



## The Eighth Anniversary of the Largest Chemical Weapons Attack by the Syrian Regime against Syrian Citizens in the Two Ghoutas of Damascus, Still Without Accountability

The Most Notable Syrian Regime Individuals Involved in the Use of Chemical Weapons in Preparation for Exposing Them and Placing them on International Sanctions Lists

Friday 20 August 2021

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.

**SNHR**  
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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## I. On the Eighth Anniversary of the Chemical Attack on the Two Ghoutas, the Syrian Regime's Continuing Impunity and Its Repeated Use of Chemical Weapons of Mass Destruction

Today marks the eighth anniversary of one of the most heinous and horrific tragedies suffered by the Syrian people in their modern history, especially the people of the Eastern and Western Ghoutas of Damascus, against whom the Syrian regime used chemical weapons on August 21, 2013; this was the largest chemical weapons attack known to the world since the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on April 29, 1997, with this atrocity shocking humanity and civilization. Eight years later, the victims' families who survived this unspeakable crime, who lost children, parents, spouses, siblings, and other loved ones, are still waiting for the international community to fulfill its promises and act on its 'red line' to punish the Syrian regime, whose recurrent use of chemical weapons against Syrian citizens has been repeatedly proven, yet shamefully no meaningful or effective form of accountability has been achieved to date. Indeed, the same regime remains in power and continues to rule over Syria and the Syrian people and the same 'president' who ordered the use of chemical weapons against civilians recently won another sham 'presidential election', the second such 'victory' since this massacre.

This attack on August 21, 2013, together with the type and number of munitions loaded with gases used and the high death toll of victims, shocked the whole world. We hoped, after such an unspeakable atrocity, that the international community would take real and decisive action in response to the Syrian regime's flagrant breach of the 'red lines' drawn for it by several major world powers, primarily the United States of America, with its famous 'red line', and the French Republic, which would contribute to the realization of the rights of the victims killed or injured, and to achieve the level and type of punishment that the Syrian regime deserves for such a monstrous act and for its many other brutal practices against the Syrian citizens, especially given the regime's deliberately use of chemical weapons targeted at residential neighborhoods full of civilians, including women and children. Almost worse than the attack itself, however, was the international community's total abandonment of the victims through its failure to punish the Syrian regime that carried out this atrocity, encouraging the regime to repeatedly carry out chemical attacks on dozens of occasions thereafter, and contributing to most Syrians' losing hope and faith in justice and international law.

### **Details of the attack:**

On the night of Wednesday, August 21, 2013, the Syrian regime launched nearly four chemical weapons attacks on populated areas in the Eastern Ghouta and Mu'damiyet al Sham town in the Western Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate. In these attacks, regime forces used at least 10 missiles loaded with lethal toxic gases; with the capacity of each missile estimated at 20 liters, this meant that the total amount of Sarin gas used was 200 liters. The missiles were launched from special launch pads in the early hours of the morning after midnight, using large amounts of sarin gas, apparently with the planned and deliberate intention of murdering as many residents as possible while they slept, minimizing people's chances of survival and resulting in a higher death toll.

The relatively low temperature estimated in the area that night and the lack of any breeze there during the period between 02:00 a.m. and 05:00 a.m. indicates that those launching the missiles knew that the heavy poison gases would settle and remain close to the ground rather than being dispersed or blown away by any wind, resulting in the injury to or deaths of as many residents as possible in the area, which later contributed to terrorizing and further traumatizing 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 dynastic rulers. This leads us, at the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), to believe that the attack was carefully, deliberately and intentionally planned beforehand 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's hereditary dictatorship and to punish them for daring to have freed themselves from the regime's control and from the persecution of its security services.

In addition, the crippling 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 these areas, along with the lack of basic medicine and medical equipment needed to treat the injured, further contributed to increasing the death toll.

All the above-mentioned reasons contributed to the huge number of casualties, including deaths and injuries. SNHR documented the deaths by suffocation of at least 1,144 individuals through the victims' names and other personal details. These were divided between:

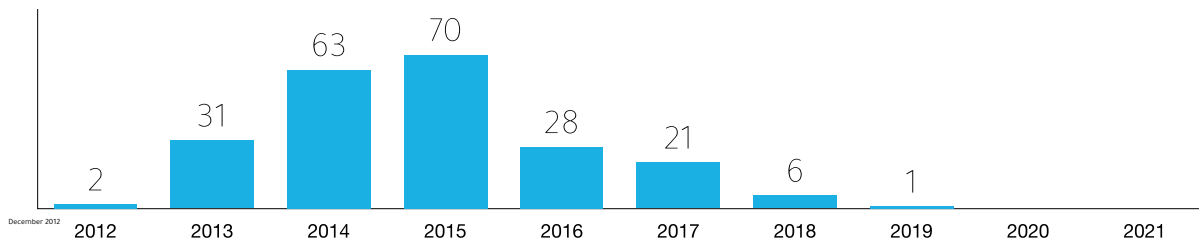
- 1,119 civilians, including 99 children and 194 women (adult female)
- 25 Armed Opposition fighters

We also documented the injury of nearly 5,935 other people with respiratory and suffocation symptoms. This death toll constitutes approximately 76% of the total victims killed as a result of the chemical attacks launched by the Syrian regime since December 2012 up until the most recent attack using chemical weapons which SNHR documented in al Kbaina in Latakia suburbs in May 2019.

[We have issued numerous reports documenting the details of the attack](#), with the related data collection process being continuous, concerning this attack and all chemical and other attacks, as we periodically add to the incident database whenever new evidence becomes available.

### III. 222 Chemical Attacks Documented on the SNHR Database, Which Resulted in the Deaths of Nearly 1,500 Syrian Citizens, Including 205 Children:

The SNHR has documented a total of 222 chemical attacks on Syria since the first attack using chemical weapons documented by SNHR on December 23, 2012, until August 20, 2021, with approximately 98% of these carried out at the hands of Syrian regime forces, and nearly 2% at the hands of ISIS, all of which are distributed by year as follows:



These attacks and the resulting deaths and injured were distributed - according to the perpetrator of the attack - across the Syrian governorates as follows:

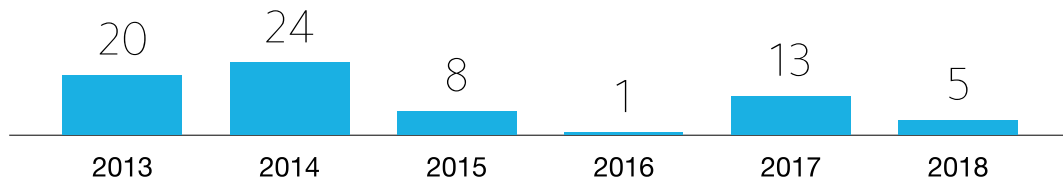
**A.** The Syrian regime carried out 217 attacks on Syrian governorates using chemical weapons since its first such attack, which was documented by SNHR on December 23, 2012, up until August 20, 2021, which resulted in the deaths of 1,510 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 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.

These attacks were distributed across the governorates as follows:

**Damascus Suburbs:** governorate: 71 attacks distributed by year as follows:

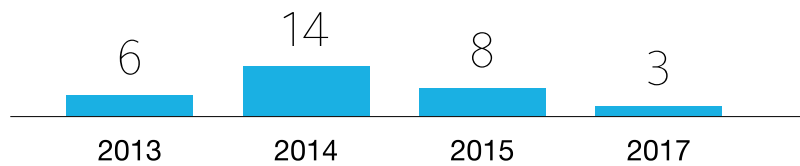


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 1,245 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 1,172 civilians, including 110 children and 209 women.
- 66 Armed Opposition fighters.
- Seven Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in the Armed Opposition prisons.

These chemical attacks also injured nearly 7,749 individuals, including five Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in Armed Opposition's prisons.

**Damascus governorate:** 31 attacks distributed by year as follows:

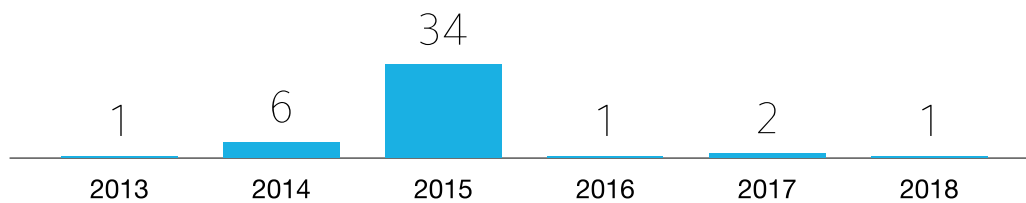


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 13 individuals, distributed as follows:

- Seven civilians.
- Six Armed Opposition fighters.

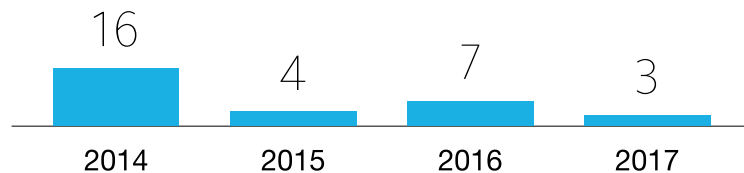
These chemical attacks also injured 319 individuals.

**Idlib governorate:** 45 attacks distributed by year as follows:



These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 109 civilians, including 42 children and 27 women, and injured 1,475 more individuals.

**Hama governorate:** 30 attacks distributed by year as follows:

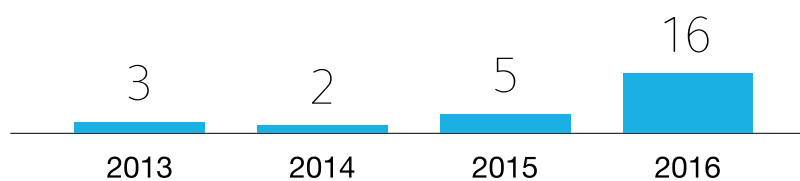


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 77 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 76 civilians, including 37 children and 14 women.
- One Armed Opposition fighter.

These chemical attacks also injured 737 individuals.

**Aleppo governorate:** 26 attacks distributed by year as follows:

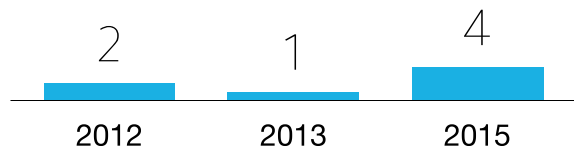


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 47 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 37 civilians, including 13 children and nine women.
- Ten Armed Opposition fighters.

These chemical attacks also injured 545 individuals.

**Homs governorate:** Seven attacks distributed by year as follows:

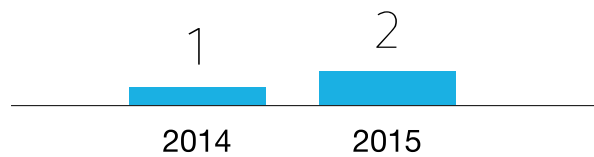


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 14 individuals, distributed as follows:

- Three civilians.
- 11 Armed Opposition fighters.

These chemical attacks also injured 191 individuals.

**Daraa governorate:** Three attacks distributed by year as follows:

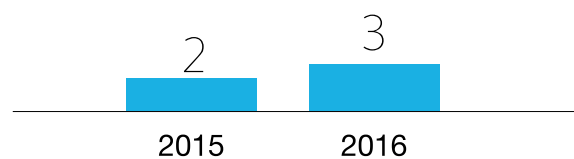


These chemical attacks injured 33 individuals

**Deir Ez-Zour governorate:** Three chemical weapons attacks all of which took place in 2015, which resulted in the deaths of five civilians, including three children and one woman, and injured 27 more individuals.

**Latakia governorate:** We documented one chemical attack in 2019, which injured four of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham's fighters.

**B. ISIS** carried out five chemical attacks since its establishment on April 9, 2013, until August 20, 2021, all of which were in Aleppo governorate, distributed by year as follows:



These chemical attacks injured 132 individuals.

### The distribution of attacks according to the UN Security Council resolutions on the use of chemical weapons in Syria:

According to the SNHR's 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, up to August 20, 2021. These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator party 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.

### **III. The Direct Responsibility of the Commander of the Army and Armed Forces, Bashar al Assad, for Chemical Weapons Attacks and the Names of Individuals Who We Believe Are Involved in Committing Egregious Violations:**

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 the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, who is at the same time the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces. Indeed, it is not possible for any Syrian regime forces to carry out missions 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 on the personal level, not only for the actions and breaches they have personally committed but also for the actions committed by their subordinates. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross' study of customary international humanitarian law, the responsibility of leaders developed into the following customary rules:

- Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed pursuant to their orders<sup>1</sup>.
- Commanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> ICRC, customary international humanitarian law, Rule 152. [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule152](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152)

<sup>2</sup> ICRC, customary international humanitarian law, Rule 153. [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule153](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153)



- Commanders must ensure that members of the armed forces under their command are aware of their obligations under international humanitarian law<sup>3</sup>.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court strengthens these elements of responsibility and extends them to include crimes against humanity committed in peacetime or war, and war crimes, whether committed in an international or internal armed conflict<sup>4</sup>. The law holds military commanders as well as other superiors, including civilians, responsible for this<sup>5</sup>.

The International Court of Justice has affirmed that “According to a well-established rule of international law, which is of customary character, ‘the conduct of any organ of a State must be regarded as an act of that State’”. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda (see above), the International Court of Justice upheld that “The conduct of individual soldiers and officers of the UPDF is to be considered as the conduct of a State organ. The contention that the persons concerned did not act in the capacity of persons exercising governmental authority in the particular circumstances, is therefore without merit”<sup>6</sup>.

Generally speaking, international criminal courts require that three elements must be proved before a person may incur superior responsibility for the crimes committed by subordinates:

- The existence of a relationship of superiority and subordination between the accused and the perpetrator of the underlying offence;
- the knowledge of the superior that his subordinate had committed or was about to commit the crime;
- the failure of the superior to prevent the commission of the crime or to punish the perpetrators.

We believe that all these requirements are fulfilled in the case of the Syrian regime and the relationship of the head of the regime and its leaders and the strict and centralized chain of command, meaning that the head of the Syrian regime Bashar al Assad and the higher-ranking 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.

### **Names and positions of the most prominent leaders of the Syrian regime involved in using chemical weapons:**

Hundreds of leaders of the Syrian regime’s security services, army and other state institutions have been involved in the violations that have been committed against the Syrian people and the Syrian state since 2011 to date, with SNHR maintaining a database that includes detailed reports on thousands of individuals involved in committing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in Syria, their positions and the most prominent violations they committed that we have documented, and working to update this database continuously whenever new details emerge. We have talked about many of these figures in [reports](#) and other materials we’ve issued over the past ten years.

<sup>3</sup> ICRC, Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 87-2, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/470>

<sup>4</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 25, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 28, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Report of the International Court of Justice (1998-1999) <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/annual-reports/1998-1999-en.pdf>

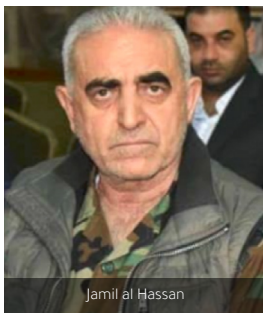
Report of the International Court of Justice (2004-2005) <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/annual-reports/2004-2005-en.pdf>

With regard to the use of chemical weapons, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces, his deputy, the Director of the Air Force, the Air Intelligence Department, the commanders of military airbases and the squadron directors and brigades of the Republican Guard, in addition to the directors of scientific research units bear the greatest responsibility for the use of this weapon; our database indicates the involvement of at least 387 prominent army and security officers, civil and military personnel in research and scientific studies centers which specialize in providing and supplying chemicals used militarily in Syria, who are accused of ordering or carrying out chemical weapons attacks in Syria. We note that the implementation of the attacks in which chemical weapons were used was carried out according to a complex and complicated coordinated operation involving some brigades of the army, mainly the Republican Guard brigades, the Air Force, and a number of security services, mainly the Command of the General Military Intelligence Division, the Command of the Air Intelligence Division, and the National Security Office, and the Center for Scientific Studies and Research, mainly Institute 1000 and Branch 450. Here, we identify a few of the most prominent senior leadership officials amongst those involved:



Bashar al Assad

**Bashar al Assad**, President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces.



Jamil al Hassan

**Jamil al Hassan**, a Major-General, born in 1952, from al Qarniya village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, served as Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate throughout Syria from the beginning of 2009 until 2019. He issued instructions to establish factories producing barrels loaded with chlorine gas within military airbases and to use airbases to launch chemical weapons attacks.



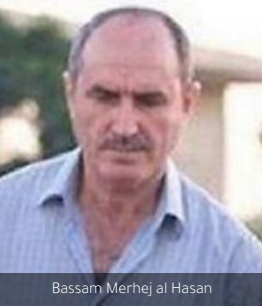
Adib Nemr Salameh

**Adib Nemr Salameh**, a Major-General, born in 1953, from Daher al Mughar village, which is administratively a part of al Salamiya city in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, was the Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the northern region of Aleppo governorate from 2006 until 2016. In September 2016, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the Air Intelligence Directorate throughout Syria, with his successor as head of its northern region being Brigadier General Iyad Mandou. Adib Salameh is considered one of the most prominent assistants to Major General Jamil al Hasan in the management of the regime's infamous Air Force Intelligence Service in Syria. He is involved in supervising the production and monitoring usage of barrel bombs loaded with chlorine gas at military airbases.



Suheil al Hasan

**Suheil al Hasan**, a Brigadier General, from Beit Ana village in the suburbs of Jabla city in Latakia governorate, Commander of the 25th Special Task Force "Tiger Forces", and an intelligence officer at the Air Force Intelligence branch in Damascus city, used barrels loaded with chlorine gas in his military operations.



Bassam Merhej al Hasan

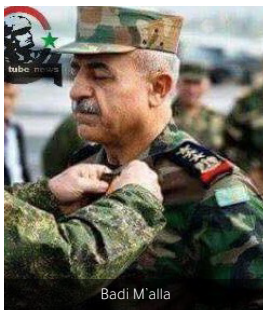
**Bassam Merhej al Hasan**, a Major-General, born in 1961, from Shin town in the suburbs of Homs governorate, Director of the security and military office at the Republican Palace, previously headed Branch 450 in 2008. Bassam al Hasan is considered one of those responsible for issuing orders, and for coordination and liaison between the various military sectors to carry out chemical weapons attacks.

**Ghassan Abbas**, a Brigadier General, Director of Branch 450, located in the Jamraya Scientific Research Center within Institute 1000, which specializes in storing, mixing and loading warheads with chemical munitions, which were used in chemical attacks, with Branch 450 being directly affiliated with the Republican Palace. Ghassan Abbas was one of the supervisors of the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas on August 21, 2013.

**Jawdat Sleibi Mawwas**, a Major-General, born in 1954, from Rabah village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, an officer at the Artillery and Missile Administration Directorate in the Syrian regime's army 155th Brigade responsible for launching Scud missiles, located near al Qtaifa in Damascus Suburbs. He used the brigade complex as a center for launching missiles loaded with chemical weapons, and was one of the supervisors of the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas on August 21, 2013.

**Yousef Ajib**, a Brigadier General, Head of the Security Office of the Center for Scientific Studies and Research since 2012, supervised the transfers of chemicals from scientific research centers, and was one of the participants in carrying out the chemical weapons attack on the two Ghoutas of Damascus on August 21, 2013.

**Haidar al Muallem**, a Colonel, deputy head of the Security Office of the Center for Scientific Studies and Research, was one of those involved in issuing orders to bomb the two Ghoutas of Damascus with chemical weapons on August 21, 2013.



**Badi M'alla**, a Pilot Brigadier General, from Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, carried out operations dropping barrel bombs loaded with chlorine gas.

**Saji Jamil Darwish**, a Major-General at the Air Force, issued orders for sorties that carried out raids with chemical weapons.

**Abdul Fattah Suleiman Qudsiyeh**, a Major-General, born in 1953, from Hama governorate, is Deputy Director of the National Security Office. He previously headed the General Military Intelligence Division. Qudsiyeh is considered one of the most prominent military advisors at the Republican Palace, and plays a key role in issuing and implementing orders for the use of chemical weapons.

**Amr Armanazi** served as Director General of the Center for Scientific Studies and Research in Syria from 1999 until 2021, with the center being one of the institutions specialized in developing, manufacturing and maintaining weapons, including chemical weapons.



**Muhammad Khaled Nasri** has held the position of Director of the Center for Scientific Studies and Research in Syria since the beginning of 2021 and was previously the Director of the 1000 Center 'Jamraya Center', one of the main institutes of the Center for Scientific Studies and Research responsible for storing chemical weapons.

**Ali Abdullah Ayoub**, born in 1952, an officer with the rank of Colonel General, from al Bahlouliya village in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, currently holds the position of Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces - Minister of Defense. Ali Ayoub graduated from the Military Academy with a specialization in armor at the end of 1973, and rose through senior military ranks and positions until he reached the rank of Colonel General, and was appointed Minister of Defense in 2018; he is considered directly responsible for the crimes committed by the Military Intelligence Division of the General Staff, in addition to those committed by the military and security services that he commanded; among these crimes was the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas of Damascus on August 21, 2013.

**Ali Wannous, a Major General**, born in 1964, from Safita city in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, held several positions at the security services and the army; in 2013, he was one of the officers of the 105th Brigade and supervised the coordination, transportation and storage of chemical weapons between the 105th Brigade, Institute 1000 and Branch 450 of the Scientific Research center. Ali Wannous is considered one of the most prominent senior regime officials responsible for the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas on August 21, 2013.

**Ghassan Ahmad Ghannam**, a Major General, is Commander of the 155th Brigade of the Republican Guard; the 155th Brigade is one of the brigades that participated in the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas on August 21, 2013.

## IV. The OPCW Has Identified the Syrian Regime's Responsibility for Four CW Attacks, and Action Must Be Taken to Hold It Accountable and Compensate the Victims:

As noted above, the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons represented a great challenge to the international community, and the Syrian case was a primary motive and inspiration for a large number of countries in the world to expand the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the first step of its kind since the OPCW's establishment, with a decision [adopted](#) on Wednesday, June 27, 2018, which provided for extending the OPCW's mandate to include identification of the perpetrators of attacks using chemical weapons.

Expanding the OPCW's mandate to include identification of the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons was an important legal and human rights achievement; it's hoped that the first beneficiaries of this step will be the victims killed or injured by the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against them. The expansion of the mandate has resulted in the publication of two highly detailed, accurate and important reports by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which identified the Syrian regime's responsibility for four of its chemical attacks, with three of these cited in [the first report](#)<sup>7</sup> issued in April 2020, namely those in al Latamena on March 24, 25, and 30, 2017, while the fourth, cited in [the second report](#)<sup>8</sup> issued in April 2021, was the chemical attack on Saraqeb on February 4, 2018; the most prominent feature of this report was the identification of the 'Tiger Forces' as bearing responsibility for leading the chemical attack.

The 'Tiger Forces' are directly supported by Russia, which makes Russia a direct accomplice in contributing to this chemical attack, not only, as previously, a provider of logistical and military support with political cover and absolute protection at the Security Council. This report confirmed conclusively that Russia had become a full accomplice in the use of weapons of mass destruction against the Syrian people, a fact which [explains the extent of Russia's desperation to distort the report's findings](#), politically and in media, through propagandists, the yellow press, and paid journalists, and its attempts to question the investigators, and demand that countries loyal to it vote against the OPCW's decisions.

Following the publication of the IIT's [second report](#), the OPCW adopted Decision C-25/DEC.9 on Wednesday, April 21, 2021, under which it suspended some of Syria's rights and privileges as a member state of the OPCW. On April 29, 2021, we issued [a special report](#) on the OPCW's decisions on Syria.

On April 21, 2021, the [French Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying](#), "This is the first step in the fight against impunity, without prejudice to the actions that may have been or could be taken in national or international courts against those responsible for the use of chemical weapons."

<sup>7</sup> OPCW, the first report of the IIT, <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/s-1867-2020%28e%29.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> OPCW, the second report of the IIT, <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021/04/s-1943-2021%28e%29.pdf>

On April 22, 2021, the United States of America, [in a statement issued](#) by the US Department of State, urged the Syrian regime, to cooperate with the OPCW, to declare and destroy its remaining stockpile, to renounce its chemical weapons program, and to comply with its obligations under the CWC.

On May 6, 2021, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [said](#) in her speech before the Security Council: "Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable, no matter who they are. If we cannot do so, we allow the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity, something that must not be tolerated. It is my sincere hope that members of this Council will unite on this issue."

On June 3, 2021, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [in her speech to the Security Council](#), called on the Council to "Unite behind the re-establishment of a global norm against chemical weapons" in Syria, underscoring "the urgent need to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons in violation of international law."

On June 5, 2021, the [Dutch media agency NPA](#) published a video that included a statement by Jan Sullins, head of the Dutch intelligence service, in which he spoke about investigations conducted by his team indicating that it is extremely likely that sarin was used in attacks in Syria, adding that his team had determined the responsibility of five of senior Syrian regime officers working in the chemical weapons program for al Latamena attacks in the suburbs of Hama (2016) and Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib (2017).

A letter from the Secretary-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to the Security Council dated July 29 on the Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme stated [in paragraphs 20, 21 and 22](#) that the Syrian regime had informed the General Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, via a note verbale, of an attack in on June 8, 2021, that targeted a military facility, which led to the destruction of two chlorine cylinders connected to with the chemical attack on Douma city in Damascus suburbs on April 7, 2018. These two cylinders had previously been stored and subjected to inspection in another announced location, approximately 60 km from the place where they were reported to have been destroyed on June 8. The Syrian regime did not notify the organization that the two cylinders had been moved from their location before informing it of their destruction on June 8.

On Wednesday, August 4, 2021, Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [said](#) in a Security Council session on Syria: "As long as the use of chemical weapons continues, or the threat of their use remains, we must retain our focus on preventing these threats." [In a report by Anadolu Agency](#), Mr. Markram, quoting United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, emphasized the need to identify all those who used chemical weapons in Syria and hold them accountable, explaining that achieving unity of ranks among the members of the Security Council is a prerequisite for identifying all those who used chemical weapons in Syria and holding them accountable.

Based on all the preceding points, the evidence and data possessed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons must be used as the foundation for holding the Syrian regime to account for its use of weapons of mass destruction. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is distinguished by consisting of experts and specialists, using the highest standards in data collection and analysis, with one of its most important features being its ability to provide exhaustive scientific analysis of samples because of the laboratories it works with, a feature not available to local human rights organizations or research centers. The OPCW has participated in the Joint Investigative Mechanism established by [Security Council Resolution No. 2235](#), which issued seven reports based on highly accurate and credible evidence, and found the Syrian regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons in five incidents; the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is also affiliated [with the OPCW](#), with the IIT issuing two reports, in which the IIT found the Syrian regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons in four incidents. We believe that these reports, along with the reports in which the OPCW has confirmed that chemical weapons have been used, with the firm evidence these contain, constitute a solid and reliable basis for holding the Syrian regime to account judicially and, more importantly, holding it to account politically by rejecting any move to secure its return to the fold of the international community, and for classifying it as a rogue regime and an international outlaw. All the countries of the world must combat and deter the Syrian regime, given its use of weapons of mass destruction, and serious pressure on it must be accelerated to achieve a political transition that leads to a democratic government that respects international law and human rights.

## V. Recommendations

### **UN Security Council and the United Nations, According to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations:**

- Impose economic, political and military sanctions on the Syrian regime on the anniversary of its use of chemical weapons in the two Ghoutas of Damascus, as a form of moral compensation for the victims' families.
- Prosecute the individuals identified in this report, verify the extent of their involvement in the use of chemical weapons, and place them on the lists of sanctions and terrorism.
- 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 towards democracy, which would contribute to lifting sanctions and to moving towards democracy and stability.
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for crimes should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using its veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states' veto power should be withheld in cases where crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.



- Since it has been proven that the UN Security Council has failed for ten years to date to end any of the Syrian regime's crimes against humanity or to refer them to the International Criminal Court, the United Nations General Assembly should intervene based on Resolution No. 377 of 1950 (the Uniting for Peace Resolution), and work to refer the case to the International Criminal Court and hold all those involved in using chemical weapons against Syrian citizens accountable.
- Initiate fundamental reforms, particularly in the area of the use of the veto under international law and human rights, and establish strict limitations and standards for the veto's use.
- Place the public interest, especially that of victims and affected countries and the attainment of just security and peace before the economic and political gains and interests of any permanent member state.

**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 since easing the sanctions in the presence of the same individuals and entities involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes means providing support to these repressive entities, and impose direct sanctions on the Syrian regime's backers, primarily Russia and Iran.
- Increase the provision of humanitarian assistance to the World Health Organization to work in all regions of Syria, 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 under clear criteria aimed at providing urgent protection for civilians from brutal regimes in the event of these regimes committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

**Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW):**

- Responsibility should be promptly transferred to the Security Council, which should be requested to intervene under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, given that a Member State's use of weapons of mass destruction is assumed to constitute a serious threat to international peace and security.
- In the event that the Security Council fails and is unable to make a decision, responsibility should be transferred to the United Nations General Assembly, and if this fails, responsibility should pass to the international community, especially the civilized democratic nations which claim to uphold human rights.

- Work more intensively on the issue of holding all Syrian regime individuals involved in the use of chemical weapons, including senior leaders, accountable for their crimes. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights have full details on our database of those involved in committing violations, as well as data on a large number of the individuals who contributed to the use of chemical weapons, and we will, according to the agreement signed with the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), coordinate for further cooperation in this context.

## Condolences

To all the families of the victims, who were killed by the Syrian regime through use of 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 all those involved in using chemical weapons in Syria and in killing Syrian citizens are held accountable until this is achieved.



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