

Statement by NSC Spokesperson Ned Price on the UN-OPCW Report on Syria

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Today, the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) announced the results of a year-long expert, independent, and neutral investigation into multiple allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. The report released today follows our call, together with international partners, last year to identify those involved in the use of chemical weapons in attacks in 2014 and 2015.

It is now impossible to deny that the Syrian regime has repeatedly used industrial chlorine as a weapon against its own people in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 2118. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Asad regime's use of chlorine against its own people. In 2013, the Syrian regime agreed to the removal and destruction of its chemical weapons and also joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. While chlorine has legitimate, peaceful uses, the Chemical Weapons Convention bans its use as a weapon.

The United States will work with our international partners to seek accountability through appropriate diplomatic mechanisms, including through the United Nations Security Council and the OPCW. We urge all UN member states and parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, including Russia and Iran, to participate in this effort.

The OPCW-UN report also confirmed that in August 2015, ISIL used mustard gas against civilians in Syria. The U.S.-led Counter-ISIL coalition has placed a high priority on targeting ISIL's chemical weapons capabilities, including by capturing one of its chemical weapons manufacturing leaders in March 2016 and using information gained from him to launch airstrikes to degrade ISIL's ability to use such weapons. We continue to remove leaders from the battlefield with knowledge of these weapons and will target any related materials and attempts to manufacture such chemicals going forward.

The findings by the UN and the OPCW present yet another opportunity for all nations to speak with one voice to address these heinous crimes and to make it clear that the use of chemical weapons is intolerable.