

On Human Rights Watch Report about the Assad Regime's Use of Chemical Weapons in Aleppo

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February 15, 2017

Press Statement
Media Office
Syrian Coalition
February 15, 2017

[Original in arabic](#)

Human Rights Watch confirmed that the Assad regime forces conducted coordinated chemical attacks in residential areas in Aleppo during the assault they launched on the city late last year.

In a report released on Monday, the watchdog group said that the Assad regime helicopters dropped chlorine-filled bombs on residential areas on at least eight occasions between November 17 and December 13, 2016. It stressed that this is a strong indication that these chlorine attacks were part of the overall military strategy for retaking Aleppo and displacing its residents.

The UN Security Council is obliged more than ever to take action following the release of the HRW report especially as it has already adopted resolution 2118 and resolution 2209, which condemned any military use of chlorine gas and threatened to take measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in the event of non-compliance.

Action must also be taken by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to conduct serious investigation in the findings of the HRW report. These findings gave more weight to the results of earlier investigation by the Joint Investigative Mechanism which concluded, in a report published on October 21, 2016, that Assad regime forces had used chlorine as a weapon in at least three incidents in Syria in 2014-2015.

The Syrian Coalition renews calls to refer the latest HRW report, along with other investigations and similar reports, including the report on Saydnaya Prison by Amnesty International titled "Human Slaughterhouse, to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to ensure that those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity are held accountable. The Coalition also renews calls on the UN Security Council to initiate judicial proceedings based on the mechanism adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 21, 2016 which called for an investigation of war crimes in Syria and the prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes since 2011.