

# Chemical Attack on Oqeirbat

20 December 2016

Oqeirbat Sub-district is located within As- Salamiyeh District in Hama Governorate. Oqeirbat is located on the Eastern side of Hama and borders Tadmor Sub-district in Homs Governorate and Aleppo Governorate. Oqeirbat Sub-district consists of 24 communities with an estimated population of 24,000 people according to statistics prior the beginning of the civil uprising. Oqeirbat is mostly rural and most of its population work in agriculture and grazing. According to the latest statistic of the Information Management Unit at ACU, the current population of this sub-districts was about 22,000 individuals till the month of October 2016.

**On June 2013**

NSAG had controlled Oqeirbat Sub-district over GoS control for 6 months.

**On January 2014**

ISIL forces took control over the sub-district after the allegiance of some factions to ISIL. However, other factions who didn't ally to ISIL control left the area.

**On March 2014**

All NSAG who refused to support the ISIL control in the area had retreated from Oqeirbat Sub-district. Afterward, the whole sub-district had become under ISIL control and was called the State of Hama.

The citizens of Oqeirbat were forced to dig trenches and hide in caves during the bombing. Whereas, this sub-district was subjected to GoS and Russian shelling since NSAG took control over it due to its closeness to contested areas and Hama military airport. GoS forces aiming to take revenge of the civilians in the areas out of its control had resorted to using chemical weapons to reach the citizens who hide in basements and shelters. The poisonous gasses go down to the caves because their weight is heavier than the oxygen in the air, and it is advised to get to upper floors during exposing to a chemical attack.

**On Monday 12 December 2016**

Around 8:00 am, the Oqeirbat civilians hid in the caves after hearing the presence of the warplanes. However, the GoS air attack was with poisonous gasses which led to choking cases within the collective shelters full of women and children.

## List of Acronyms

ACU – Assistance Coordination Unit  
CWC - Chemical Weapons Convention  
GoS - Government of Syria  
HRW – Human Rights Watch

IMU – Information Management Unit  
NSAG – Non-State Armed Groups  
OPCW - Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons  
UN – United Nations

## 104 Casualties is the Initial Death Toll of Oqeirbat Chemical Attack Distributed as Follows



IMU received information that all civilians mostly women and children were hiding in collective basements. The targeted resort shelters contained about 300 civilians who were transferred to the sub-district medical points. Oqeirbat Sub-district contains 5 medical points that are capable of providing first aid only. The serious injuries require the transfer to Ar\_Raqqa hospitals. The affected people with chemicals were suffering from choking; nausea; convulsion symptoms; frothing at the mouth; fluid coming out of noses before the cessation of heartbeats and the occurrence of death.

The unavailability of the proper medicaments to cure the explosion to toxic gasses had an increase of the number of victims which reached 106 martyrs till the moment of writing this report.

Human Rights Watch assured receiving strong evidence that the Syrian Government is responsible for several chemical massacres since the beginning of the civil uprising in Syria. Among those attacks, in mid-April 2014, GoS helicopters had dropped barrel bombs embedded with cylinders of chlorine gas on three towns Kafr Zeita in Hama Governorate, Tamanaah, and Telamnas in Idlib Governorate<sup>1</sup>. The most recent deadly chemical attacks, prior to the attack on Oqeirbat, were recorded in Aleppo that killed 5 civilians and injured dozens in September 2016<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, HRW found that GoS forces were almost certainly responsible for the 21 August 2013 attacks on the NSAG control Damascus suburbs of Western and Eastern Ghouta<sup>3</sup>.

Afterward, Security Council required scheduled destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, unanimously adopting resolution 2118 (2013)<sup>4</sup>, and according to that resolution, it was supposed that Syrian Government had got rid of those chemical weapons. On 17 November 2016, Security Council extended the mandate of mechanism to identify perpetrators using chemical weapons in Syria by unanimously adopting resolution 2319<sup>5</sup>.

The Syrian Government intends to use chemical weaponry in places that are far from the media sources and the international community interest under the pretext of extremist groups control of those areas. Often the vulnerable categories as children, women and elderly are the most affected groups with this kind of weapons.

**According to the CWC<sup>6</sup> issued by OPCW that was signed in 1993 and became effective in 1997, it is prohibited to develop, produce, store, possess and use the chemical weapons including its launch systems and on their destruction. The Syrian Government exceeded all red lines under the Charter of the United Nations regarding the use of chemical weapons, with the UN demand of destroying it.**

**Syrian Government will continue with these violations in case the United Nations do not take concrete actions to limit the use of chemical weapons. If the international community does not have the means to assert that the Syrian Government possesses chemical weapons in Syria; however it does not need evidence that the Syrian Government is the only party to the conflict with helicopters and other aircraft in Syria, and that the chemical attacks are often launched using those aircraft.**

1- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/13/syria-strong-evidence-government-used-chemicals-weapon>

2- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/28/syria-new-deadly-chemical-attacks>

3- <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/09/10/attacks-ghouta/analysis-alleged-use-chemical-weapons-syria>

4- <https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm>

5- <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12594.doc.htm>

6- [https://www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/CWC/CWC\\_en.pdf](https://www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/CWC/CWC_en.pdf)

