

Statement

SNHR Welcomes the Findings of the OPCW IIT's Report Proving **ISIS' Use of Chemical Weapons in Marea in September 2015**

SNHR is a Principal Source in All the Reports Released by the IIT, Supporting the Team's Crucial Mandate in Syria



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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.

On Friday, February 23, 2024, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) released its fourth report. In the report, the IIT, whose mandate include identifying the perpetrators of the crime of using chemical weapons, outlined the findings of its investigation into who carried out a chemical weapons attack in Marea town in Aleppo governorate on September 1, 2015. This comes after the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) had established that chemical weapons were used at that time in that location.

The report confirms that ISIS used sulfur mustard in Marea on September 1, 2015, between 09:00-12:00 local time, in the course of a sustained offensive to capture the town. Sulfur mustard was deployed, using one or more guns. The remnants and munition examined from the impact locations were conventional 122-mm caliber artillery projectiles. The report adds that at least **11 individuals** showed "symptoms consistent with exposure to sulfur mustard".

The report further stresses that such attack could not have been carried out without direct orders from ISIS's executive echelon, namely the committee working directly under the so-called caliphate of ISIS. According to the report, the IIT investigation managed to link additional structures and individuals who were involved in the use and deployment of chemical weapons by ISIS, including Diwan al-Jund (i.e., the department in charge of combatant affairs), which was affiliated with ISIS, and its committee for military development and manufacturing. More particularly, four individuals were identified as the perpetrators, while two other ISIS affiliates were identified as the main drivers of ISIS's chemical weapons programme.

The IIT's findings matches the degree of certainty known as 'reasonable grounds', which constitutes the standard of proof consistently adopted by international fact-finding and investigation bodies. IIT's report includes data from the OPCW's FFM, state parties, interviews conducted by the IIT, analysis of samples, computer modeling, satellite imagery, maps for the frontlines, authenticated video and photo footage, and other relevant data.

On September 16, 2015, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) released a report entitled, "[Following the Steps of the Syrian Government: ISIL Violates UN Security Council Resolutions](#)", in which it documented the artillery attack on Marea city, which involved **40 projectiles** (18 of which were loaded with poisonous gases), injuring no fewer than **37 individuals**.

SNHR has been a partner of the OPCW's IIT since it was first established in order to assist with its investigative efforts, including both current and future investigations, [on the basis of the Principles of Cooperation signed between the OPCW's IIT and SNHR](#). As such, SNHR has been a principal source in all of the IIT's reports, thanks to its large database on the use of chemical weapons database.

On April 8, 2020, the team released [its first report](#) confirming that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons in three separate incidents in al-Latamena city. SNHR [released a statement on that report](#).

On April 12, 2021, the IIT [released its second report](#) confirming that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons in its attack on Saraqeb city on February 4, 2018. SNHR [released a statement on the report](#).

On January 27, 2023, IIT [released its third report](#) concluding that the Syrian regime was responsible for the Douma chemical attack carried out on April 7, 2018. SNHR [released a statement on that report](#).

SNHR has documented **222 chemical weapons** attack in Syria since the first documented use of deadly weapons on December 23, 2012, up until February 23, 2024. Ninety-percent of those attacks were carried out by the Syrian regime:

The Syrian regime has carried out **217 chemical weapons** attacks across Syria since the first chemical weapons attack we documented, which took place on December 23, 2012, up until February 23, 2024, killing **1,514 individuals**, divided between:

- **1,413** civilians, including 214 children and 262 women (adult female).
- **94** armed opposition fighters.
- **Seven** regime soldiers who were being held captive in opposition prisons.

These attacks also injured **11,080 individuals**, including five regime soldiers who were being held captive in opposition prisons.

Meanwhile, ISIS has carried out **five** chemical weapons attacks since the group emerged in Syria on April 9, 2013, up until February 23, 2024. All five of ISIS' CW attacks took place in Aleppo governorate, injuring a total of **132** individuals.

SNHR fully supports the mandate of the OPCW's IIT, as we reiterate that such investigations are an integral part of the path towards holding those involved in the use of weapons of mass destruction in Syria accountable, prosecuting them, ensuring that their impunity is ended, and exposing all their lies and crimes, and as such we hold the states of the world responsible for delivering the appropriate punishment, as stated in Article 8 of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).¹

To read the IIT's fourth report, please follow this [link](#).

1. Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). See: <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-viii-organization>



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