



## **One Year Has Passed with Silence and Inaction on the Syrian Chemical Massacre**

### **SCTJ Statement about the Chemical Attack Against Al-Ghouta, Damascus**

The night of August 21, 2013 witnessed a new chapter in the book of crimes and a dangerous precedent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Syrian regime forces used internationally banned chemical weapons against the people of Eastern and Western Ghouta region in the Damascus suburbs. The attack resulted in thousands of exposures to sarin gas and the death of hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians, most of whom were women and children -- this in an area that was already crippled by a long siege that had denied residents even the most basic of necessities.

However, even more tragic and shocking, one year since the massacre, the perpetrators of the crime are free and have not been held accountable. Additionally, during the past year, the Syrian government has continued to perpetrate more chemical attacks using poisonous gases such as chlorine gas, which resulted in the death of 21 documented victims in Idlib, Hama, and Eastern Ghouta.

The Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice condemns the failure and the inaction of the international community to take serious steps and create mechanisms to hold the Syrian regime accountable. The Assad regime has been granted impunity for the crimes against humanity and the war crimes committed against the Syrian people, especially the use of chemical gas to exterminate civilians in the thousands despite the resolution adopted by United Nations Human Rights Council in September 2013 condemning the attack. The Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice stresses that disarming and destroying chemical weapons does not ensure justice in any way for the Syrian people. Moreover, it does not give the people of Syria any form of protection or guarantee that Assad crimes will lessen or stop. The SCTJ considers the use of chlorine gas against civilians as a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the use of any chemical substance with intent to kill -- that includes the use of chlorine gas against civilians in Syria. Not only is this a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the international law, but further evidence showed that the Syrian government failed to list chlorine gas as a weapon within its arsenal.

The failure of the UN Security Council to refer the perpetrated crimes committed in Syria to the International Criminal Court establishes a culture of impunity that allows criminals to escape from justice and to evade accountability. As a result the cycle of violence and the notion of revenge will spread and continue to cause more violence.

After a year since the dreadful chemical attack on Ghouta, the SCTJ demands that the United Nation Security Council act upon its responsibility and conduct a complete impartial investigation for the horrendous chemical attack committed against the Syrian people. In addition, the SCTJ calls for referring the Syrian file to the ICC.

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