

OPCW Condemns Syria's Repeated Use of Chemical Weapons

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On April 21, 2021 in The Hague, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Conference of the State Parties adopted a historic decision in response to the Assad regime's continued use and possession of chemical weapons in violation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its failure to complete the measures set out in the OPCW Executive Council's July 2020 decision.

This decision fulfills the recommendation made by the Executive Council in response to the April 2020 findings of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which identified that the Syrian Arab Air Force was responsible for three chemical weapons attacks involving sarin and chlorine in March 2017 in the northern Syrian town of Ltamenah. The IIT has since issued an additional report of Syria's use of chemical weapons in a separate instance, which adds to a robust body of evidence by other international investigative bodies that the regime has repeatedly used these weapons on its own people. The United States commends the OPCW staff for its thorough, expert, and professional work in producing these reports. The United States itself assesses that the Assad regime has used chemical weapons at least 50 times since acceding to the CWC in 2013.

The decision condemns Syria's use of chemical weapons and suspends certain of its rights and privileges under the Convention until the OPCW Director-General reports to the Council that Syria has completed the measures requested in the Executive Council's July 2020 decision. In that decision, the Council requested that Syria declare any chemical weapons it continues to possess as well as its chemical weapons production facilities and other related facilities. It also requested that Syria resolve all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile and program. This is the first time such action has been taken against a country at the OPCW. A copy of the decision will be provided to the United Nations Security Council and to the United Nations General Assembly.

Along with the international community, the United States urges the Assad regime to cooperate with the OPCW, to declare and destroy its remaining stockpile, to renounce its chemical weapons program, and to comply with its obligations under the CWC.

The United States welcomes the OPCW's decision and applauds the international community's continued commitment to upholding the international norm against the use of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons by any state presents an unacceptable security threat to all states. As demonstrated today, the international community will continue to pursue accountability for the use of chemical weapons, for which there can be no impunity.

Text of the Decision and additional information is available
here: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2021/04/conference-states-parties-adopts-decision-suspend-certain-rights-and>