

Brief Report

On the 3rd Anniversary of the Syrian Regime's Chemical Attack on Khan Sheikhoun and the 2nd of Its Attack on Douma City, the Victims Still Await Accountability

The Syrian Regime, Which Is Responsible for Using Chemical Weapons 217 Times and for Their Proliferation in Syria, Can't Be Considered Trustworthy in the Fight Against the COVID-19 Pandemic

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

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 Regime Which Used Chemical Weapons Against the Syrian People Is Unreliable in the Fight Against the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's spread to most countries worldwide, including Syria, a number of totalitarian dictatorships (China, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, North Korea), and civil society organizations affiliated with them have raised their voices to call on those nations which imposed sanctions on the Syrian regime for the large number of violations it perpetrated, many of which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, urging them to reduce or lift those sanctions, supposedly so that the Syrian regime can combat this pandemic. However, the anniversaries of the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons of mass destruction in Khan Sheikhoun city on April 4, 2017, and in Douma city on April 7, 2018, are a somber reminder of these states' inhumanity and deep dishonesty as well as reminding the Syrian people and the international community that these states which claim to care about the Syrian people's wellbeing have never condemned the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians, but instead justified and defended their use; this being the case, how can any rational person imagine that they are keen to protect the health and wellbeing of the Syrian people from the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when we know that the Syrian regime organs that committed the heinous crime of repeatedly using chemical weapons are the same ones still governing Syria to date. It is clear that these calls are a blatant attempt to obtain funds for the regime in foreign currencies, and there is no doubt that the vast majority of any funds obtained would be used by the regime to commit more violations, with the aim of remaining in power. It is glaringly obvious that the regime that used chemical weapons against the Syrian people cannot be keen on protecting the people from any pandemic or disease outbreak, instead using such disasters to serve its own interests.



II. The Victims Still Await Accountability, and the UN Security Council Should Impose Economic, Political and Military Sanctions Against the Syrian Regime

On April 4, 2017, the Syrian regime used chemical weapons to kill 91 civilians, including 32 children and 23 women (adult female), by suffocation, and injured nearly 520 others in Khan Sheikhoun city in Idlib suburbs. The following year, on April 7, 2018, the Syrian regime again used chemical weapons to kill another 39 civilians, including 10 children and 15 woman (adult female), and to injure about 550 others in Douma city in Damascus Suburbs governorate. All these victims, their families and their loved ones, as well as the rest of the Syrian community's people, and a large part of the people of the region and the world are waiting to the Syrian regime finally be held accountable for these heinous crimes, which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, particularly given the repeated use of chemical weapons. Three years have passed, and no form of accountability has been achieved. Indeed, allies of the Syrian regime now dare to request that sanctions be eased and lifted off the regime, with the lackluster response by the international community and the Security Council contributing to the terrible audacity of these states in denying or ignoring its heinous crimes.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has confirmed the events of the chemical weapons attacks in both Khan Sheikhoun and Douma in a number of reports in which it failed to identify the perpetrator of these attacks; this failure is understandable given that the OPCW's investigations were carried out in the period before its mandate expanded allowing it to ascribe responsibility. However, the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) established by Security Council Resolution 2235 of August 2015 has confirmed the Syrian regime's responsibility for the Khan Sheikhoun attack only, with its mandate ending before the Douma attack took place. In addition, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) documented the Syrian regime's responsibility for both the Khan Sheikhoun and Douma attacks. It was assumed that after these accurate and highly credible investigations, the Security Council would move to take all forms of active measures, including economic, political and military sanctions, to implement its relevant resolutions - Resolution No. 2118 of September 27, 2013, Resolution No. 2209 of March 6, 2015 and Resolution No. 2235 of August 7, 2015, to penalize the Syrian regime; whilst it has failed to do so to date, it is still better to move late than never to move at all on this critical issue, which continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security.



III. The Record of Chemical Weapons Use in Syria, According to the SNHR Database

According to the Syrian Human Rights Network's (SNHR) database documenting chemical attacks carried out in Syria, the total number of chemical weapons attacks documented to date amounts to at least 222 since December 23, 2012, the date of the first use of chemical weapons in Syria which we documented up to April 7, 2020. These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

A. The Syrian regime carried out 217 chemical attacks since the first documented use of this weapon in December 2012 until April 2020, 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

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 prisoners from Syrian regime forces who were being held in an opposition prison.
- These attacks also caused the injury of at least 11,080 individuals, including five prisoners from Syrian regime forces who were being held in an opposition prison.

B. We documented five attacks in which ISIS used chemical weapons in Aleppo governorate, causing the injury of at least 132 individuals.

IV. Recommendations

The United Nations and the Security Council:

- Impose economic, political and military sanctions on the Syrian regime on the anniversary of its use of chemical weapons against Khan Sheikhoun and Douma.
- Call on the Syrian regime's allies to condemn its use of chemical weapons, work with the rest of the world to hold the Syrian regime accountable, and pressure it to enter into a political process that leads to a real political transition away from the despotic hereditary rule of the ruling family, which would contribute to lifting sanctions and moving towards democracy and stability.



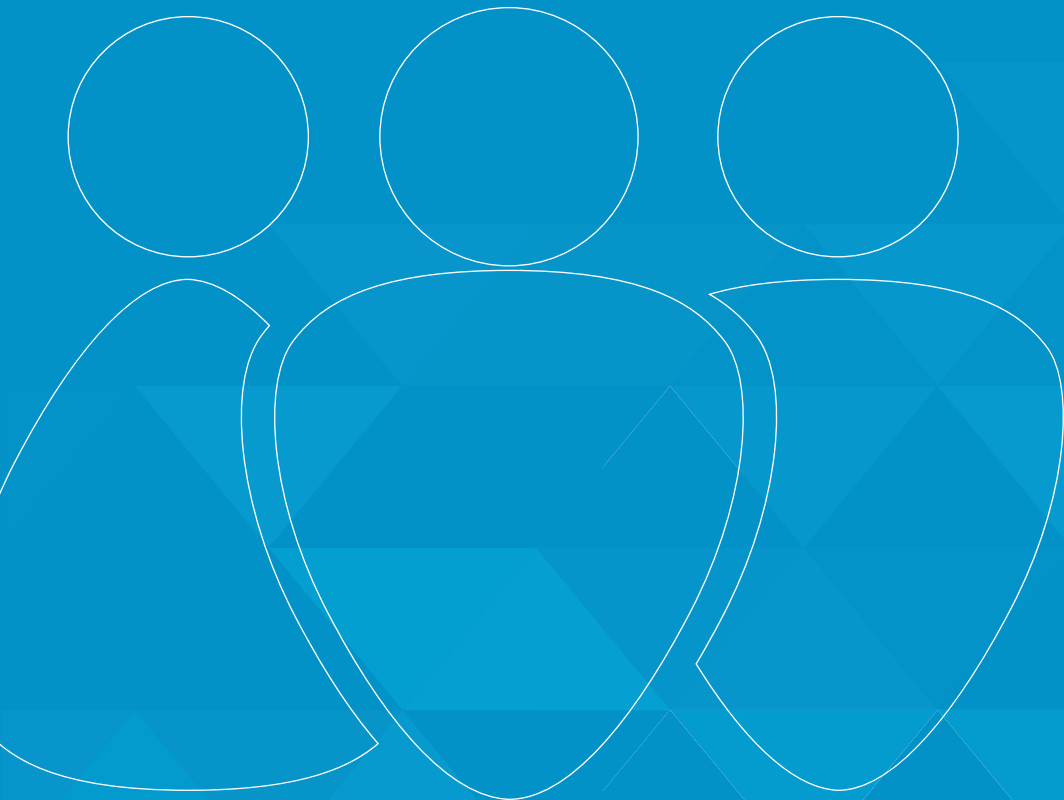
The European Union, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and the rest of the world that imposed sanctions on the Syrian regime:

- Insist on a permanent link between the issue of sanctions and achievement of a real political transition because easing the sanctions in the presence of the same leadership and organs involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes means providing support to these repressive entities.
- Increase the provision of humanitarian assistance to the World Health Organization to work in Syria in all regions, and ensure that its work is practiced freely away from the influence of local organizations affiliated with the Syrian regime in the areas under its control.
- Continue to work to hold the Syrian regime to account for its use of weapons of mass destruction.
- In light of the continued failure of the UN Security Council, it is imperative to consider establishing a civilizational and humanitarian alliance in accordance with clear criteria aimed at providing urgent protection for civilians from brutal regimes in the event of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Condolences

To all the families of the victims, who were killed by the Syrian regime through chemical weapons, and to all their friends and loved ones, we pledge that we will not abandon our persistence or falter in our efforts to ensure that those involved in using chemical weapons in Syria are held accountable until this is achieved.





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