

UNITED NATIONS MISSION TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC:

REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN THE GHOUTA AREA OF DAMASCUS

Following the tragic events of 21 August 2013 and the receipt of dozens of requests from Member States, the Secretary-General called for the Mission, already working in Damascus, to investigate and report on the allegation of the use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013 as a matter of priority.

The Secretary-General established the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic on 21 March 2013 based on his authority under General Assembly resolution 42/37C and Security Council 620 (1988).

The UN Mission was headed by Professor Åke Sellström (Sweden) and assisted by expert teams from the Organisation of Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Health Organisation.

During a temporary ceasefire for five hours each day between 26-29 August 2013, the Mission was able to access affected sites in Moadamiyah, Ein Tarma and Zamalka in the Ghouta area of Damascus.

Fact-Finding Activities:

- Interviews with more than 50 survivors, including patients, other victims, health workers and first-responders;
- Documentation of munitions and their sub-components;
- Assessment of symptoms of intoxicated survivors;
- Collection and analysis of bio-medical (hair, urine and blood) samples;
- Collection and analysis of 30 soil and environmental samples.

Analytical Results and Factual Findings:

- Impacted and exploded surface-to-surface rockets, capable of carrying a chemical pay load, were found to still contain sarin;
- Close to the rocket impact sites, where survivors were affected, the environment was found to be contaminated by sarin;
- A number of survivors clearly diagnosed for intoxication by an organophosphorous compound and clearly presented symptoms of exposure;
- Almost all of the blood samples from the above same survivors were found positive for sarin and sarin signatures.

UN MISSION'S CONCLUSIONS: On the basis of the evidence obtained during the investigation of the Ghouta incident, the conclusion of the UN Mission is that, on 21 August 2013, chemical weapons have been used in the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic on a relatively large scale. In particular, the environmental, chemical and medical samples collected by the Mission provide clear and convincing evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in the Ghouta area of Damascus.