

Statement

The Syrian Regime Uses Chemical Weapons against the Residents of Douma City, 55 Individuals Killed and about 1,000 Injured

An Urgent, Serious Action Has to
be Taken against the Syrian
Regime's Crimes by the 193 States
that Have Signed the CWC

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.



Nearly 50 days into the vicious offensive against Eastern Ghouta, Syrian-Russian alliance forces have managed to take over 80% of the areas of Eastern Ghouta, splitting it effectively into three sectors. Consequently, Syrian-Russian forces started working on separate settlements for each sector that resulted in displacing thousands of civilians. On March 25, negotiations started on Douma city. The agreement included provisions regarding a cessation of hostilities in order to start evacuating groups of civilians as well as some fighters with their light weapons, while those who wish to stay and settle their situation can do so. Also, the agreement provided that some gunmen from Jaish al Islam are to stay with their weapons, where they were to be repurposed as civilian police. 4,500 individuals have been evacuated on four waves in accordance with the agreement.

On April 6, 2018 however, Syrian-Iranian alliance forces resumed bombing Douma city after negotiations were obstructed, as Russian-Syrian air forces carried out about 350 airstrikes over the course of two days while Syrian regime helicopters dropped no less than 120 barrel bombs. Approximately 180,000 civilians remain trapped in Douma city inside shelters and basements in light of an extremely dire situation on all fronts - medical, health, and food as there is no end in sight for the air and ground shelling.

On April 7, 2018, Syrian regime forces carried out two air chemical attacks in northern Douma city within three hours. The first attack was at 16:00 near Sa'da bakery building in Omar ben al Khattab Street that resulted in 15 injuries. The second attack took place at approximately 19:30 near al Shuhada Square in Nu'man area and resulted in the killing of no less than 55 individuals, while 860 civilians were injured at least. Some paramedics and civil defense members reported [severe symptoms on the injured](#), as all of the people who were affected suffered from [acute dyspnea](#), while some suffered from conjunctivitis and miosis. We've acquired a number of pictures and videos that [show tens of dead bodies for women and children that are piled up. A blueness had struck their faces, their mouths were covered in foam, and their eyes were startled](#). These pictures bear a large similarity to the victims' picture from the Two Ghoutas attacks in August 2013 and Khan Sheikhoun attack in April 2017.



The Syrian-Iranian alliance adopted the same criminal tactic that we've documented in past attacks, as both chemical attacks were preceded by destroying a hospital in the city just a few hours ago, while airstrikes didn't stop in the aftermath of these attacks, where routes taken by ambulance and civil defense teams were targeted, largely hindering the aiding of the injured. In addition, most of the residents in Douma city were gathered in basements at the moment of the attack in light of the heavy airstrikes, meaning that the impact of the gas was larger since it is more concentrated in basements and lower levels.

The two attacks on Douma city come merely 72 hours after a meeting was held at the Security Council addressing the situation of chemical ammunitions and the implementation of Resolution 2118 which the Syrian regime, at this point, had breached 183 times, including three times in light of the most recent offensive on Eastern Ghouta.

Moreover, the two attacks took place exactly one year after the American strike on al Shayrat Airbase in Homs suburbs, the airbase from which the Syrian regime warplanes that carried out Khan Sheikhoun chemical attack last year took off.

The international community should establish a humanitarian alliance that aims to protect civilians from chemical weapons and barrel bombs, as Russia will continue to hinder Security Council and use veto countless times.

The OPCW's fact-finding mission, which already has a team in Damascus, should immediately head for Douma city to examine injuries and directly investigate the two attacks.

The Russian government should stop using veto to shield the Syrian regime who has been involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as using chemical weapons.





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