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.

The Hague – December 2022

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SNHR Participates in Two Events on the Margins of the OPCW CSP-27

The Hague - December 2022

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Thursday, December 1, 2022

At the invitation of Mr. Bård Ivar Svendsen, Norway’s Ambassador to the Netherlands and Luxembourg and the Permanent Representative of Norway to the OPCW and the International Criminal Court (ICC), Mr. Abdul Ghany participated in a side event entitled, 'Civil Society and the Chemical Weapon Convention’. The event, which took place at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in the Hague, was cosponsored by the Permanent Representations of Canada, the European Union, Germany, Norway, and the United States of America. As well as Mr. Abdul Ghany, other speakers at the event included Mr. Christo Grozev, the lead Russia investigator at Bellingcat, and Mr. Radi Saad, the Hazmat Team Coordinator with the White Helmets. The session was moderated by Paul Walker, Chair of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition (CWCC).

Known for their extensive experience in investigating chemical weapon attacks, the three organizations featured in the event shared insights into their best practices and perspectives on how NGOs’ investigations and reports can contribute to the implementation of the CWC.

The event aimed to inform the state parties about the activities of civil society organizations actively involved in documenting, investigating, and reporting on chemical weapons attacks, especially key NGOs who were denied accreditation to the CSP by a small group of state parties.

In his address at the event, Mr. Abdul Ghany gave a presentation on the use of chemical weapons in Syria in which he shed light on the Syrian regime’s repeated and widespread use of chemical weapons, as well as outlining the reports by the UN and OPCW on the issue. Furthermore, Mr. Abdul Ghany underscored SNHR’s work in this regard, with the group having documented 217 attacks involving the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, including 184 attacks since the regime ratified the CWC. In total, Mr. Abdul Ghany stressed, these attacks have resulted in the death of 1,510 individuals who suffocated to death. Of these victims, 1,409 were civilians, including 205 children and 260 women (adult female). The attacks also injured 11,080 other individuals. Mr. Abdul Ghany also stressed that since a task such as carrying out attacks involving the use of chemical weapons is one of great complexity, these attacks could not have been carried out without the knowledge and approval of Bashar Assad in the case with a highly centralized apparatus such as the Syrian regime. He emphasized that the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime is a violation of international law and a clear attempt to suppress the Syrian people and their legitimate demands for freedom and democracy.
Mr. Abdul Ghany concluded his address by affirming that the SNHR calls for collective measures to be imposed in accordance with international law based on the massive quantities of verified information and data concerning the Syrian regime’s use of chemical weapons, particularly the reports by the OPCW’s Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 3 of the Convention. Moreover, he noted that the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council must be briefed on this issue and on all of these reports’ relevant data and conclusions, in accordance with Article 12, Paragraph 4 of the Convention. He also added that responsibility for action on this matter should be referred swiftly to the Security Council, which should be called on to implement the relevant resolutions and to intervene in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, since a state member has used weapons of mass destruction in a way that poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Additionally, Mr. Abdul Ghany highlighted that member states, especially those which pride themselves on being civilized nations, such as France and the United States of America, need to invoke their rights enshrined in Article IX, Paragraph 8 of the Convention to request an on-site challenge inspection in the Syrian territories “for the sole purpose of clarifying and resolving any questions concerning possible non-compliance with the provisions of this Convention” by the Syrian government, as well as invoking the rights established in Paragraph 12 (a) of the same article, where a representative is sent to “observe the conduct of the challenge inspection” and to ensure that this inspection is carried out without obstruction.

Additional information gathered by SNHR’s database shows that no fewer than 387 individuals, including high-ranking military officers, as well as security officials and civil and military workers are confirmed as having been directly involved in this process, adding that all of these individuals have rightfully earned their place on the US and EU sanction lists.
Mr. Abdul Ghany also took part in another side-event, entitled ‘Dialogue With the Civil Society’, which was organized by the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Germany, Norway, the United States of America, and the European Union, together with the French Presidency of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

At the event, Mr. Abdul Ghany stressed that the Syrian regime’s repeated and widespread use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people strips the regime of its legitimacy according to international and domestic laws. The regime’s allied states, he added, should fully realize this fact and listen to Syrian human rights groups.

SNHR has worked extensively on the issue of chemical weapons, releasing a total of 44 reports to date. Furthermore, SNHR has concluded a Principles of Cooperation Agreement with the OPCW’s IIT and has been a primary reference source in all of the reports released by the team. In addition, SNHR is also a member of the CWCC, and has released a statement addressed to the OPCW CSP-27. Finally, on December 30, which is the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, we released a statement outlining the death toll from chemical attacks in Syria as documented on SNHR’s database.