

Statement

On the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare the Syrian Regime Still Possesses a Chemical Weapon Arsenal, With Serious Concerns Over Chemical Weapons Potentially Being Used Again in Syria

No Fewer than

1,514

Syrian Citizens

Have Suffocated to
Death in Chemical
Weapons Attacks

including 214 Children
and 262 Women, with
12,000 Injured Still
Awaiting Accountability
for the Syrian Regime



Thursday 30 November 2023

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.

Having been formally approved at the 20th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), held in 2015, November 30 of every year is observed as the [Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare](#). This occasion is a token of recognition and memorialization by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of the continuing suffering of chemical weapons attacks' survivors and of their right to effective support and advocacy. On this day, the state parties to the OPCW reaffirm their commitment to bringing about a world truly free of the threat of chemical weapons. This year, 2023, holds an additional symbolism, since it marks 10 years since the Syrian regime ratified the Convention; despite this, however, the criminal regime is still free, and has repeated its crime of using chemical weapons hundreds of times, while tens of thousands of victims still await justice.

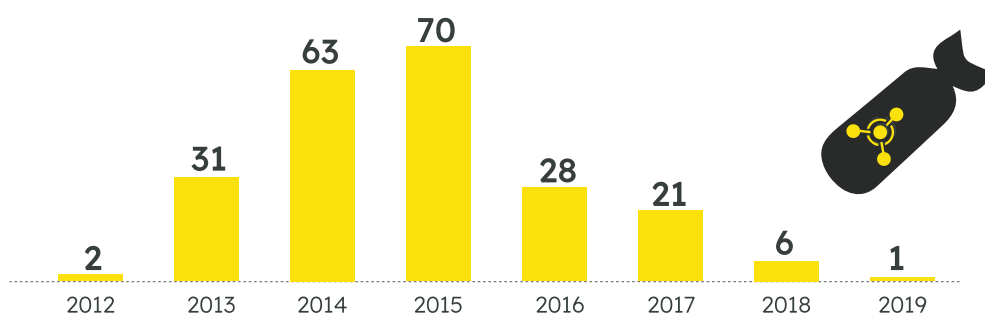
On such an occasion, it is both appropriate and essential to remember the chemical weapons attacks that Syria has seen in recent years, and more importantly to remember the victims and survivors of those attacks who are still awaiting justice and accountability to this day.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) also must reiterate that the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons in hundreds of chemical attacks, through all of which the regime has had continuous impunity for 12 years to date, has taken place under full and complete Russian protection and blessing. Russia is also directly involved in helping the Syrian regime with hiding its massive chemical weapon stockpile, which has ultimately led to the repeated use of chemical weapons over and over again.

222 Chemical Weapons Documented on SNHR's Database that Killed Roughly 1,500 Syrian Citizens, including 214 Children

SNHR has carried out extensive and wide-ranging work on the issue of chemical weapons use in Syria, releasing nearly 50 reports on the subject. SNHR [has also signed a Principles of Cooperation Agreement with the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team \(IIT\)](#) and has been cited as a reference in all of the reports released by the IIT. [We are also a member of the CWC Coalition.](#)

As of November 30, 2023, SNHR has documented 222 chemical attacks in Syria since the first documented use of this unlawful weapon on December 23, 2012. Ninety-eight percent of these attacks were carried out by Syrian regime forces, while the remaining two percent were carried out by ISIS. Chemical weapons attacks are distributed by year as follows:



These attacks and their resultant deaths and injuries are distributed according to the perpetrator party across Syrian governorates as follows:

A. 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 November 30, 2023, killing 1,514 individuals, divided between:

 1,413 civilians, including 214 children and 262 women (adult female).

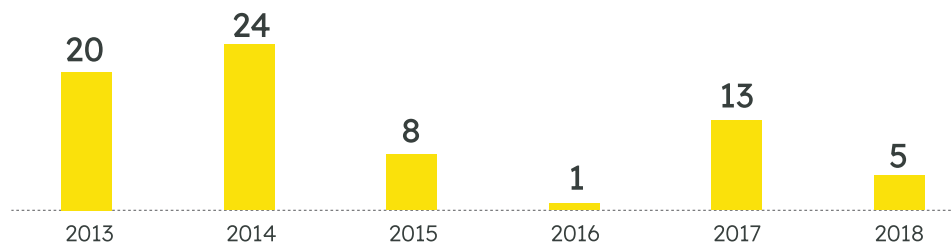
 94 armed opposition fighters.

 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.

The 217 chemical attacks carried out by the Syrian regime are distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:

Rural Damascus ‘Rif Dimshaq’ governorate: 71 chemical attacks, distributed by year as follows:



These attacks killed 1,249 individuals divided into:

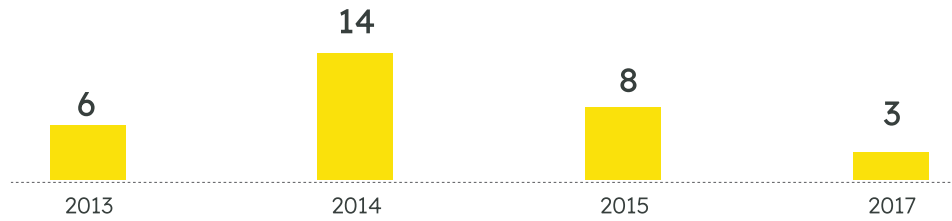
 1,176 civilians, including 119 children and 211 women (adult female).

 66 armed opposition fighters.




 Seven regime soldiers who were being held captive in opposition prisons.

About 7,749 others were also injured in these attacks, including five regime soldiers who were being held in captivity in opposition prisons.

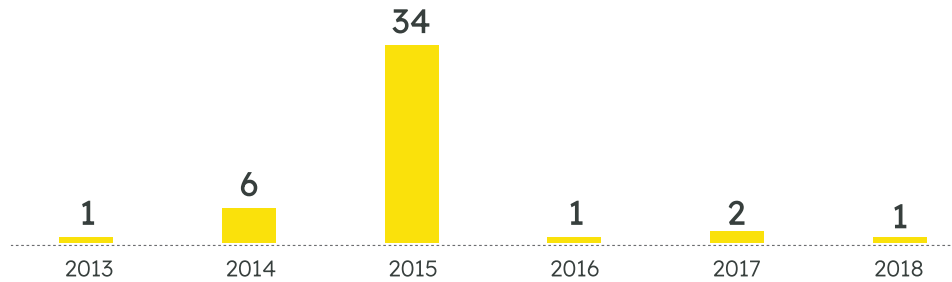
Damascus governorate: 31 chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:





These attacks killed 13 individuals divided into:

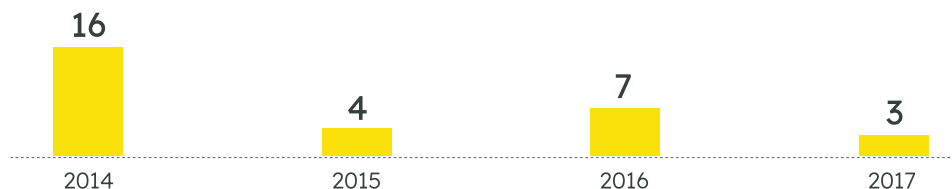
-  Seven civilians.
-  Six armed opposition fighters.
-  319 other people were also injured in those attacks.

Idlib governorate: 45 chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:






These attacks  killed 109 civilians, including 42 children and 27 women, and  injured 1,475 others.

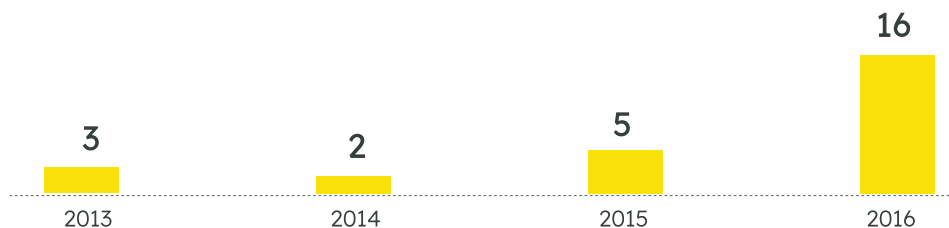
Hama governorate: 30 chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:






These attacks killed 77 individuals, divided into:

-  76 civilians, including 37 children and 14 women.
-  One armed opposition fighter.
-  737 others were also injured in those attacks.

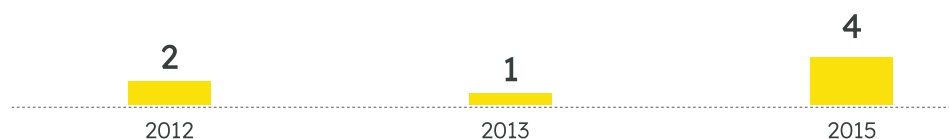
Aleppo governorate: 26 chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:






These attacks killed 47 individuals, divided between:

-  37 civilians, including 13 children and 9 women.
-  10 armed opposition fighters.
-  545 others were also injured in those attacks.

Homs governorate: Seven chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:





These attacks killed 77 individuals, divided between:


-  Three civilians.
-  11 armed opposition fighters.
-  191 others were also injured in those attacks.

Daraa governorate: Three chemical weapons attacks, distributed by year as follows:



These attacks  injured 33 individuals.

Deir Ez-Zour governorate: Three chemical weapons attacks, all in 2015, that  killed five civilians, including three children and one woman, and  injured 27 others.

Latakia governorate: One chemical weapons attack in 2019 that  injured 4 Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) fighters.

B. Five chemical weapons attacks were carried out by ISIS since the group was founded on April 9, 2013, up until November 30, 2023, all in Aleppo governorate. The five are distributed by year as follows:



Distribution of chemical weapons attacks according to the UN Security Council resolutions addressing the use of chemical weapons in Syria

As SNHR's database attests, 222 chemical weapons attacks have been carried out in Syria since December 23, 2012, up until November 30, 2023. These attacks are distributed according to the perpetrator party as follows:

A. The Syrian regime has carried out 217 chemical weapons attacks, divided according to Security Council resolution as follows:

1. Before Security Council Resolution 2118, issued on September 27, 2013: 33 attacks.
2. Since Security Council Resolution 2118, issued on September 27, 2013: 184 attacks.
3. Since Security Council Resolution 2209, issued on March 6, 2015: 115 attacks.
4. Since the establishment of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and Security Council Resolution 2235, issued on August 7, 2015: 59 attacks.

B. ISIS has carried out five chemical weapons attacks, all of which were in Aleppo governorate, all of which constituted violations of Security Council resolutions 2118, 2209, and 2235.

A task such as carrying out attacks involving 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 regime head Bashar al Assad. Using chemical weapons is a calculated policy for the Syrian regime based on an executive decision, in which the institutions of the military and intelligence are incriminated, in particular the leaderships of the General Military 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, all high-ranking military officers, as well as security officials and civil and military workers, were involved. All of these individuals have rightfully earned their place on the US and EU sanction lists.

We have included a list providing details of some of the individuals involved in the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapon in [two previous reports](#), which we hope will be a precursor for exposing these individuals more widely and adding them to international sanction lists.

Despite all of this, however, the Syrian regime still possesses chemical weapons. In fact, we believe the regime has established new facilities for the storage of chemical weapons. On January 27, 2023, the OPCW's IIT released its [third report](#) on the chemical weapons attack that took place in Douma city in Rural Damascus governorate. The report states that "there are reasonable grounds to believe" that at least one Mi8/17 helicopter dropped two cylinders on apartment buildings in an area in the center of Douma city between 19:10 and 19:40 on April 7, 2018, in a military attack by Syrian regime forces. The helicopter, operated by the Russian-backed Nemer 'Tiger' forces, operated out of al-Dmair Airbase. The report adds that the attack killed 43 individuals, including 19 children and 17 women, who died due to being exposed to high concentrations of chlorine gas for prolonged periods of time, while dozens others were injured. On January 28, [SNHR released a statement](#) welcoming the findings of the report, and revealed that it has contributed to the work of the IIT by sharing data and eyewitnesses.

On June 28, 2023, the OPCW's [Fact-Finding Mission \(FFM\)](#) released its report on two incidents which were reported by the Syrian regime's government to the OPCW's Technical Secretariat on October 26, 2017. In its submission to the OPCW, the Syrian regime alleged that regime army personnel stationed in Kharbit Massasneh village in Hama suburbs were targeted using mortar shells loaded with a toxic gas in July and August of 2017. In that report, the FFM outlined the findings of their investigations which covered the period from October 2017 up until the report's release. The report concluded 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 believes that the findings of this report prove, yet again, that the Syrian regime has no shred of credibility, and has already lied dozens of times about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Working closely with its allies Russia and Iran, the regime is conducting a systematic misinformation campaign to distort the already-established facts about its use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have released [a statement](#) on this matter.

Based on all the above facts, and specifically the reports by the [OPCW-UN JIM](#), [the reports by the OPCW's IIT](#), [the reports by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic \(COI\)](#), [the reports by Human Rights Watch](#), and [the reports by SNHR](#), all of which conclusively prove the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian

regime, and in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 3 of the CWC,¹ we at SNHR call on the 28th Session of the Conference of the State Parties (CSP-28) to make Syria a priority. We also call on the State Parties to take collective measures in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 3 of the CWC, “in conformity with international law”. Moreover, this issue, and all of the related relevant data and conclusions, must be presented in a briefing to the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council in accordance with Article XII, Paragraph 4 of the CWC.²

Responsibility should be swiftly ascribed to the UN Security Council, which should be called on to implement the relevant resolutions and to intervene in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, considering that a state member has used weapons of mass destruction in a way that poses a serious threat to international peace and security, and to implement the resolutions it adopted in relation to this issue. The member states, especially those which pride themselves on being civilized nations such as France, as well as the UN itself, must invoke their rights enshrined in Article IX, Paragraph 8 of the CWC³ to 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. We also recommend the invocation of the rights established in Paragraph 12(a) of the same article,⁴ by which a representative should be sent to “observe the conduct of the challenge inspection” and to ensure the inspection is being carried out with no stalling.



1. “In cases where serious damage to the object and purpose of this Convention may result from activities prohibited under this Convention, in particular by Article I, the Conference may recommend collective measures to States Parties in conformity with international law.” Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Article XII, Paragraph 3.
2. “The Conference shall, in cases of particular gravity, bring the issue, including relevant information and conclusions, to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council.” Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Article XIII, Paragraph 4.
3. “Each State Party has the right to request an on-site challenge inspection of any facility or location in the territory or in any other place under the jurisdiction or control of any other State Party for the sole purpose of clarifying and resolving any questions concerning possible non-compliance with the provisions of this Convention, and to have this inspection conducted anywhere without delay by an inspection team designated by the Director-General and in accordance with the Verification Annex.” Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Article IX, Paragraph 8. See: <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-ix-consultations-cooperation-and-fact-finding>
4. “With regard to an observer, the following shall apply:
(a) The requesting State Party may, subject to the agreement of the inspected State Party, send a representative who may be a national either of the requesting State Party or of a third State Party, to observe the conduct of the challenge inspection.” Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Article IX, Paragraph 12(a). See: <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-ix-consultations-cooperation-and-fact-finding>



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No justice without accountability

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