

## Statement

# SNHR Welcomes the Outcome of the Fifth Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team that confirmed the Assad Regime's Use of Chemical Weapons in Kafr Zita in October 2016

SNHR is a Primary Source in All Reports of the Investigation and Identification Team

Tuesday 27 January 2026



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.

## Damascus – The Syrian Network for Human Rights:

On Thursday, January 22, 2026, the fifth report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the team responsible for identifying the perpetrator of the use of chemical weapons, was released. This report addresses the responsibility of the party that carried out the chemical weapons attack on the town of Kafr Zita in Hama Governorate on October 1, 2016, noting that the fact-finding mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons had previously established that chemical weapons had been used on this date and at this location.

The report concluded that on the evening of October 1, 2016, between 19:00 and 19:40 local time, a Syrian Arab Air Force Mi-8/17 helicopter dropped at least one yellow pressurized cylinder containing chlorine gas over a cave system in Wadi al-Anz near Kafr Zita. The report indicated that the helicopter took off from Hama military airport and was operating under the control of the “Tiger Forces”.

## THE MILITARY CONTEXT OF THE OFFENSIVE

The report places the offensive within the broader military context of northern Hama Governorate during 2016. At that time, Kafr Zita was a predominantly Sunni town under the control of opposition factions, located near vital supply routes, including areas adjacent to the M5 international highway. The city of Hama and its military airport also held significant strategic importance for government forces, particularly after the loss of other air bases earlier in the conflict.

This incident occurred in the context of a military operation aimed at halting the advance of opposition factions towards the city of Hama. The team assessed that helicopters launched from Hama airport were conducting regular air operations in the area, and that the use of chlorine, despite its limited direct military effectiveness, had been used in other locations within Syria as a means of intimidation, imposing control, and creating a broad psychological impact.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION, CHALLENGES, AND SUBSEQUENT COOPERATION**

Throughout most of its work, the IIT faced significant obstacles due to the lack of cooperation from the former Syrian authorities, including denial of entry into the country and failure to provide the necessary information. This limited the possibility of conducting field visits, forcing the team to rely on remote investigation methods.

However, following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2014, the new Syrian authorities offered unprecedented cooperation, including granting the team full access to the country and providing it with preliminary documentation relevant to the investigation. Although security and logistical constraints prevented a visit to the Kafr Zita site itself, the team concluded that such a visit would have added limited value given the passage of time and the site's subsequent destruction.

The IIT reached its conclusions based on the evidentiary standard known as "reasonable grounds," a standard consistently adopted by international fact-finding bodies and commissions of inquiry. The assessment incorporated information from the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), from States Parties, and from interviews conducted by the Independent Investigation Team, as well as sample analyses, computer models, satellite imagery, frontline maps, documented videos and photographs, and other relevant data.

## **SNHR'S COOPERATION WITH THE INVESTIGATION AND IDENTIFICATION TEAM**

SNHR has been sharing data with the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) since its inception, contributing to the team's current and future investigations. This cooperation is based on the Principles of Cooperation signed between the Network and the IIT. The Syrian Network for Human Rights is a primary source for all reports issued by the team, given its extensive database on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Part of this database can be accessed via the following [link](#).

## SNHR'S DATABASE OF DOCUMENTED ATTACKS USING CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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.

## PREVIOUS REPORTS OF THE IIT

- 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.
- On February 23, 2024, IIT released its [fourth report](#) concluding that ISIS used chemical weapons in an attack on the town of Marea in Aleppo Governorate on September 1, 2015. SNHR released a [statement](#) on that report.

## SNHR'S POSITION ON THE WORK OF THE OPCW

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).

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





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*No justice without accountability*

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