

## Statement

### For a Second Time, the OPCW Disproves the Syrian Regime's Allegations About the Occurrence of A Chemical Weapons Incident Attributed to ISIS

SNHR Renews its Calls on the OPCW Not to  
Waste Further Resources and Efforts on Any  
Allegations by A Regime Whose Deadly Use of  
Chemical Weapons Is Well-Established



Thursday 29 February 2024

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 Thursday, February 22, 2024, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) [released its report](#) outlining the findings of an investigation into allegations reported by the Syrian regime's government to the OPCW's Technical Secretariat on November 1, 2017. The regime alleged that ISIS used chemical weapons in an attack that took place in the south of al-Yarmouk Camp in Damascus governorate, requesting that the OPCW investigate this incident.

In this latest report, the FFM, whose mandate includes responsibility for determining whether or not toxic chemicals have been used as a weapon of war in Syria but not assigning culpability in any alleged attacks involving the use of chemical weapons, outlined the findings of their investigations into the alleged attack. The FFM noted that the investigators had, as part of the investigations, conducted a field-visit to the site in question, and interviewed eyewitnesses and victims of the alleged incident that was reported by the regime, as well as reviewing and analyzing photos, video footage, and the documents provided by the Syrian regime's government, in addition to examining the chemical analyses of the samples received and collected, while also reviewing open source materials.

After examining and collecting all the information at hand, the report concludes, "Considering the time that had elapsed between the moment of the reported incident and the moment samples were collected... the presence of amino-dinitrotoluene (ADNT) identified in the samples cannot be linked to a specific event that had occurred..." adding that "Based on the scope of analysis... the overall results do not provide an indication of the use of toxic chemicals as a weapon."

Furthermore, the report noted that the FFM faced challenges in verifying the information collected about the incident due to discrepancies between the information provided by the eyewitnesses and that provided by the Syrian regime's government on the incident. Even worse, the report adds that "The documents provided by the Syrian Arab Republic contained discrepancies in the number of casualties;" while the report also mentions a discrepancy between the number of individuals reported to have been present at the site at the time of the incident, the number of casualties, and the number of individuals seeking medical attention at the hospital. Moreover, the report notes that the FFM found no photos or video of the munitions that were allegedly used in the attack, adding that even the eyewitnesses' description of the said munitions was inconsistent. The FFM also stressed that it could not find any link between the symptoms reported and "a specific factor or to a class of chemicals".

Additionally, the eyewitnesses' accounts were inconsistent with respect to the number of individuals treated following the alleged incident at the makeshift Yalda Hospital. Other inconsistencies in the accounts were also found in their narrating of the events and the description of the "gas" that was allegedly present at the site of the incident, including its color and odor, the report adds.

It should be noted that this comes after the FFM [released a similar report on June 28, 2023](#), which outlined the findings of investigations into another two alleged chemical weapons attacks reported by the Syrian regime's government. Back then, the regime alleged that two chemical weapons attacks had taken place in Kharbit Massasneh village in rural Hama on on July 7 and August 4 of 2017. The report released by the FFM on those two alleged attacks contained similar conclusions, stating that the analysis of the information acquired, in line with the FFM's mandate, "did not provide reasonable grounds for the FFM to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incidents that occurred in Kharbit Massasneh, in Hama Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017." SNHR [released a statement](#) on that report, in which we called on the OPCW not to waste any further limited time, resources, and efforts on any allegations made by the Syrian regime, yet the OPCW proceeded with investigating the alleged al-Yarmouk Camp, despite SNHR's earlier recommendations, and again proved what has been already established – that the Syrian regime is trying to deceive the OPCW and to waste its efforts, time, and resources.

Meanwhile, the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose mandate includes identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the attacks where the FFM established their presence, has released four reports so far. 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 that report as well](#). On January 27, 2023, the IIT released its third report concluding that the Syrian regime was responsible for the Douma chemical attack on April 7, 2018. SNHR [released a statement](#) on that report. Finally, on February 23, 2024, the IIT released its fourth report, which concluded that ISIS carried out attack involving the use of chemical weapons on Marea city in Aleppo governorate on September 1, 2015. SNHR also [released a statement on this report](#).

In January 2020, SNHR [signed a Principles of Cooperation Agreement with the OPCW's IIT](#). SNHR is also sharing data to contribute to the team's current and future investigations. SNHR's data is a primary source in all of the IIT's reports, with the group possessing an extensive database on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

SNHR has documented **217 chemical weapons** attacks carried out by the Syrian regime across Syria since the first CW attack we documented, which took place on December 23, 2012, up until February 23, 2024, killing a total of **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.

Based on the reports by the OPCW's IIT and those by the UN and the OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), as well as SNHR's database, we further recommend that the OPCW stop wasting any further limited resources, especially after its funds have been reduced, on allegations made by a regime that, as it has been very much well-established, has killed its citizens using chemical weapons in a repeated and systematic manner, constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes. Perpetrating such crimes would strip any elected government of any legitimacy, let alone a totalitarian regime that has clung to power through blatantly illegitimate elections and coercion by its draconian security apparatus.



SYRIAN NETWORK  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



[info@snhr.org](mailto:info@snhr.org)  
[www.snhr.org](http://www.snhr.org)

*No justice without accountability*

© Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR),  
February 2024

