

Statement

SNHR Participates in an Event on the Sidelines of the OPCW's Fifth Review Conference

The OPCW's General Committee Must Reveal Which States Rejected SNHR's Request to Participate in the Conference and Clarify the Reason



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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 analyzes in Syria.

The Hague - On May 15, 2023, Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), participated in a side-event that took place on the sidelines of the Fifth Review Conference (RC-5), held by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) from May 15-19, 2023.

The side-event, which was organized under the sponsorship of the Permanent Representation of the US, Norway, Canada, Germany, and the EU to the OPCW at the headquarters of the Norwegian Embassy in the Hague, featured Farouq Habib from the Syrian Civil Defense (White Helmets), Andrea Stricker from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), and Fadel Abdul Ghany from SNHR.

In his speech, Mr. Abdul Ghany shed light on SNHR's exhaustive work on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria over nearly a decade which has involved releasing dozens of reports and statement on the use of chemical weapons in the country. He explained that SNHR now possesses a large database on the incidents it has documented which includes the names of the victims and survivors of those attacks, as well as data on hundreds of individuals who were involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria.



Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, at the event - May 15, 2023

He stressed that, as documented on SNHR's database, a total of 33 attacks were recorded before the Syrian regime ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), while 184 attacks were recorded after the regime had ratified the Convention and the relevant Security Council resolution was issued in September 2013. Overall, he adds, chemical weapons attacks have resulted in the deaths of 1,514 individuals, who were fatally suffocated. Of these victims, 1,413 were civilians, including 214 children and 262 women (adult female), while 11,080 other civilians were injured.

Furthermore, Mr. Abdul Ghany noted that SNHR's data on chemical weapons is a principal source for many UN organs, as well as for the OPCW, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In this context, it is worth noting that, In January 2020, [SNHR signed a Principles of Cooperation Agreement with the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team \(IIT\)](#), and has been a reference in all of the IIT's reports thus far. [SNHR is also a member of the CWC Coalition.](#)

Mr. Abdul Ghany also lamented the way in which the findings of the IIT's third report, which conclusively proved that the Syrian regime was responsible for the chemical attack on Douma city on April 7, 2018, in coordination with Russia, met with an insincere response from the states which have ratified the CWC and from the UN Security Council, even though the attack killed 43 civilians, including 19 children and 17 women, as the report confirmed. He stressed that the failure on the part of these states and the UNSC will only embolden the Syrian regime to repeat its use of chemical weapon in Syria, especially against areas outside its control, which are estimated at 37 percent of the total area of the country.

As such, Mr. Abdul Ghany warned that the situation in Syria in terms of the use and potential use of chemical weapons is classified as a "case of particular gravity and urgency". Such cases, he noted, require that the OPCW's Executive Council "shall, in cases of particular gravity and urgency, bring the issue or matter, including relevant information and conclusions, directly to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council," according to Article VIII, Paragraph 36.

Lastly, Mr. Abdul Ghany said that given SNHR's status as an independent human rights organization concerned with the documentation of violations, there is no reason to reject its application to attend the RC-5. As such, he demanded that the Conference's General Committee clarify the reason behind its rejection of SNHR's attendance of the event this year, and reveal which states argued for the rejection. He noted that SNHR is fully aware and certain that Russia, China, and Iran, are among the states which oppose the interests of the Syrian people, and which have encouraged the regime to use chemical weapons,

and as such it stands to reason that it is in those states' interest to vote against SNHR's application, adding that SNHR has the right to receive an official confirmation from the Conference's General Committee regarding this matter.

Mr. Abdul Ghany also reiterated that the rejection of SNHR's application to attend the event only helps the Syrian regime, Russia, and Iran to promote their narrative and efforts to cast doubt on all the reports released on the regime's proven use of chemical weapons, including the reports issued by the OPCW itself.



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