

Syria: joint OPCW-UN chemical weapons team reports visits to nearly all declared sites

[UN news.un.org/en/story/2013/10/453632](http://news.un.org/en/story/2013/10/453632)

October 23, 2013



UN Photo/Hend Abdel Ghany

An advance team of the UN and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) arriving in Damascus, Syria, on 1 October 2013.

23 October 2013

The Joint Mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations dealing with Syria's chemical weapons programme reports that it has now visited 18 of the sites disclosed by Damascus, a spokesperson for the chemical watchdog said today.

“Interaction with UN remains excellent and cooperation from Syrian authorities complete,” said OPCW spokesperson Michael Luhan, telling reporters at a press conference in The Hague, that the weapons inspectors on the ground had visited 18 of the 23 sites declared by Syria and that the team is proceeding with “functional destruction” to ensure the sites are inoperable.

Specifically, he said the joint team is concentrating on destroying “what we call the critical equipment that is at the heart of the production facility, or that runs the mixing and filling units. That critical equipment will be destroyed, rendering the production facilities and equipment inoperable, unusable.”

He said that “low tech, quick and cheap” methods were being used, such as filling equipment with concrete or smashing it, sometimes using heavy vehicles.

With destruction activities now conducted at nearly all the relevant sites in Syria, he said: “It means that [Syria] will no longer have the capability to produce any more chemical weapons, and it will no longer have any working equipment to mix and to fill chemical weapons agent into munitions.”

With that being achieved, the OPCW expects to meet the 1 November deadline set by the agency, he said.

The Security Council formally approved the first-ever joint United Nations mission with the Nobel Peace Prize-winning global chemical weapons watchdog on 11 October.

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council endorsed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s plan to deploy up to 100 UN and OPCW experts in a multi-phase operation to carry out its resolution on eliminating Syria’s chemical weapons material and equipment, scheduled for completion by 30 June, 2014.

The Council passed its resolution after Syria agreed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention following a chemical weapons attack in August that killed hundreds of people in a Damascus suburb, in a conflict that has already killed over 100,000 people and driven some 6.5 million others from their homes since protesters first sought the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad’s Government in March, 2011.

syria

chemical

News Tracker: Past Stories on This Issue



Syria has ‘fully cooperated’ with OPCW-UN efforts to destroy chemical arsenal, team head says

22 October 2013

The Syrian Government has been fully cooperating with the destruction of its chemical weapons programme, the head of the joint mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations today said.