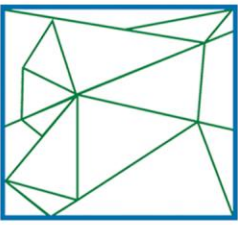
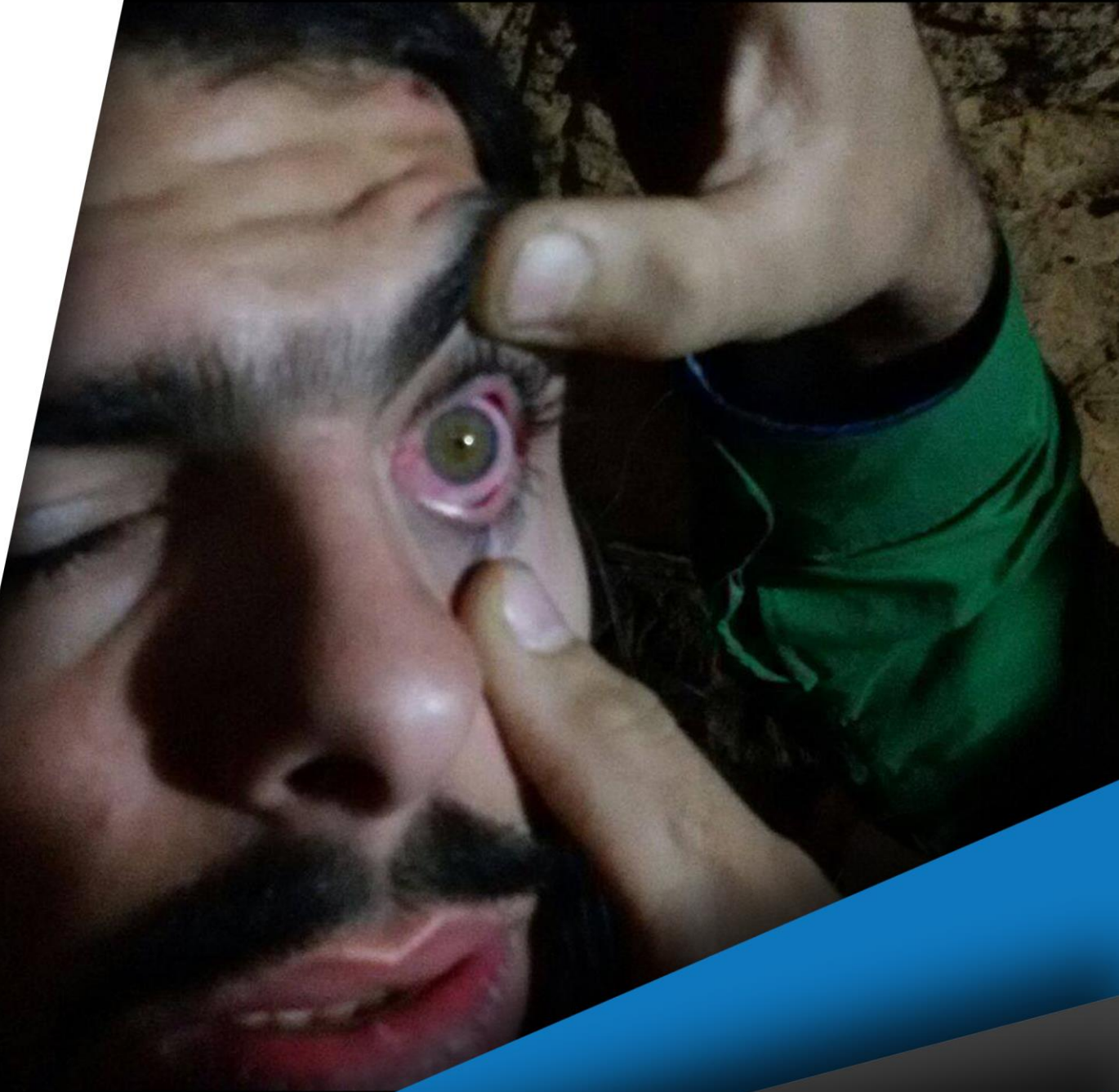


سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



December 2017



New Attack by Toxic Gases on a Battlefield in Harasta-Damascus Contryside

"Testimonies Confirm Using "Organophosphorus Compounds"



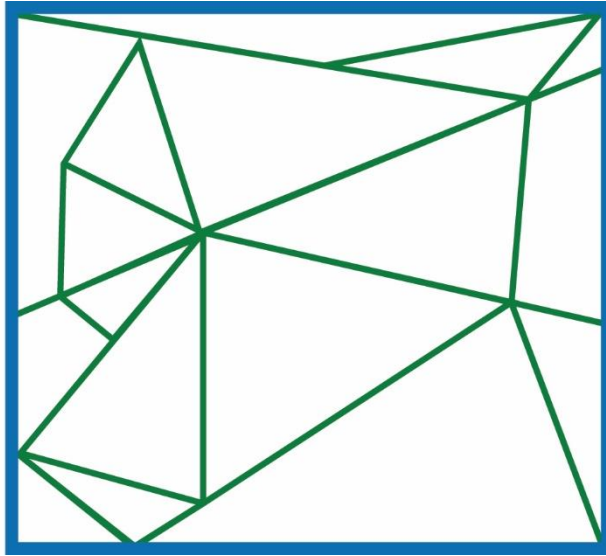
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[Syrians for Truth and Justice /STJ](#) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental, independent Syrian organization. STJ includes many defenders and human rights defenders from Syria and from different backgrounds and affiliations, including academics of other nationalities.

The organization works for Syria, where all Syrians, without discrimination, should be accorded dignity, justice and equal human rights.

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Preface:

Several cities and towns in the besieged Eastern Ghouta witnessed a significant military escalation carried out by the Syrian regular forces, starting from November 15, 2017 to November 23, 2017, when they launched a violent attack utilizing warplanes and artillery shelling on different areas in Eastern Ghouta. The largest share of the attacks was on towns of [Irbid](#), [Madyara](#), and [Mesraba](#), but [Harasta](#)¹ witnessed some other sort of the attacks. On Saturday morning, 18 November 2017, the Syrian regular forces launched a grenade attack loaded with a toxic gas believed to be one of the organophosphorus compounds according to the testimonies obtained by [Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ](#), the attack targeted groups of fighters of Ahrar al-sham al-Islamiyya Movement on the Military Vehicle Management Front in Harasta. The attack resulted in the wounding 39 combatants being light and medium, as many eyewitnesses have confirmed to a STJ reporter.

The escalation comes in the context of the fierce military campaign launched by Syrian regular forces on Eastern Ghouta on Tuesday November 15, 2017, following Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya Movement's announcement of the Battle "[They Were Wronged](#)" which began on Monday morning, 14 November 2017. According to STJ reporter, these battles caused the death of several Syrian regular forces fighters including some officers, headed by Lieutenant General, Walid Khawashkji, deputy commander of the Military Vehicles Management, in addition to that, combatants of Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya Movement managed to control large parts of the Military Vehicles Management as well as the seizure of weapons and ammunition.

¹ A large part of Harasta is held by Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya Movement, but few of its neighborhoods are still held by Syrian regular forces.



The Incident Details

One of the paramedics, who helped the wounded in the attack, spoke to STJ about the symptoms that showed up on the injured:

"At first, we thought chlorine is the gas used in the attack, so we treated the injured on this basis, but hours later we found out that it was not chlorine gas and the proof is that after the injured left the emergency department, conditions of some of them aggravated and they were brought back to the medical centers and placed in the intensive care unit after showing symptoms of eye-pin pupils with a blurred vision, as well as chest symptoms such as a excess detachments in the bronchial tubes and excessive salivation, as well as neurological symptoms represented by irritation, muscle weakness and muscle spasms, which usually result from exposure to "organophosphorus compounds".

Fayez Fethi Orabi, the official spokesperson of the Health Directorate in Damascus and its countryside, assured to STJ that the attack had occurred at around 5:00 in the dawn of Saturday, 18 November, injuring 50 people with symptoms likely to be the result of "organophosphorus compounds". Concerning the attack, he said:

"First of all, we gave the injured first aid that are special to exposure to chlorine gas, but several hours later, several cases, about 15 injured, came back due to the worsening of the symptoms. Immediately, they were admitted to hospitals for cure, 11 of them were placed into the intensive care unit, and the Health Directorate team in Damascus and its countryside supervised their treatment. Through the symptoms that showed, it seemed that the gas used was not chlorine gas at all because of the obvious respiratory and neurological symptoms of irritation, restlessness and convulsions with an absence of consciousness and symptoms of the eye, particularly the constricted pupils and pin-eye pupils, which do not result from exposure to chlorine gas, but refers to exposure to "organophosphorus compounds". It is remarkable to indicate that the symptoms of exposure to this type of gas are similar to that exposure of Sarin gas, but organophosphorus compounds have a stench that does not exist in Sarin gas."

[A video footage](#) published by the Health Directorate in Damascus and its countryside on November 20, 2017 showed a number of injured due to exposure to an attack by toxic gas believed to be "organophosphorus compounds", during treatment in Eastern Ghouta hospitals.



Image shows a combatant of Ahrar al-sham al-Islamiyya Movement who inflicted with poisonous gas at a medical point in Harasta on November 18, 2017.

Photo credit: Activists from Harasta.

For its part, the Health Directorate in Damascus and its countryside (of the Syrian Interim government, affiliated with the Syrian opposition) issued on November 20, 2017, a statement confirming the arrival of a number of cases believed to be exposed to "organophosphorus compounds" to the intensive care unit in one of Eastern Ghouta hospitals. The statement also explained the symptoms showed on the injured like clinical eye symptoms (conjunctiva redness, pin-eye pupils, watery eyes) and respiratory and neurological symptoms; the doctors specialists agreed unanimously that they are symptoms of poisoning by "organophosphorus compounds", as well as they demanded an immediate investigation of this incident by an ad-hoc international commission.



Syrian Interim Government
Ministry of Health
Damascus and Rural Damascus'
Directorate of Health



الحكومة السورية المؤقتة
وزارة الصحة
مديرية الصحة في دمشق وريفها

بيان

الرقم: ١٢٢/ص
التاريخ: ٢٠١٧/١١/٢٠

بلغنا في تمام الساعة الثالثة عصراً من يوم السبت الواقع في ٢٠١٧/١١/١٨ وصول عددٍ من الحالات التي يعتقد إصابتهم بأحد مركبات الفوسفور العضوية إلى مركز العناية المشددة في أحد مشافي الغوطة الشرقية، وعلى إثرها توجه ثلثة من الأطباء في مديرية الصحة في دمشق وريفها إلى المركز لمعالجة الحالات وتقييمها، وقد تبين من خلال التشخيص السريري لعددٍ من المصابين الإصابة بالأعراض التالية:

- أ- أعراض سريرية عينية (حركات دوسية - احمرار شديد بالملتحمة - دماغ)
- ب- أعراض تنفسية (سيلان أنفي - سعال - مفرزات قصبية - ضائقة تنفسية)
- ج- أعراض عصبية (هياج - تلمل - رنج - رتة كلامية - تحزيمات عضلية - رعاش عضلي واضح)

وقد أجمع الاختصاصيون من الأطباء على أن هذه الأعراض تتماشى مع انسمام بمركبات الفوسفور العضوية. أغلب هذه الحالات تم تدبيرها إسعافياً بإعطاء الأتروبين - هيدروكورتيزون - إرذاذ بالسالبوتامول - أوكسجين. في بعض الحالات تم إعطاء ديازيبام للسيطرة على الأعراض العصبية.

بالإضافة إلى قبول حالتين في قسم العناية المركزة وتطبيق براليدوكسيم بجرعة ١ غ ومراقبة حيويات مشددة لوحظ بعدها تحسناً سريرياً بالأعراض.

تم أخذ عينات دم لجميع الحالات المشتبه علمياً بأن هذه الحالات قد حوّلت إلينا من مركز إسعاف أولي بعد إجراء التدابير الأولية للانسمام بمركبات الفوسفور العضوية من خلع ملابس المرضى وغسل كامل الجسم.

وبتاريخ ٢٠١٧/١١/١٩ وبعد ٢٤ ساعة من تاريخ الإصابة، قام الفريق الإعلامي الخاص بالمديرية بمتابعة الحالات وإجراء مقابلات مع الطبيب المختص في مركز العناية المشددة ومع بعض المرضى المصابين وأخذ صور جديدة لهم للتأكد من الأعراض.

إن مديرية الصحة تطالب بإجراء تحقيق فوري في هذه الحادثة وتحديد المسؤولين عنها ونحن مستعدون لتقديم العينات التي جمعناها للجنة دولية مختصة للتأكد من نوع المركب المستخدم حيث لا توجد لدينا داخل الغوطة الشرقية إمكانيات مخبرية لتحديد نوع هذا المركب بشكلٍ دقيق.

كما نحمل المنظمات الحقوقية الدولية المسؤولية عن متابعة هذه الحوادث وعدم القبول بتمريرها، فالغوطة لم تنسى شهداءها الذين سقطوا في عام ٢٠١٣ أمام مرأى العالم دون أي عقاب أو محاسبة للمرتكبين.

نسأل الله الشفاء العاجل للمصابين وأن يحفظ الغوطة وأهلها من الغادرين والحاقدين

مديرية الصحة
في دمشق وريفها



Image the statement issued by the Health Directorate in Damascus and its countryside on November 20, 2017, in which likely the use of "organophosphorus compounds" in the recent attack on Harasta.

Photo credit: [Telegram channel for the Health Directorate in Damascus and its countryside.](#)



According to STJ reporter, only two days before targeting Harasta with poisonous gases specifically on November 16, 2017, the Syrian regular forces threw mortar shells loaded with poisonous gas, believed to be chlorine gas, targeting aggregations of Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya fighters during their storming of a Military Vehicle Management facility in Harasta. As a result, several media professionals and activists who were present at the time were injured, including:

1. Mohammed al-Qaseer, Orient TV cameraman.
2. Mazen ash-Shami, director of Qasioun Office.
3. Mohammed al-Jzaeri, director of al-Jazira Office.
4. Diyaa ash-Shami, Step News Agency reporter.
5. Abedl Monaem Isa, a photographer.

It is worth mentioning that this attack came hours after Russia [vetoed](#) a draft resolution submitted by the US to the Council security, which called for the extension of the work of the Joint United Nations Commission of Inquiry and the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons/OPCW. The Committee concluded during October 2017 that the Syrian regular forces bear responsibility for the chemical attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib, the attack that killed at least 80 people in April 2017.

It is also noteworthy that on May 4, 2017, the sponsoring states of Astana Talks (Russia, Turkey and Iran) signed [memorandum of Understanding](#) for the establishment of de-escalation zones in Syria, which included Eastern Ghouta in Damascus countryside, Idlib province and some parts of northern Homs province; in addition to some parts of the adjacent provinces (Latakia, Hama, and Aleppo) and some parts of southern Syria. One of the most prominent items was the cessation of hostilities between conflicting parties and the provision of conditions for the delivery of medical assistance. On July 22, 2017, the Army of Islam participated in [signing](#) the de-escalation zone agreement in Syria, [followed](#) by Faylaq al-Rahman faction on August 18, 2017.

Earlier, Syrians for truth and justice/STJ had prepared a [report](#) detailing the three attacks in which poisonous gases were used by Syrian regular forces on several clash zones in Eastern Ghouta against Syrian armed opposition factions, Faylaq al-Rahman, during July 2017. STJ, in cooperation with Justice for Life Organization, had issued [a special report on the chemical attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun](#) on April 4, 2017.