

Chairperson, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,¹

On September 14, 2013, the Syrian government officially submitted the documents necessary to join the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to the UN. On September 27, Security Council resolution 2118 was issued. Subsequently, on June 23, 2014, the head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) stated that all chemical weapons have been shipped out from Syria in order to be properly destroyed. Indeed, on January 4, 2016, the OPCW announced that the last of Syria's chemical weapons, 75 cylinders containing fluoride hydrogen, have been destroyed.

According to the report released by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) as part of the document S/1867/2020, dated April 8, 2020, however, the Syrian regime used sarin gas in two attacks that targeted Latamena, Hama suburbs on March 23 and March 30, 2017 respectively. Chlorine was used in a third attack on the same town on March 25, 2017. The team's second report, released as part of the document S1943/2021, dated April 12, 2021, concludes that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that at approximately 21:22 on 4 February 2018, during ongoing attacks against Saraqib, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder. The cylinder ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine..."

One can definitively deduce, in light of the ITT's two reports, that the Syrian regime has not surrendered its full chemical arsenal, nor has it disclosed all the facilities used to produce or store chemical weapons. Another explanation would be that new facilities have been repurposed or constructed after destroying the ones disclosed at the time the Syrian regime joined the Convention.

We, at SNHR, have supported the work and mandate of the ITT. We firmly believe that the international community needs to take the information revealed in these reports seriously and act accordingly. It is an undeniable fact that the Syrian regime still possesses chemical weapons.

¹ Message from the [CWC Coalition](#): This statement is not a document of the 27th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, as the General Committee did not accredit the authoring organization. However, the CWC Coalition believes that civil society voices should not be muted through this practice and is hosting the statement on the CWC Coalition website.



According to SNHR's database, the Syrian regime carried out 184 chemical weapons attacks after joining the CWC and after the issuance of the Security Council resolution in question, back in September 2013. Before that, the Syrian regime carried out 33 of the 217 chemical attacks in total perpetrated by the Syrian regime against its people since March 2011, in which 1,510 individuals were suffocated and killed, including 1,409 civilians, 205 children, and 260 adult women. Additionally, those attacks resulted in injuries for 11,080 individuals. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has presented proof that the Syrian regime was responsible for 32 chemical attacks since March 2011, while the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) held the Syrian regime responsible for four attacks that occurred between 2014 and 2015.

A task such as carrying out attacks that involve the use of chemical weapons is one of great complexity. The Syrian regime is a highly centralized apparatus. As such, those attacks could not have been carried out without the knowledge and approval of Bashar Assad. Using chemical weapons is a calculated policy for the Syrian regime based on a central decision, in which the institutions of the regime's military and intelligence branches are incriminated, particularly the leaderships of the General Intelligence Directorate, Air Force Intelligence Directorate, the National Security Bureau, and the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (especially institute 1000 and branch 450). Our data shows that no fewer than 387 individuals who are high-ranking military officers, as well as security officials and civil and military workers, are involved. All of those individuals have rightfully earned their place on the US and EU sanction lists.

Based on the reports and documents released by the OPCW, the Syrian regime has categorically violated the CWC in a deliberate and widespread manner. According to the reports released by the OPCW's Technical Secretariat, which provide updates on progress, the Syrian regime is still hindering the efforts to hold the 25th round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian government. Further, the Technical Secretary has yet to receive a response to its request for information on unauthorized movement, and the remnants of two destroyed cylinders concerning the chemical attack that occurred in Douma, Damascus suburbs, on April 7, 2018.

Based on the above, particularly the ITT reports, and in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 3 of the CWC, we call on the OPCW to recommend to the State Parties that they take collective measures in accordance with international law. Moreover, the case, including



all relevant information and conclusions, should be presented to the UN General Assembly and the Security Council according to Article 12, Paragraph 12.

The case should also be quickly referred to the Security Council which, in turn, should act accordingly, and invoke the relevant resolutions, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, given that a member state has used a weapon of mass destruction that apparently poses a serious threat to international safety and security.

The member states, especially those who pride themselves in 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 CWC and 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. Also, we recommend the invocation of 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 the inspection is carried out without any further delay.

