 21, 2016 The First Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 2255 to Identify the Perpetrators Three years have passed since the Syrian regime perpetrated the most atrocious and...</p>
<p>Syrian Regime Forces Use Chemical Weapons Again Despite Security Council Resolution... March 17, 2018 The French President Should Form an International Alliance to Deter the Syrian Regime and its Allies from Using Chemical Weapons SNHR said in a report...</p>	<p>Syrian Regime's Chemical Terrorism Hits Syrians for the 211th Time February 13, 2018 After Diminishing the American Red Line, the Syrian Regime Diminishes France's Initiative SNHR said in its report, which was released today, that the Syrian regime...</p>	<p>Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect: UN Security Council Vetoes... November 18, 2017 By: Picture-alliance/Zuma Press. Yesterday, 16 November, for the tenth time since Syria's civil war began, Russia vetoed a draft resolution at the UN Security Council...</p>	<p>139 Chemical attacks in Syria after Security Council Resolution 2118 August 21, 2016 139 Violations of the Security Council Resolution and the Criminal is still in Power The report: '139 Violations of the Security Council Resolution and the...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Uses Toxic Gases Again and Violates UNSC Resolutions... September 14, 2016 "Russia's Inadequate Assurance" SNHR issued its 24th documentation report about the use of chemical gases in Syria by government forces mainly. The report stated that...</p>	<p>Following the Steps of the Syrian Government: ISIL Violates UN Security... September 16, 2015 130 violations by Syrian government forces and 2 violations by ISIL. Introduction: In this report we record, and for the first time, ISIL's use...</p>
<p>Syrian Regime Has Carried Out 207 Attacks Using Chemical Weapons, 174... August 21, 2017 Attempting to Rehabilitate the Criminal is a Direct Involvement in the Crime Today. The Syrian people remembers one of the most atrocious incidents in modern...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Has Used Chemical Weapons Five Times after Khan... March 7, 2015 All Attacks were in Damascus and Eastern Ghouta SNHR has released its 27th report on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The report documents...</p>	<p>Russian Forces Have, most likely, Supported the Syrian Regime Forces in... May 29, 2017 "We were Gasping for Air" SNHR has released a report entitled: "Russian Forces Have, most likely, Supported the Syrian Regime Forces in Khan Sheikhoun Chemical..."</p>	<p>Toxic Gases in Syria: Unlimited Security Council Breaches August 18, 2015 125 Breaches of UNSC Resolution 2118, including 56 Breaches of Resolution 2209. Introduction and Methodology: On 21 August 2013, the Syrian government committed a...</p>	<p>Commemoration of Chemical War Victims in Syria April 29, 2015 A One Sided War The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued 21 reports about the use of poisoned gases in Syria, the first was...</p>	<p>Waiting for the Second Ghouta Attack April 20, 2015 87 violations of Security Council Resolution 2118 including 15 Violation of Resolution 2209 introduction Through many studies and reports issued by SNHR after Security Council resolutions...</p>
<p>Inhalation of Death March 22, 2015 Government Forces' Use of Poison Gases and Disrespect for the Security Council Executive Summary: Since 23 December, 2012, when government forces targeted Al-Bayyasi neighborhood in...</p>	<p>Resolution 2118 was violated 71 Times at Least August 7, 2015 "The Implementation of Resolutions is more important than Adopting it" Over the course of our work at SNHR in documenting the Syrian government's violations of...</p>	<p>50 Documented Violations of the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 through... November 10, 2014 What is Behind the Red Line? First: abstract In its continuous work on documenting Syrian regime's violations of UN Security Council Resolution 2118 - adopted...</p>	<p>Syrian regime shelled again the capital Damascus with chemical weapons August 28, 2013 Last report issued by SNHR about using chemical weapon by Syrian regime in 5/8/2013, we documented 28 attacks led to 83 victims, and almost...</p>	<p>The second largest chemical weapons attack August 26, 2013 Last report issued by SNHR about using chemical weapon by Syrian regime in 5/8/2013, we documented 28 attacks led to 83 victims, and almost...</p>	<p>Comprehensive report of using chemical weapons by Syrian government's 28 times... August 5, 2013 Syrian Network for Human Rights' team conducted separate investigation for each case of using chemical weapons by Syrian Armed Forces inside Syrian territories. The team...</p>
<p>First year anniversary of Ghouta chemical attack August 18, 2014 Before the massacre The Syrian regime used gases likely to be poison 28 times. The first one of which were on 23 December, 2012 where...</p>	<p>There is No Red Line August 7, 2014 The Syrian government has signed on 14 September, 2013 the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty. On 28 September, 2013 the Resolution 2118 was issued which...</p>	<p>The Syrian Regime Violated Resolution 2118 June 15, 2014 The Syrian government has signed the CWC on 14 September, 2013. On 28 September, 2013, the Security Council passed Resolution 2118 which includes in...</p>	<p>Comprehensive report of using chemical weapons by Syrian governments 25... July 7, 2013 Syrian Network for Human Rights' team conducted separate investigation for each case of using chemical weapons by Syrian Armed Forces inside Syrian territories. The team...</p>	<p>A Comprehensive Report on the Use of Chemical Weapons by the... June 18, 2013 18 Times in Five Syrian Governorates Production and use of chemical and biological weapons, in all of its forms and kinds, are prohibited according to...</p>	<p>Using Chemical Weapons by Syrian Government's 14 Times in 5 Provinces June 15, 2013 Syrian Network for Human Rights' team conducted separate investigation for each case of using chemical weapons by Syrian Armed Forces inside Syrian territories. The team...</p>
<p>The Syrian Government and poison gas attacks from 2012 until 2014 April 30, 2014 SNHR's reports and researches team has documented the use of poison gases by the government forces in 28 different occasions before the Eastern and...</p>	<p>Government Forces Use Strange Kinds of Poisonous Gases The Committee on... April 10, 2014 Since our team wasn't able to visit the location of the incident and considering the network's limited capacities and present circumstances, we used in...</p>	<p>After joining chemical weapon convention in September 2013, Syrian Government use... January 17, 2014 The city is located in Damascus countryside about 8 kilometers west of Damascus, it is too near of Maaza Damascene neighborhood and Mozamiah city...</p>	<p>Comprehensive Report on Syrian Regime Use of Chemical Weapons by SNHR... May 14, 2013 Syrian Network for Human Rights' team conducted separate investigation for each case of using chemical weapons by Syrian Armed Forces inside Syrian territories. The team...</p>		



II. The United States must shoulder its historical and moral responsibilities and honor its commitments

In this context, the administration of the United States of America must be reminded of its responsibilities and commitments to the Syrian people. The US-Russian agreement, signed after the attack on the two Ghoutas, provided for the Security Council to conduct periodic reviews of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons, with all UN Security Council resolutions on chemical weapons in Syria providing for such reviews in the event that the Syrian regime failed to comply with the terms of the US-Russian agreement and Security Council resolutions and requiring the UN Security Council to impose measures against it under Chapter VII in this event. Despite all this, however, the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons has remained unchanged and often escalating rather than diminishing, and often - as we have documented – taking place in the context of near-term military advances, and constitutes crimes against humanity in terms of the size of the affected area and the pattern of use.

The Syrian regime's chemical attacks constitute a very clear violation of the Russian-American agreement, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. According to the SNHR's database, we have documented at least 217 chemical attacks carried out by the Syrian regime between the first documented use of chemical weapons in Syria on December 23, 2012, and August 21, 2019. These attacks are distributed in light of Security Council Resolutions on chemical weapons as follows:

1. Before Security Council Resolution 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013: 33 attacks
2. After Security Council Resolution 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013, until August 21, 2019: 184 attacks
3. After Security Council Resolution 2209, adopted on March 6, 2015: 115 attacks
4. After Security Council Resolution 2235, adopted on August 7, 2015, which established the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM): 59 attacks

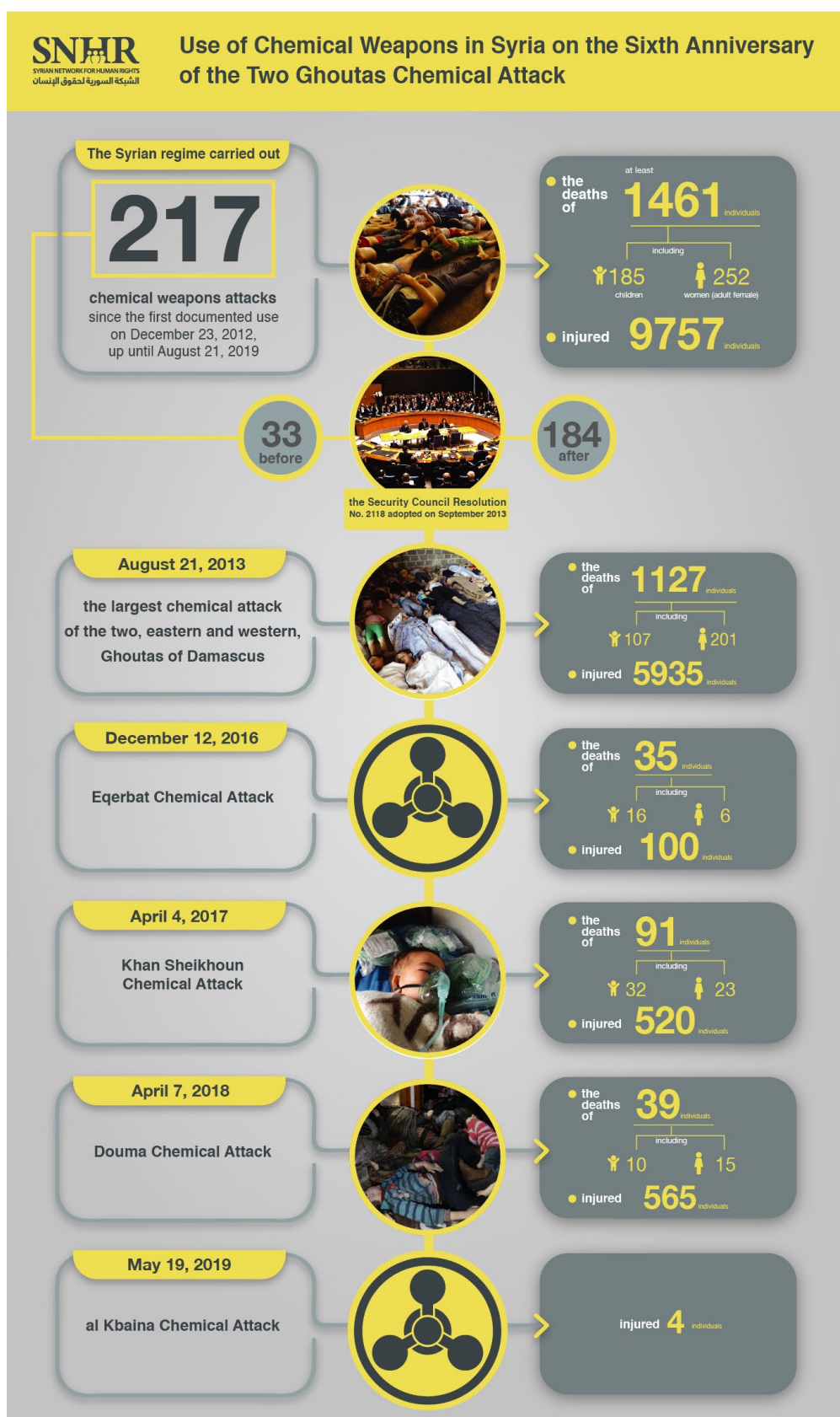
These attacks resulted in the deaths by suffocation of at least 1,461 individuals, recorded on our lists by name and in detail, distributed as follows:

- 1,397 civilians, including 185 children, and 252 women (adult female).
- 57 Armed Opposition fighters.
- Seven Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in an opposition prison.

Furthermore, these attacks also injured at least 9,757 individuals.



Infographic showing the use of chemical weapon in Syria before Security Council Resolution No. 2118, and outlining the details of the most notable chemical attacks carried out by the Syrian regime after the attack on the two Ghoutas:



III. The Ghouta attack is the largest chemical attack in Syria and the world since the Chemical Weapons Convention

On the night of August 21, 2013, the Syrian regime used around 10 missiles, to bomb populated areas in the Eastern Ghouta and Mu'damiyet al Sham town in the Western Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate. The missiles were launched from special launchers in the early hours of the morning after midnight, and used a large amounts of sarin gas, apparently with the planned and deliberate intention of exterminating as many residents as possible while they slept, thus minimizing their chances of survival and resulting in a higher death toll. The relatively low temperature estimates in the area and lack of any breeze there during the period between 02:00 and 05:00 indicates that those launching the missiles knew that the heavy poison gases would settle and remain close to the ground rather than scattering or being blown away, resulting in the injury or deaths of as many residents as possible in the area, which later contributed to terrorizing survivors of the attack and sending them and the rest of the Syrian people a very clear warning message against continuing to oppose the regime's ruthless dynastic rulers.

All the above-mentioned reasons contributed to the huge number of casualties. We documented with names and details the deaths by suffocation of at least 1,127 individuals, including 107 children and 201 women (adult female), and the injury of nearly 5,935 others; this leads us, at the SNHR, to believe that there was careful, deliberate and intentional planning by the Syrian regime with the objective of exterminating as many Syrian people as possible in retaliation for their demands for the end of the ruling family and for being out of its control and the persecution of its security services.

In addition, the siege that had been imposed on the Eastern and Western Ghouta by the Syrian government since the end of 2012, which prevented the entrance of gas and fuel to the town, along with the lack of basic medicine and medical equipment needed to treat the injured, also withheld under the siege, further contributed to increasing the death toll.

IV. The Syrian regime is the only ruling power in the world that used chemical weapons, repeated their use and challenged the international community with impunity

The international community's indulgence of the Syrian regime's repeated violations of UN Security Council resolutions, whether those relating to the chemical weapons file or the other Security Council resolutions, such as the resolution on the use of barrel bombs, has been the main reason why the Syrian regime felt confident enough to repeat its use of chemical weapons. This impunity will undoubtedly encourage other regimes and governments with a similarly brutal and barbaric predisposition to copy the Syrian regime's behavior and use



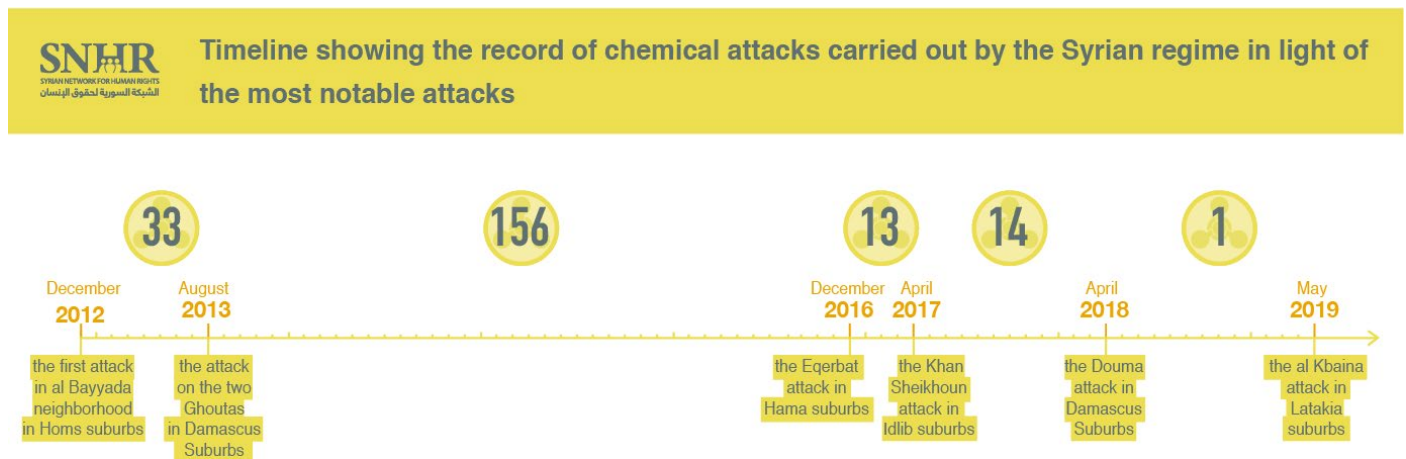
weapons of mass destruction against their own people. Without a doubt, Russia's apparently infinite support for the Syrian regime at the UN Security Council and its use of the veto on 12 occasions, six of which were concerned with the issue of chemical weapons use, has acted as a strong incentive for the Syrian regime to repeat its crimes, with the international military responses that followed the massive chemical attacks which occurred after the two Ghoutas attack being limited and ineffectual, as in the case of the retaliatory airstrikes that followed the regime's Khan Sheikhoun chemical attack in April 2017, when US forces targeted the al Shayrat airbase, and again in airstrikes following the Douma chemical attack in April 2018, when US, French and British forces targeted facilities developing the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program. These militarily inadequate and extremely limited retaliatory attacks had no effect on the ground and were not followed by any political steps aimed at expediting the removal of one of the most heinous regimes in the modern world, and the only one to have used chemical weapons. As a result, these timid and ineffectual responses failed to prevent the Syrian regime from challenging the international community again by using chemical weapons in al Kbaina village in the eastern suburbs of Latakia on May 19, 2019, with this attack failing to arouse any international reaction at all.

According to SNHR's database, the Syrian regime has carried out

- 156 chemical attacks since the attack on the two Ghoutas in Damascus Suburbs on August 21, 2013, up until the Eqerbat attack in Hama suburbs on December 12, 2016.
- 13 chemical attacks since the Eqerbat attack in Hama suburbs on December 12, 2016 up until the Khan Sheikhoun attack in Idlib suburbs on April 4, 2017.
- 14 chemical attacks since the Khan Sheikhoun attack in Idlib suburbs on April 4, 2017, up until the Douma city attack in Damascus Suburbs governorate on April 7, 2018.
- One chemical attack since the Douma city attack on April 7, 2018, which was the al Kbaina attack in the eastern suburbs of Latakia in May 19, 2019.



The following timeline showing the use of chemical weapon in Syria in light of the most notable chemical attacks carried out by the Syrian regime since al Bayyada attack in Homs city in December 2012 up until al Kbaina village attack in Latakia suburbs on May 19, 2019:



V. The Syrian and Russian regimes continue to mislead and obstruct the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

While the advanced countries have succeeded in extending the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on June 28, 2018, and granting this body powers to identify the perpetrators of the chemical attacks, this step has met with further intransigence and misinformation on the part of the Syrian regime and its Russian ally. Less than a month after the chemical attack on al Kbaina village, [the Syrian regime refused to](#) allow the OPCW investigation team to enter Syria to investigate and identify the perpetrators of attacks in which chemical weapons may have been used. This prohibition proves beyond doubt once again that the Syrian regime was involved in these attacks, and doesn't want the OPCW to reveal this. The Syrian regime has obstructed the international organization's teams at every turn by deliberately delaying the granting of visas, delaying its response to the organization's messages, and hindering the access of inspectors to a number of areas. Russia also has been involved in clear efforts to mislead the organization and misrepresent its work. The Russian Embassy in the Hague held a press conference on July 12, 2019, seeking to discredit and deny the facts of the use of chlorine gas in the attack on Douma city in April 2018, at which Russian officials presented testimonies of a number of local residents in the city, with these testimonies challenging the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which confirmed the use of toxic gases in the city.



VI. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should investigate the recent al Kbaina attack and other chemical attacks

Given its new mandate, the OPCW must identify those responsible for the attack on al Kbaina village on May 19, 2019, and for other chemical attacks, and thus hold the Security Council and the international community fully responsible; such action may prompt these entities, , including the Syrian regime's allies, to reconsider any kind of relationship with a regime that has repeatedly deployed internationally outlawed weapons of mass destruction against civilians in the modern age before the eyes of the whole world.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

- By using chemical weapons, the Syrian regime has firstly violated customary international humanitarian law, which prohibits the use of chemical weapons in any situation, and has secondly undoubtedly breached the Chemical Weapons Convention that was ratified by the Syrian government in September 2013, which requires the prohibition of the use of toxic gases and the destruction of any such materials. Thirdly, it has breached all relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution numbers 2118 of 2013, 2209 of 2015, and 2235 of 2015. The use of chemical weapons also constitutes a war crime according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- The Syrian regime's use of weapons of mass destruction against the Syrian people will remain an egregious and historic disgrace for the international community due to its failure to punish the perpetrator of these attacks, even in the form of economic sanctions, which the United Nations failed to impose against the Syrian regime in response to its crimes, despite the simplicity of such action. This shows the alarming magnitude of the deterioration of the international system; it is imperative that the international community rectify this imbalance and impose economic and military sanctions against the Syrian regime, which remains determined to commit crimes which amount to crimes against humanity.

Recommendations:

Security Council:

- The Security Council should convene an emergency session and act quickly to pass a resolution obliging the Syrian regime to allow the OPCW team to enter Syria unhindered and to travel freely there, threatening the use of sanctions if the Syrian regime fails to comply.



International Community, Primarily the Civilized Countries:

- If the Security Council fails to compel the Syrian regime to abide by international law due to Russia's unlimited support, the rest of the world must act to preserve the honor and prestige of international law and take a decisive stand against the Syrian regime's use of weapons of mass destruction and refusal to allow the commission of inquiry to enter in order to carry out its investigations.
- There is an imperative need for the creation of a humanitarian alliance aimed at protecting Syrian civilians from chemical weapons and barrel bombs since, without any such protection, Russia will continue to obstruct the Security Council and to use its veto with impunity. There is also a similarly urgent need for immediate humanitarian intervention to protect the Syrian people from the crimes against humanity practiced by the Syrian regime, similar to the NATO intervention to protect civilians from killings and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, an intervention approved by the International Court of Justice which did not see this as contrary to international law or UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999, especially since we are once again referring to gross violations, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the ruling power against the people.

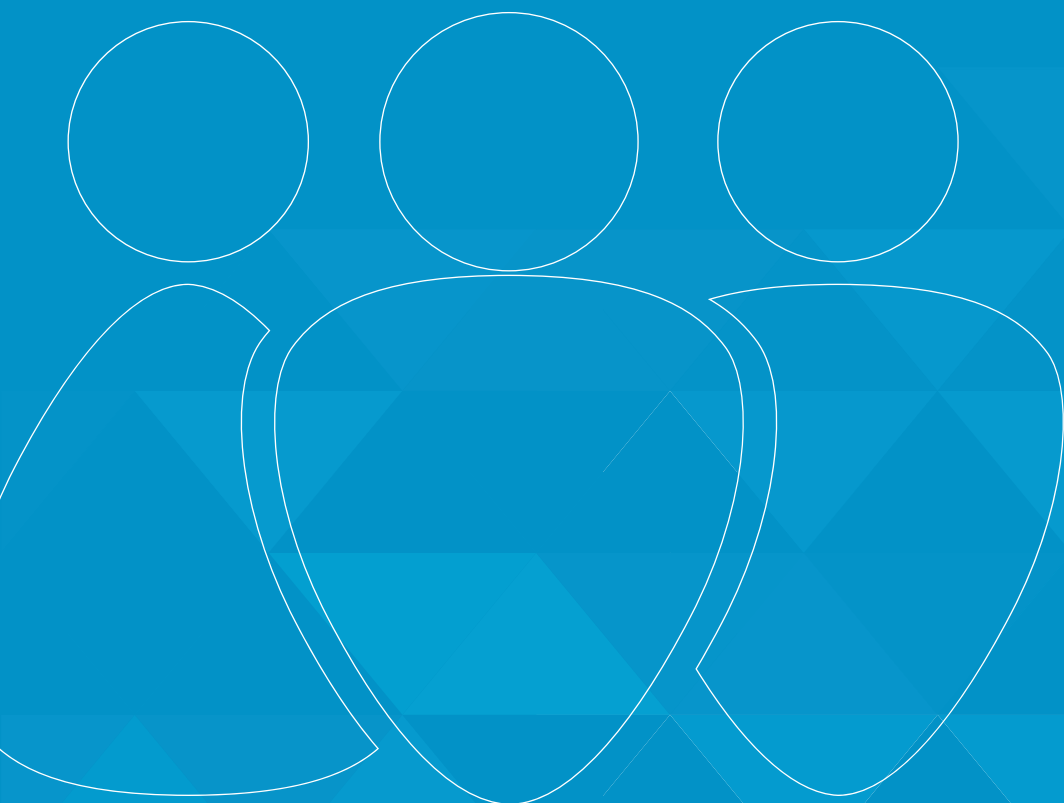
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:

- Request that the Security Council act immediately to issue a resolution obliging the Syrian regime.
- Expose the blatant crimes of the Syrian regime and its Russian ally before all United Nations organizations and bodies, as well as before media institutions, and put serious pressure on all such organizations to prevent the Syrian regime from repeating its prevention of investigators' entry to the country.

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere condolences, as well as offering our thanks and appreciation to all the chemical attack survivors and their families, and to the victims' families and activists, whose testimonies contributed effectively to the SNHR's investigations.





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