

One Year Anniversary of the Ghouta Chemical Attacks

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Press Release
Syrian Coalition
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On August 21, 2013, the Assad regime, in defiance of President Obama's red line, dropped chemical weapons on besieged civilians in the suburbs of Damascus (Ghouta), killing over 1400 people. Video footage of children convulsing and suffocating to death served as a blatant reminder of the extent Assad will go to repress the uprising for freedom and democracy in Syria.

Today, we mourn the victims of Assad's chemical attack and remind the world that Assad continues to use chemical weapons against civilians. Earlier this year, reports emerged about the regime's use of a poisonous substance in urban areas. Independent investigations have confirmed the regime has used chlorine gas in attacks against civilian areas, another stark breach of the Geneva Conventions and a war crime under international law.

The Syrian Coalition expresses its gratitude to the UN-OPCW mission, as well as participating countries, who have put in great efforts to help destroy the regime's most lethal declared chemical weapons. It was a difficult process made harder by regime procrastination and repeated missing of deadlines.

However, much work remains to be done as questions over discrepancies in the regime's initial declaration of chemical substances remain unanswered. Also, the remaining chemical weapons production facilities must be completely destroyed and the regime's ability to produce, stockpile, and use chemical weapons neutralized.

The use of chemical weapons is only one in a long list of horrifying and intentionally banned weapons used by the Assad regime. Since November 2013, the regime has been intensively using the infamous weapons of mass destruction, barrel bombs, killing thousands of people, flattening entire neighborhoods, and forcing thousands of civilians to flee their homes.

The Syrian people have the right to see justice take its course. Families of the victims deserve closure. The international community must send a strong message to Assad, and indeed all dictators, that terrorizing their populations will not pass unchecked, and that it is just a matter of time before those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity are brought to justice.