

Federal Foreign Office on the OPCW's report on the use of chemical weapons in Syria

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Welcome

Breadcrumbs

1. [Federal Foreign Office](#) ›
2. [News](#) ›
3. [Newsroom](#) ›
4. **Federal Foreign Office on the OPCW's report on the use of chemical weapons in Syria**

14.06.2018 - Press release 

A Federal Foreign Office Spokesperson issued the following statement today (14 June) on the recent report by the Fact Finding Mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has once again confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria in two cases in its report published yesterday. According to the report, it is very likely that the chemical warfare agent sarin was used on 24 March 2017 in Ltamenah (province of Hama), followed by chlorine gas as a weapon in an attack on a hospital one day later.

These attacks must stop. Those responsible for the use of such terrible weapons must be identified and brought to justice.

If weapons of mass destruction are used today in contravention of all international bans and norms, then we must not turn a blind eye to this. We have a duty to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is an important pillar of our rules based order. This is why Germany, together with other countries, has requested a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which will take place in The Hague from 26 to 28 June 2018. Over 90 states have supported our request.

We are committed to ensuring that the 192 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention live up to their responsibility so that an end can be put to the use of chemical weapons and steps towards strengthening the Chemical Weapons Convention can be taken.

Background information:

The OPCW is investigating reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria with a Fact Finding Mission (FFM). The FFM was tasked with establishing whether chemical weapons have actually been used. Its mandate does not extend to investigating those who are responsible.

The OPCW's Fact Finding Mission has confirmed the use of chemical weapons – chlorine gas, mustard gas and sarin – in Syria in a number of reports. Sarin was used in Ltamenah also on 30 March 2017. According to another report, sarin was used in Khan Shaykhun a few days later on 4 April 2017, with tragic consequences for hundreds of men, women and children. An independent Joint Investigative Mechanism of the OPCW and the United Nations, mandated by the Security Council, attributed responsibility for this attack to the Syrian army.

The Mechanism's mandate was not extended owing to Russia's vetos in the ~~UN~~ (United Nations) Security Council in November 2017. Since then, it is no longer possible to identify those responsible for these terrible attacks in Syria.

The OPCW is also investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April 2018 with its Fact Finding Mission. The FFM interviewed witnesses and took samples on site for analysis in accredited designated laboratories. Once all analyses have been completed, the OPCW will publish a report on this as well.

Together with its partners, Germany is seeking to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of the OPCW by a decision of the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties and to task the OPCW with identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

Overview "Newsroom"