



The Ninth Anniversary of the Largest Chemical Weapons Attack by the Syrian Regime against Syrian Citizens in the Two Ghoutas of Damascus

The 194 Women and 99 Children Killed Constituted a Third of All the Victims, Showing the Syrian Regime's Deliberate Intention to Kill the Largest Number of Innocent People

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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. On the Ninth Anniversary of the Chemical Attack on the Two Ghoutas, Algeria Is Trying Hard to Return the Syrian Regime to the Arab League

The Syrian regime has carried out 217 chemical attacks against the Syrian people, with each documented on the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database. The barbaric attacks on the two Ghoutas of Damascus remain the crudest and most difficult of all these attacks, bearing with them horrendous and traumatic memories which continue to afflict many families, especially those who were children at the time, with their suffering increasing as the years pass by without any sort of accountability for the Syrian regime and its organs. Adding insult to injury, [recent months have seen shameful efforts by Algeria, acting under Russian orders, aimed at returning the Syrian regime to the Arab League](#), showing no shame or remorse and offering no acknowledgment of the value of the innocent lives which the regime so barbarically ended, of their families' suffering, or of international law. The Syrian regime's apparent total impunity, in particular for its use of internationally prohibited chemical weapons, is one of the most prominent factors for Syrian society and the people of the region, leading many to lose hope of freedom or justice, and thus encouraging many to resort to joining extremist organizations and enter into a hopeless, endless cycle of violence and conflicts.

II. Details of the Ghouta Attack Show the Deliberate Intention of the Syrian Regime to Kill the Largest Possible Number of Syrians, Including Women and Children

[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'adamiyet 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 the highest possible 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. This leads us, at the 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.

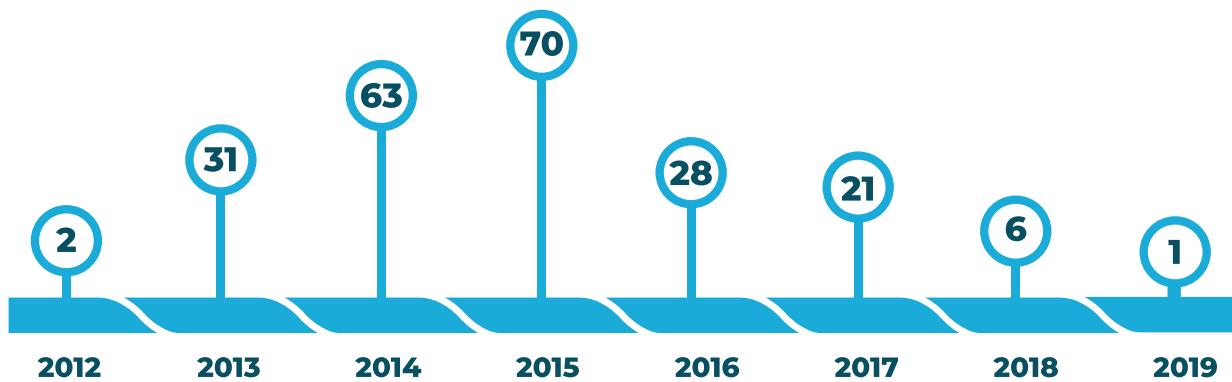
We also documented the injury of nearly 5,935 other people with respiratory and suffocation symptoms.

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.

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 worked extensively on the chemical weapons file and issued 44 reports, in addition to having [an agreement with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' \(OPCW\) Investigation and Identification Team \(IIT\)](#), and is considered a reference in all the reports it issued.

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, 2022, 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:



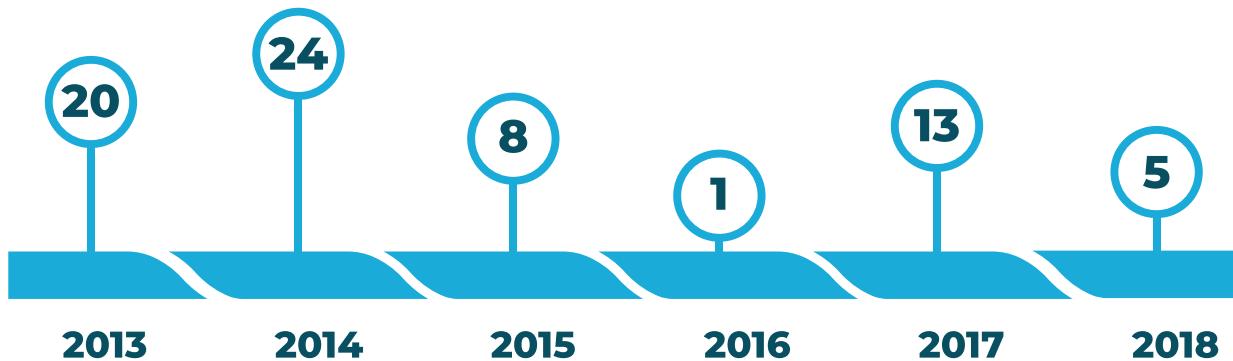
These attacks and the resulting deaths and injured were distributed - according to the perpetrator of the attack - across the Syrian governorates as follows:

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, 2022, 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:

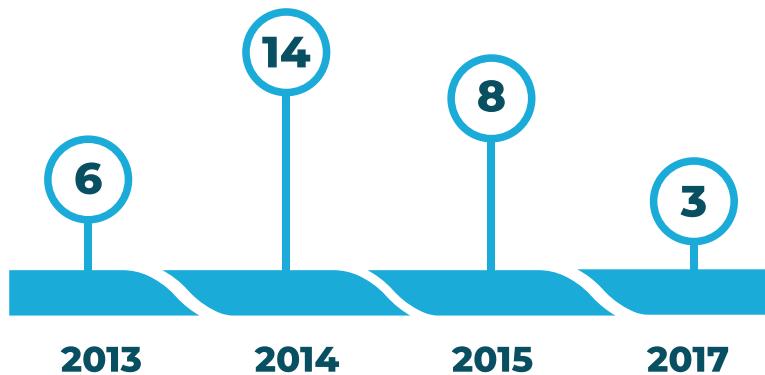


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 1,245 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 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:

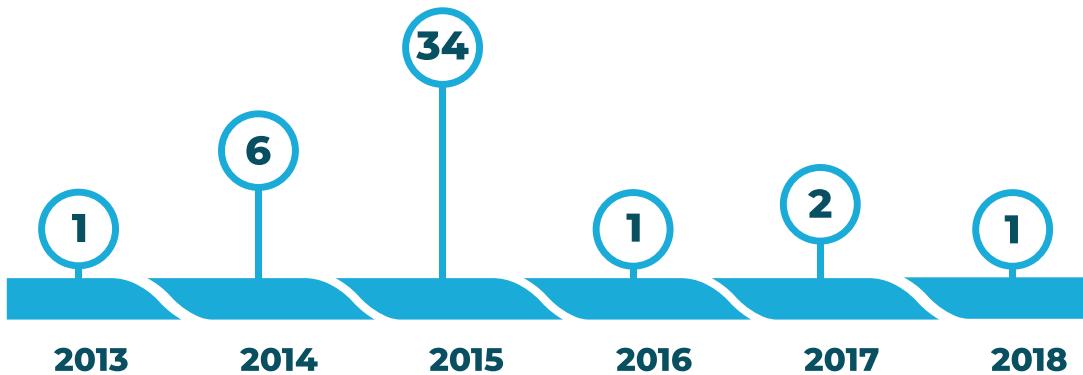


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 13 individuals, distributed as follows:

- Seven civilians.
- Six Armed Opposition fighters.

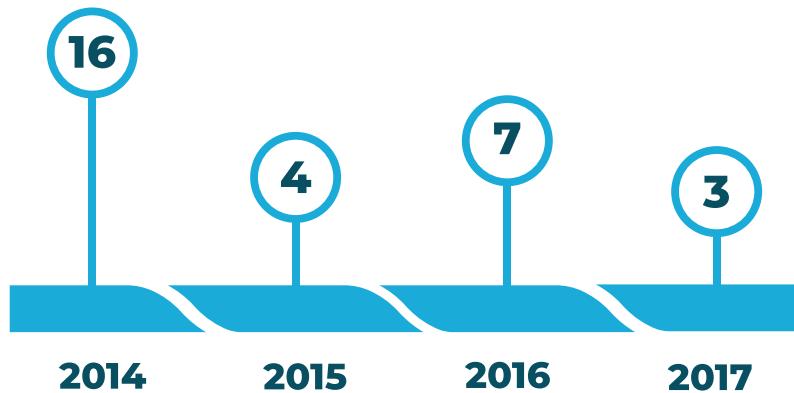
These chemical attacks also injured 319 individuals.

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:

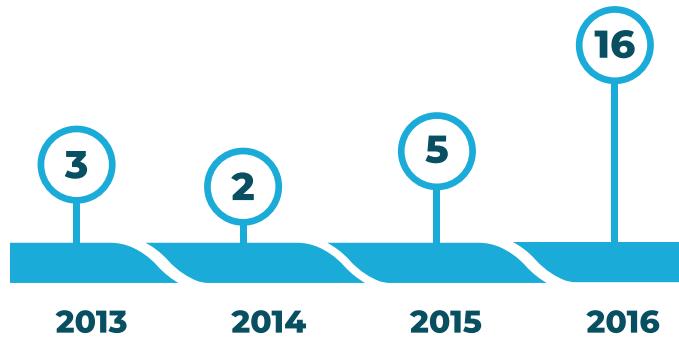


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 77 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 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:

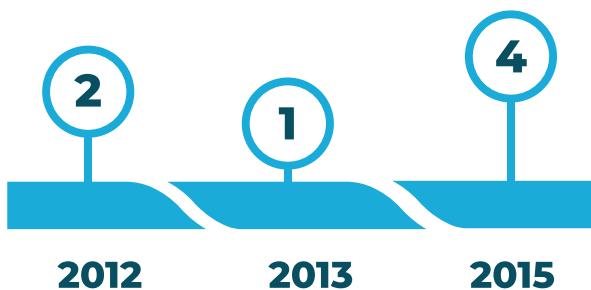


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 47 individuals, distributed as follows:

- 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:

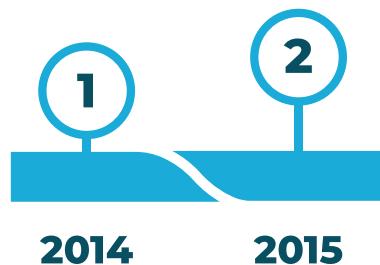


These chemical attacks resulted in the deaths of 14 individuals, distributed as follows:

- Three civilians.
- 11 Armed Opposition fighters.

These chemical attacks also injured 191 individuals.

Daraa governorate: Three attacks distributed by year as follows:

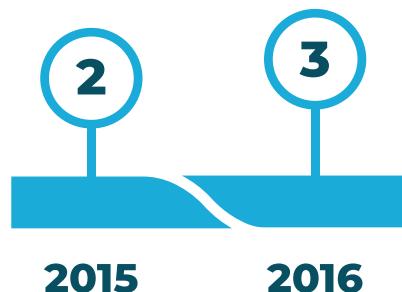


These chemical attacks injured 33 individuals.

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, 2022, 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, 2022. 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.

IV. Bashar al Assad Is Directly Responsible for the Chemical Weapons Attacks Along with Other Leaders

The Syrian regime is very centralized, and any huge undertaking such as moving and using chemical weapons cannot be carried out without the knowledge and approval of the head of the 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 to carry out actions 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.¹ This relation of the head of the regime with its senior officials and the very strict and centralized chain of command all mean that the head of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, and his senior 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.

¹ ICRC, customary international humanitarian law, Rule 152, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152

ICRC, customary international humanitarian law, Rule 153, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153

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. [SNHR's database dedicated to documenting individuals involved](#) in committing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in Syria since 2011, includes data on thousands of these Syrian regime personnel, their positions, and on the most prominent violations they committed that we have documented, and we work continuously to update this database whenever new details emerge; this exhaustive and detailed data indicates the involvement of at least 387 prominent regime 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 highly coordinated operation involving some brigades of the regime 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, along with the Center for Scientific Studies and Research, mainly Institute 1000 and Branch 450. In our report issued on August 21, 2021, entitled "[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](#)", we have provided details of some of the most prominent of the Syrian regime individuals involved in the use of chemical weapons, in preparation for exposing them and placing them on international sanctions lists. In this report, we identify a few of the most prominent officials amongst those involved particularly in the chemical attack on the two Ghoutas on August 21, 2013.

Names and positions of the most prominent leaders of the Syrian regime involved in using chemical weapons in the attack on the two Ghoutas in Damascus Suburbs on August 21, 2013:



President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces.

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.

Ali Wannous, a Major General, born in 1964, from Safita city in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, held several positions in 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.

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.
- 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 the 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.
- 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.
- Impose sanctions on Russia, Iran, and Algeria for their support of the Syrian regime's violations against the Syrian people and state.

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 SNHR 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 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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