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21 December 2023
ENGLISH only

NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

**SUMMARY UPDATE OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE OPCW
FACT-FINDING MISSION IN SYRIA**

1. UPDATE

- 1.1 This summary provides an update on the activities of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) since the issuance of the previous Note entitled “Summary Update of the Activities Carried Out by the OPCW Fact-finding Mission in Syria” (S/2124/2023, dated 20 January 2023). This Note summarises the activities carried out by the FFM throughout the reporting period (up to 31 December 2023) and the next steps ahead.
- 1.2 Guided by decisions of the Executive Council EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- 1.3 Over the course of 2023, the FFM conducted several deployments to gather information. The deployments and movements of the FFM took place with the necessary approvals, including that of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. The FFM also continued the analysis of all information obtained by the FFM from the Syrian Arab Republic, other States Parties, and relevant stakeholders. The Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) is maintaining its readiness and preparing for further deployments with due consideration for the prevailing security situation.
- 1.4 The FFM took part in several training activities in order to maintain and upgrade the team’s technical skills and capacity. The FFM also provided support and co-organised training activities with the Inspectorate Division of the Secretariat as part of the FFM’s continued contribution to knowledge-transfer activities.

Reported incidents from 2016 that are under investigation¹

- 1.5 Within the context of the execution of its mandate, the FFM continues to coordinate its activities with the Syrian Arab Republic via notes verbales.
- 1.6 On 23 January 2023, the FFM sent Note Verbale No. NV/ODG-354/23 as a follow up on the internal memorandum FFM/091/22/Memo/01, which contains a “List of questions regarding information received by the Technical Secretariat from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the allegations of Sheikh Maqsoud, Zubdieh, al-Sukkari and al-Sakhour”. In the same Note Verbale, the FFM inquired about the availability of

¹ The English spelling of the location names reported here may vary slightly due to transliteration.



additional information and witnesses. The Syrian Arab Republic communicated its answers to the FFM's questions in Note Verbale No. 24 (dated 3 April 2023).

- 1.7 Approximately one month later, on 3 March 2023, the FFM addressed two notes verbales to the Syrian Arab Republic. Note Verbale NV/ODG-367/23 requested information on the alleged incidents in Douma on 22 January and 1 February 2018, as well as the alleged incidents in Hamoryah on 5 and 7 March 2018. In NV/ODG-368/23, the FFM shared images of an object related to the alleged incident in Kbayneh on 19 May 2019 and asked the Syrian Arab Republic for any additional information that may be available. The Syrian Arab Republic replied to NV/ODG-367/23 on 30 March 2023 via Note Verbale No. 22, maintaining that the incidents mentioned in said Note Verbale had never taken place, and that a technical study of the munitions visible in the images seen on social media shows that they are incompatible and unusable as chlorine munitions. On 5 April 2023, the Syrian Arab Republic sent a response to NV/ODG-368/23 reiterating that no such incident took place in Kbayneh. Regarding the photographs shared by the FFM, the Syrian Arab Republic stated that the object was a 107-mm missile with a metal container used for explosive substances, and not compatible with using chlorine as a weapon. The Syrian Arab Republic also outlined that this munition—referred to as “Saroukh Jhannam”, or “hell rocket” in English—is not used by the Syrian Arab Army, but by armed groups.
- 1.8 On 20 March 2023, the FFM informed the Syrian Arab Republic, via NV/ODG-377/23, of its intention to deploy to Aleppo in the second half of May. The Syrian Arab Republic welcomed the FFM in its response via Note Verbale No. 21 (dated 30 March 2023), but noted the fact that seven years had passed since the incident took place. Thus the locations have undergone changes, and it is no longer possible to collect samples. The Syrian Arab Republic further explained that all identified witnesses have already been interviewed and that Sheikh Maqsoud is not under the control of the Government forces. In this same context, several notes verbales were exchanged between the FFM and the Syrian Arab Republic from April until the end of September 2023; as such, this deployment has been postponed for logistical and security reasons.
- 1.9 In the process of collecting information about incidents that allegedly took place in Aleppo in 2016, the FFM sent Note Verbale NV/ODG-391/23 (dated 17 April 2023), inquiring about witnesses who might be available for interview, or information in the possession of the Syrian Arab Republic, in relation to the alleged incidents in Khan al-Assal on 2 and 7 November 2016, Hanano on 18 November 2016, Jisr al-Haj on 21 November 2016, Ard al Hamra on 23 November 2016, and Kallaseh on 8 December 2016. The Syrian Arab Republic replied via Note Verbale No. 38 (dated 15 May 2023) that all the aforementioned allegations are fabricated and that the National Authority had already provided eight witnesses and is working on finding more witnesses. The Syrian Arab Republic emphasised in the same correspondence that the FFM relied on open sources that are opposed to the Syrian Government and that no evidence had been collected due to the ongoing conflict, which is an invalid excuse, according to the Syrian Arab Republic. The latter asserts that the chemical incidents are planned by the West to blame the Syrian Government.
- 1.10 Furthermore, on 25 July 2023 the Syrian Arab Republic sent Note Verbale No. 51 following the publication of a Note by the Secretariat (S/2186/2023, dated 28 June 2023). In its Note Verbale, the Syrian Arab Republic expressed its views that the FFM is biased and politicised, and does not take into consideration the evidence provided to the team by the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the alleged incident in Kharbit Massasneh on 7 July and 4 August 2017.

- 1.11 Regarding the two cylinders that had been used as a weapon in the incident in Douma on 7 April 2018 and that were in the custody of the Syrian Arab Republic, the latter sent Note Verbale No. 10 (dated 9 February 2023) with images showing the destruction thereof, reportedly resulting from an attack by foreign forces that took place on 8 June 2021 at a site approximately 60 kilometres from where the cylinders were supposed to have been stored. The FFM was not able to determine the presence of the cylinders or any shrapnel from these cylinders in the photographs sent by the Syrian Arab Republic.
- 1.12 Currently, the FFM is continuing its analysis of information pertaining to reported incidents and planning further steps, and will report on the results in due course.

Incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Kharbit Massasneh, Hama Governorate, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July and 4 August 2018.

- 1.13 Since October 2017, the FFM has been continuously engaged in an active search for information regarding an incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Kharbit Massasneh, Hama Governorate. Between 6 December 2017 and 10 December 2021, the FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic to gather further information and conduct interviews.
- 1.14 While collecting and analysing information, the Secretariat exchanged several notes verbales with the Syrian Arab Republic. The exchange related to the alleged incident that was the subject of the FFM's report, and began with a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretariat to inform it of the allegation that took place on 26 October 2017, as mentioned above. The Secretariat sent the last note verbale of this exchange on 22 February 2022, requesting additional information, and received the final response from the Syrian Arab Republic on 25 March 2022. Subsequently, the FFM continued its analysis of information pertaining to this incident and reported on its results on 28 June 2023.
- 1.15 After completing the analysis of all available and collected information, the Secretariat issued a Note entitled "Report Of The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission Regarding Incidents Of Alleged Use Of Toxic Chemicals As A Weapon In Kharbit Massasneh, Syrian Arab Republic On 7 July And 4 August 2017" (S/2186/2023). According to the conclusions of the report, the information obtained and analysed by the FFM "did not provide reasonable grounds for the FFM to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incidents that occurred in Kharbit Massasneh, in Hama Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017".

FFM-related matters presented at the briefing to the States Parties on the Secretariat's implementation of activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme

- 1.16 On 8 March, 3 July, and 28 September 2023, the Secretariat briefed the States Parties on the status of the implementation of activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including the FFM's activities.

Other activities

- 1.17 Pursuant to the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018) with regard to instances in which "the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which

the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism has not issued a report”, the FFM has continued to periodically hand material over to the Investigation and Identification Team since the issuance of its last summary update.

1.18 The FFM is currently looking into several incidents, including:

- (a) two incidents in Sheikh Maqsoud on 8 March 2016 and 7 April 2016;
- (b) one incident in Zebdiyeh on 11 August 2016²;
- (c) one incident in Marea on 16 August 2016;
- (d) one incident in Fu’ah and Kafarya on 3 October 2016;
- (e) one incident in Khan Al Asal on 2 and 7 November 2016;
- (f) one incident in Hanano on 18 November 2016;
- (g) one incident in Al Sakhour on 20 November 2016;
- (h) one incident in Jiser Al Haj on 21 November 2016;
- (i) one incident in Ard Al Hamra on 23 November 2016;
- (j) one incident in Kallaseh on 8 December 2016;
- (k) one incident in Qalib Al Thawr, Al Salamiyah, on 9 August 2017;
- (l) one incident in Yarmouk, Damascus on 22 October 2017;
- (m) one incident in Al-Balil, Suran, on 8 November 2017;
- (n) one incident in Douma 22 January 2018;
- (o) one incident in Douma on 1 February 2018;
- (p) one incident in Hamoryah on 5 and 7 March 2018; and
- (q) one incident in Kabanah on 19 May 2019.

1.19 The FFM will report on allegations, including those indicated above, in due course.

2. NEXT STEPS

2.1 As the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is evolving, additional information may become available and further activities to collect information may take place.

2.2 The FFM will continue its analysis of information it has obtained and will collect and analyse further relevant information and evidence, with a view to issuing reports on

² “10 August 2016” in the Annex to this Note.

allegations that have been assessed as credible (listed in the Annex hereto), and which have not yet been reported upon.

- 2.3 The FFM will continue to participate in knowledge transfer and capacity building related-activities. Such activities include the provision of support to the Inspectorate Division of the Secretariat in certain training activities, as well as the provision of support to States Parties through the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, if requested by States Parties.
- 2.4 The Secretariat calls upon all States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to extend their full cooperation to the FFM and to share all available information relating to the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as set out in paragraph 6 of EC-M-48/DEC.1; paragraph 7 of EC-M-50/DEC.1; paragraph 7 of S/1255/2015*, dated 10 March 2015; and paragraph 8 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), dated 7 August 2015.
- 2.5 The Secretariat will keep the States Parties informed of the progress of the FFM's activities.

Annex: Allegations of the Use of Chemicals as Weapons from 1 December 2015 to 31 December 2023

Annex

**ALLEGATIONS OF THE USE OF CHEMICALS AS WEAPONS
FROM 1 DECEMBER 2015 TO 31 DECEMBER 2023**

	Date	Approximate Location	Governorate
	2015		
1.	20 December	Teir Maalah	Homs
2.	22 December	Moadamiyah	Rif Dimashq
3.	27 December	Jobar	Damascus
	2016		
4.	23 January	al-Nashabiyah	Rif Dimashq
5.	27 January	Ghouta	Rif Dimashq
6.	31 January	Moadamiyah	Rif Dimashq
7.	8 March	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
8.	13 March	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
9.	3 April	Qaboun	Rif Dimashq
10.	4 April	Deir Ez-zor airbase	Deir Ez-zor
11.	7 April	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
12.	9 April	Al Tanf	Homs
13.	11 April	Al Mayadeen	Deir Ez-zor
14.	11 April (may be same as 9 April)	Al Tanf	Homs
15.	12 April	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
16.	14 April	Handarat	Aleppo
17.	16 April	Al Grindat	Aleppo
18.	16 April	Mt Dakwah	Rif Dimashq
19.	18 April	Al-Eis	Aleppo
20.	18 April	Al-Amqiyah Village	Hama
21.	24 April	Jisr al Shughur	Idlib
22.	26 April	Taqa village, near Shaddadi, ~60 km south of Hasakah city	Hasakah
23.	1 May	Al-Aqaba, Aleppo City	Aleppo
24.	2 May	North Aleppo	Aleppo
25.	22 May	Jobar	Damascus
26.	17 May	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
27.	30 May	Al-Waar	Homs
28.	End of May 2016	Karm al Qaterji	Aleppo
29.	13 June	Hawsh al Farah	Rif Dimashq
30.	15 June	East Ghouta	Rif Dimashq
31.	22 June	Near Tabqa (to the south) in western Raqqa	Raqqa
32.	23 June	Haritan	Aleppo
33.	26 June	East Ghouta	Rif Dimashq
34.	29 June	Jobar	Damascus
35.	29 June	Al-Mallah	Aleppo
36.	3 July	Karm Al-Myassar	Aleppo

	Date	Approximate Location	Governorate
37.	20 July	Kafr Hamrah	Aleppo
38.	23 July	Various, Aleppo City	Aleppo
39.	1 August	Saraqib ³	Idlib
40.	2 August	Old City in Aleppo*	Aleppo
41.	2 August	Kafr Takarem	Idlib
42.	4 August	Mashhad	Aleppo
43.	No date given	Al-Aqaba	Aleppo
44.	7 August	Ramouseh	Aleppo
45.	8 August	Khan Al-asal	Aleppo
46.	10 August	Zebdiyeh, Aleppo	Aleppo
47.	12 August	Hraytan	Aleppo
48.	16 August	Marea	Aleppo
49.	16 August	Aleppo city	Aleppo
50.	20 August	Hasakah city	Hasakah
51.	25 August	Dandaniyah, near Manbij	Aleppo
52.	28 August	Qabr al Englizi/ Qabr al Inglizi	Aleppo
53.	5 September	Marea	Aleppo
54.	6 September	Al Sukari	Aleppo
55.	6 September	Tarma/Ghouta	Damascus
56.	16 September	Um-Housh*	Aleppo
57.	28 September	Karah	Hama
58.	1 October	Locale of Kafr Zeita*	Hama
59.	3 October	Kafarya and Al Fu'ah villages	Idlib
60.	6 October	Um-Housh	Aleppo
61.	17 October	Ltamenah	Hama
62.	30 October	3000 apartments project, Hamadaniyah, Al-Assad, 1070 apartments project*	Aleppo
63.	31 October	Rashidin	Aleppo
64.	2 November	Khan Al Assal and Kafr Naha	Aleppo
65.	3 November	New Aleppo Region	Aleppo
66.	7 November	Khan Al Assal	Aleppo
67.	13 November	Nayrab (near airport)*	Aleppo
68.	18 November	Hanano	Aleppo
69.	18 and 19 November	Ard Al Hamra / Al Sakhour	Aleppo
70.	20 November	Al Sakhour	Aleppo
71.	20 November	Tariq al Bab	Aleppo
72.	21 November	Jisr Al Haj	Aleppo
73.	22 November	Qaterji district (and Dahret Awwad)	Aleppo
74.	23 November	Ard Al Hamra	Aleppo
75.	24 November	Ard Al Hamra	Aleppo
76.	26 November	Al Khaliliya	Aleppo
77.	26 November	Qabasin	Aleppo

	Date	Approximate Location	Governorate
78.	26 November	Al Bab	Aleppo
79.	28 November	Sheikh Maqsoud	Aleppo
80.	28 November	Qadi Askar	Aleppo
81.	8 December	Al Klasa	Aleppo
82.	8 December	Al Maghayer	Aleppo
83.	8 December	Firdous	Aleppo
84.	9 December	Kallaseh	Aleppo
85.	9 December	Al Qasiliah	Aleppo
86.	11 December	Uqayribat	Homs (Salamiyah)
87.	26 December	Wadi Barada	Rif Dimashq
	2017		
88.	3 January	Wadi Barada	Rif Dimashq
89.	5 January	Basima village	Rif Dimashq
90.	8 January	Wadi Barada	Rif Dimashq
91.	30 January	Al Marj	Rif Dimashq
92.	7 February	Irbin	Rif Dimashq
93.	9 February	Irbin	Rif Dimashq
94.	10 February	Irbin	Rif Dimashq
95.	21 February	Hosh ad-Dawahra	Rif Dimashq
96.	26 February	Harasta	Rif Dimashq
97.	3 March	Habit	Idlib
98.	23 March	Maarrat al-Nu'man	Idlib
99.	24 and 25 March	Ltamenah*	Hama
100.	29 March	Qaboun	Damascus
101.	30 March	Ltamenah*	Hama
102.	4 April	Khan Shaykhun*	Idlib
103.	7 April	Harasta	Damascus
104.	22 April	Zamalka and Irbin	Damascus
105.	29 April	Ltamenah	Hama
106.	22 June	Jobar	Damascus
107.	1 July	Ayn Tarma and Zamalka	Damascus
108.	6 July	Ayn Tarma/Jobar	Damascus
109.	7 July	Khirbat Masasinah*	-Hama
110.	14 July	Ayn Tarma	Damascus
111.	20 July	Ayn Tarma	Damascus
112.	4 August	Khirbat Masasinah *	Hama
113.	9 August	Al Salamiyah	Hama
114.	16 August	Ayn Tarma/Jobar	Damascus
115.	27 August	Ayn Tarma/Jobar	Damascus
116.	29 August	Ghanim al Ali	Al Raqqah
117.	10 September	Badia	Rif Dimashq
118.	7 October	Al Musheirfeh	Hama
119.	22 October	Yarmouk	Damascus
120.	7 November	Maqarrayn	Hama

	Date	Approximate Location	Governorate
121.	8 November	Harasta	Damascus
122.	8 November	Al-Balil, Suran	Hama
123.	15 November	Mazraat Brit Jinn, Kafr Hawar	Damascus
124.	16 November	Harasta	Damascus
125.	18 November	Harasta	Damascus
126.	16 November	Beit Jin	Damascus
127.	30 December	Al-Blaleah	Damascus
	2018		
128.	13 January	Duma/Harasta	Damascus
129.	13 January	Tall Marq	Idlib
130.	15 January	Saloumiya	Idlib
131.	22 January	Douma, Eastern Ghouta	Damascus
132.	22 January	Abu-Al-Duhur Airbase	Idlib
133.	1 February	Douma, Eastern Ghouta	Damascus
134.	4 February	Saraqib	Idlib
135.	6 February	Sheikh Kharuz, Bulbul, Afrin	Aleppo
136.	16 February	Arinde, Afrin	Aleppo
137.	25 February	Shifuniyah, Ghouta	Damascus
138.	5 March	Hamuriyah, Ghouta	Damascus
139.	7 March	Saqba and Hamuriyah	Damascus
140.	11 March	Irbin	Damascus
141.	14 March	Hamuriyah	Damascus
142.	15 March	Zamalka and Haza	Damascus
143.	18 March	Douma	Damascus
144.	7 April	Douma*	Damascus
145.	24 November	Aleppo*	Aleppo
	2019		
146.	19 May	Kabanah	Latakia