

U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL SHOULD ACTIVATE AN INDEPENDENT MECHANISM TO ATTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHEMICAL ATTACKS IN SYRIA

On April 7 the world once again was shocked by the heart-wrenching images of Syrian men, women and children who appeared to have suffocated in their houses in Douma, a suburb of Damascus that has been under furious attacks for weeks by the Syrian-Russian military alliance.

While investigations are still pending, claims have been made that the Syrian government has again used chemical weapons against its own people. The Syrian and Russian governments have vehemently denied that a chemical attack occurred.

The use of chemical weapons constitutes a war crime. The international prohibition on the use, development, production, stockpiling, and transfer of chemical weapons is absolute and cannot be left to political wrangling.

Since 2013, the UN Commission of Inquiry has recorded over 35 chemical weapons attacks in Syria. After refusing to accept findings on Syrian government responsibility for last year's attack on civilians in Khan Sheikhoun, Russia used its Security Council veto to block the UN from maintaining a UN-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons joint investigative mechanism working independently and impartially to uncover the perpetrators for such attacks. On April 10, Russia again vetoed a resolution that would have established a UN mechanism to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria.

As a result, there is no longer a UN mechanism with the independence, technical expertise, and mandate working to promptly identify who is to blame for these chemical weapons attacks.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to step up in defense of civilians everywhere by activating an independent UN mechanism to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria.

Previous UN Secretaries General created similar inquiries. We cannot afford more Security Council deadlock, paralysis, or vetoes. Taking this step is fully in line with the Secretary General's authority and would help ensure that the perpetrators of these atrocities are exposed.

It is incumbent on the UN Security Council to hold perpetrators of these crimes to account and make clear to the world that the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated.

Signatories:

1. Adopt a Revolution
2. American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS)
3. Amnesty International
4. Arms Control Association
5. ASML/Syria
6. Basmet Amal
7. Baytna Syria
8. Bridge of Peace Syria
9. CCFD-Terre Solidaire
10. CAFOD (Catholic Agency For Overseas Development)
11. CARE International
12. Christian Aid

13. CIHRS (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies)
14. FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)
15. Ghiras Alnahda
16. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
17. GOAL
18. Hand in Hand for Syria
19. HelpAge International
20. Human Appeal
21. Human Rights Watch
22. Humans of Syria
23. IDA
24. Islamic Relief UK
25. Just Foreign Policy
26. Karam Foundation
27. Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (Concordia University)
28. Nonviolent Peaceforce
29. PAX for Peace
30. Physicians for Human Rights
31. Protection Approaches
32. Relief & Reconciliation International AISBL
33. Rethink Rebuild Society
34. SCM
35. Society for Threatened Peoples
36. STAND (The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities)
37. Syria Charity
38. Syria Relief
39. Syrian American Medical Society - SAMS
40. Syrian Forum USA
41. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)
42. Syrians for Truth and Justice-STJ *سوريون من أجل الحقيقة والعدالة*
43. Trocaire
44. Vision GRAM-International
45. War Child UK
46. World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)
47. 11.11.11