

# Foreign Minister Maas remembers poison gas attacks in Syria

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## Welcome

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04.04.2019 - Press release 

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas issued the following statement today (4 April) on the anniversaries of the poison gas attacks in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017 and Duma on 7 April 2018:

This week marks the anniversary of the heinous chemical attacks on the Syrian cities of Khan Shaykhun and Duma, which join a long list of confirmed uses in Syria of these internationally prohibited weapons.

War has been raging in the country for the past eight years. The Assad regime has committed war crimes time and again, including with the use of chemical weapons against civilians, brought terrible suffering upon the population and exacerbated the already catastrophic humanitarian situation.

We urge the supporters of the Assad regime to do everything in their power to prevent further suffering and to uphold the international norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Germany continues – also at today’s meeting of the ~~UN~~ (United Nations) Security Council – to campaign resolutely for an end to all uses of chemical weapons and for the Syrian regime to comply at long last with its obligations under international law in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, to fully disclose its stockpiles of chemical weapons and to destroy them under international supervision. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable for their crimes.

Together with many partners, we have managed to ensure that the independent experts of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can now identify the perpetrators of these attacks. Strengthening the existing multilateral agreements and instruments for the disarmament of chemical weapons around the world remains the Federal Government’s objective.

Only a political solution will bring about lasting peace and stability for the people in Syria. This is why we are continuing to support ~~UN~~ (United Nations) Special Envoy Geir Pedersen’s mission. At the same time, we call on the parties to the conflict, and in particular the regime, to facilitate immediate, unhindered and regular humanitarian access throughout Syria to all people in need of assistance.

## **Background information:**

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The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is conducting a fact-finding mission to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. It has a mandate to determine whether chemical weapons have been used and has confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria in a number of cases. Following a thorough investigation, the OPCW experts concluded in their most recent report of 1 March 2019

that chemicals were once again deployed as weapons in the massive bombardment of Duma on 7 April 2018. A commission of inquiry set up by the ~~UN (United Nations)~~ Human Rights Council also reached this conclusion.

The fact-finding mission's mandate does not extend to investigating those who are responsible, however. The ~~UN (United Nations)~~ Security Council established a joint investigation mechanism, the OPCW-~~UN (United Nations)~~ Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), in 2015 for this purpose. The JIM substantiated responsibility on the part of IS for the use of chemical weapons in Syria in two cases and on the part of the Syrian regime in four cases, including the use of sarin in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017.

Due to a number of Russian vetoes in the ~~UN (United Nations)~~ Security Council in November 2017, the JIM's mandate was not renewed. The States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention therefore agreed, partly at Germany's initiative, that the OPCW should also investigate information about those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The OPCW is currently in the process of setting up an Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to this end.

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