

## Statement

# The Syrian People Have Suffered More Than Any Other Globally from CW Use in the Last Decade, and Justice Must Be Achieved

Approximately 1,472 Victims Killed and 9,989 Injured in 222 Chemical Attacks, 217 of Which Were Carried Out by the Syrian Regime

# SNHR

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.



In the last decade, no people in the world has suffered from the use of chemical weapons as much as Syrians, who have watched their children die in unspeakable agony of suffocation, generating an unimaginable fear and terror feeling among them. The Syrian regime has used its stockpile of weapons since the early days of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011, gradually increasing its deployment of various weapons and carefully monitoring the reaction – or lack of reaction - from the international community, until it felt safe to use its stockpile of chemical weapons of mass destruction due to the Security Council's and the rest of the world's indifferent attitude, almost that of a bystander, towards the Syrian regime committing crimes against humanity, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and the rules of customary international humanitarian law.

Tomorrow marks the International Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its 20th session in 2015. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) uses this occasion to remind the United Nations that the greatest threat and the most prolific user of chemical weapons on the planet, the Syrian regime and the ruling family in Syria, are still at large, and have not been held accountable for the crime of using chemical weapons despite this use being repeatedly proven by various UN bodies and international human rights organizations, as well as by the SNHR database of chemical weapons incidents. This indicates a catastrophic failure on behalf of the United Nations, primarily the Security Council, undermining the efforts of international law, entrenching frustration and loss of hope and invariably helping to nurture a climate of extremism and intolerance.

Since December 23, 2012, the Syrian regime has continued to regularly and routinely use chemical weapons against civilians; moreover, its research centers have continued to develop these munitions despite the regime's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013, with this deployment clearly seen through repeated chemical attacks in different areas in Syria, reaching according to the SNHR database at least 184 attacks following UN Security Council Resolution 2118 of September 2013, according to which Syria acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, until our last documented attack in al Kbaina village in Latakia suburbs on May 19, 2019.



The international community's indulgent attitude towards the Syrian regime's repeated violations of UN Security Council resolutions, both those relating to the chemical weapons file and even the remaining Security Council resolutions, such as the resolution concerning the use of barrel bombs, was the main encouragement for the Syrian regime to repeat its use of chemical weapons. Russia's infinite support for the Syrian regime at the UN Security Council and its use of its veto 13 times (six of these in connection with the chemical weapons issue) have undoubtedly been a powerful incentive for the Syrian regime to repeat its crimes. Russian support has not been limited to the UN Security Council, with Russia also stridently opposing any expansion of the powers of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons approved by the Member States of the Organization in June 2018, while Moscow again with its allies on November 28, 2019, voted against a new budget for the year 2020 for the Organization, a move that would substantially hinder the work of the Organization.

The Syrian people have been and are still awaiting justice for the victims of chemical weapons in Syria, which will only be achieved by action at international levels that can bypass the Russian-Chinese veto in the UN Security Council and through the creation of a humanitarian alliance aimed at protecting Syrian civilians from chemical weapons and barrel bombs, similar to the NATO intervention to protect civilians from killings and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, an intervention approved by the International Court of Justice, then subsequently endorsed by the UN Security Council through Resolution 1244 of 1999, especially since we are once again referring to gross violations, which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as the use of a weapon of mass destruction by the ruling authority against the people.

## **The Record of Chemical Weapons Use in Syria in Accordance with the Dates of UN Security Council Resolutions**

According to the SNHR database, we have documented at least 222 chemical attacks between the first documented use of chemical weapons in Syria on December 23, 2012, and November 2019. These attacks are categorised according to the Security Council Resolutions on chemical weapons which preceded and succeeded them, as follows:

• A. Attacks carried out by the Syrian regime : 217 attacks, distributed as follows:

1. Before Security Council Resolution No. 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013: 33 attacks.
2. After Security Council Resolution No. 2118, adopted on September 27, 2013, until November 2019: 184 attacks.
3. After Security Council Resolution No. 2209, adopted on March 6, 2015: 115 attacks.
4. After Security Council Resolution No. 2235, adopted on August 7, 2015, which established the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM): 59 attacks



• B. Attacks carried out by ISIS: Five attacks, all of which took place after Security Council Resolutions 2118, 2209, 2235.

These attacks by the Syrian regime and ISIS collectively resulted in the deaths of at least 1,472 individuals, recorded on our lists by name and in detail. All of the victims died in attacks carried out by the Syrian regime, and are categorized as follows:

- 1,397 civilians, including 186 children, and 252 women (adult female).
- 68 Armed Opposition fighters.
- Seven Syrian regime prisoners of war who were being held in an opposition prison.

The chemical attacks also injured at least 9,889 individuals, categorized as follows:

- 9,757 were injured as a result of attacks carried out by the Syrian regime.
- 132 were injured as a result of attacks carried out attacks by ISIS.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the Joint Investigative Mechanism established by UN Security Council Resolution No. 2235, international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and dozens of reports by the SNHR have repeatedly proved the Syrian regime's responsibility for the use of chemical weapons.
- The Syrian regime, through the use of chemical weapons, has violated a wide range of customary IHL rules, and these repeated and widespread violations constitute crimes against humanity as well as war crimes in accordance with Article VII and VIII of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- The Syrian regime has also violated all UN Security Council Resolutions on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **The US Administration:**

- Conduct investigations into other chemical weapons attacks carried out by the Syrian regime and expose the regime's and its allies' practices; under the agreement signed between the US government and the Syrian Network for Human Rights, we will soon be providing documentation of the incidents we have documented on the SNHR database, which we hope will be a major contribution to further investigations and to revealing the truth of these terrible events.
- Prosecute officers and political and military leaders responsible for the chemical weapons issue in Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights will provide, in accordance with the agreement, lists of those involved in the use of chemical weapons.



- Maintain the “Red Line” pledge by targeting forces and airbases that continue to use chemical weapons of mass destruction, and prosecute the leaders who ordered these forces to use chemical weapons.
- Form a civilized alliance aimed at eliminating the Syrian regime’s remaining stocks of chemical weapons and ensure that they are not used again.
- Impose strict political and economic sanctions on anyone trying to rehabilitate the Syrian regime, which the US administration has proven to be involved in using chemical weapons that threaten the security and safety of the region and the world.

### **The international community:**

- The international community cannot abandon the Syrians and leave them alone in the face of the Syrian regime’s brutality, or consider them to be solely responsible for holding the Syrian regime accountable for its violations.
- 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.

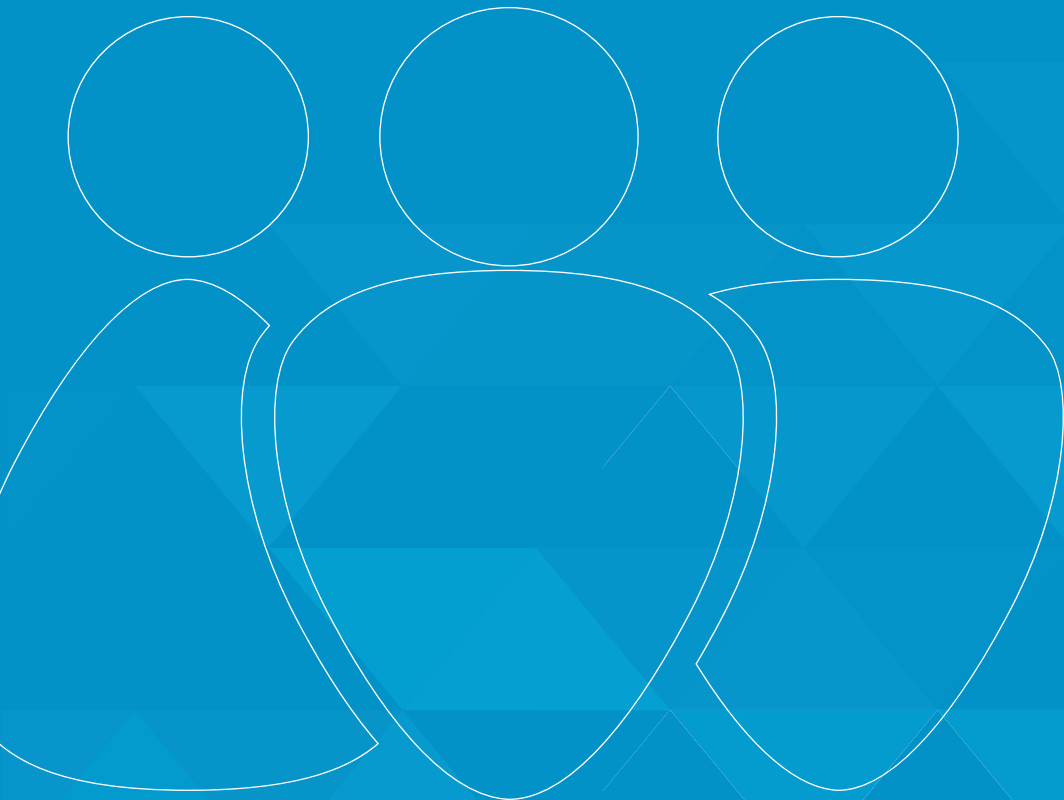
### **UN Security Council:**

- 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.

### **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:**

- Request that the Security Council act immediately to issue a resolution obliging the Syrian regime to allow the entry of the OPCW team.
- 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.





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