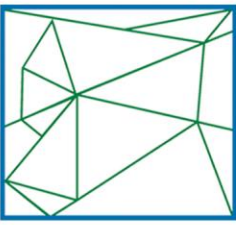


سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



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February 2018

Syrian Regular Forces Hit Saraqib with Barrel Bombs Loaded with Chlorine Gas on February 4, 2018

Joint Report: Bellingcat and Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

About Bellingcat

[Bellingcat](#) uses open source and social media investigation to investigate a variety of subjects, from Mexican drug lords to conflicts being fought across the world. Bellingcat brings together contributors who specialise in open source and social media investigation, and creates guides and case studies so others may learn to do the same.

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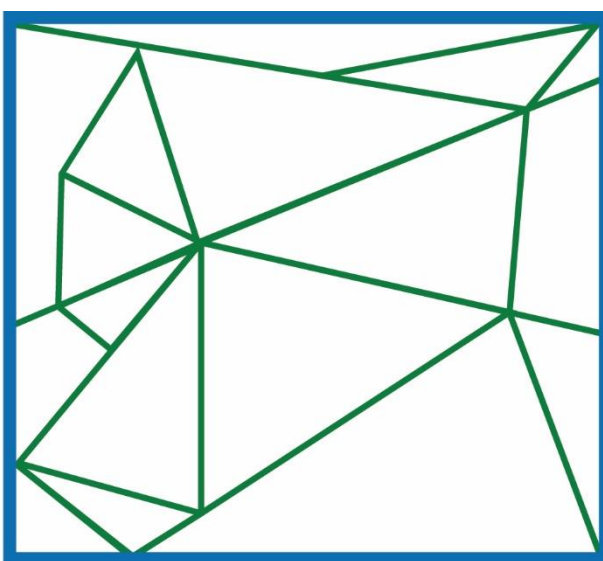
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[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

On February 4, 2018, Saraqib¹ located in the southern countryside of Idlib was hit by a poisonous gas attack². A helicopter affiliated to the Syrian regular forces threw two barrel bombs loaded with chemicals believed to be chlorine gas on the eastern neighborhood of the city, which is one of the populated areas, causing 12 civilians to be suffocated, including a child and three Civil Defence volunteers, according to many testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ.

According to STJ reporter who visited the impact site, the strike location of the two barrel bombs, loaded with poisonous gases, had had some herbs that changed its colour from green to yellow following the attack. The reporter pointed out that the recent attack had caused a massive exodus by the locals, who used to inhabit the eastern district of the city, towards safer adjacent cities and towns.

Details of the Incident

Manhel Haji Hussein, one of the people who inhaled the poisonous gases resulting from the recent attack, spoke to STJ, saying:

¹ Liwaa Thwar Jabhat Saraqib controls Saraqib. The city has a strategic location because it is a link between the eastern, western, northern and southern countryside of Idlib, and this illustrates the desire of the Syrian regular forces to control it, in order to disintegrate Idlib province completely.

² This escalation comes from the Syrian regular forces after Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, al-Nusra Front, controlled Abu Dali village located in the northeast countryside of Hama province on October 9, 2017. However, the Syrian regular forces backed by the Russian Air Force warplanes were able to restore this village, as well as several villages in the northern countryside of Hama on December 29, 2017. In addition, the regular forces and its allies had been able to advance towards the southeast countryside of Idlib and control several villages such as Atshan, al-Khwein and Sinjar, on January 7, 2018, with the aim of arriving at Abu Duhur Military Airbase in the southeast countryside of Idlib. According to STJ researchers, the military operations led the Syrian government forces and their allied militias to control the airbase on January 27, 2018.

"At about 9 p.m. while I was with my family at home, we heard the sound of a helicopter approaching, and only minutes later, there had been a strange smell inside the house. I began to feel shortness of breath, severe pain in the throat, and burns in the eyes, and then I fainted. After that, the Civil Defence teams arrived, transferred me to the hospital, and provided health care to me at a medical point adjacent to the city."

Mohammed Haji Qasim, a member of the Civil Defence who went directly to the strike location after the attack, was injured after inhaling the gas. He said:

"We received an appeal (call) through the observatories that were monitoring the movement of warplanes in the city's skies that a helicopter had thrown barrel bombs, which did not explode, on the eastern district of Saraqib. Immediately, we rushed to the strike location, and there were several injuries in the neighborhood, so we worked to evacuate them to the medical centers adjacent to Saraqib since many of the city's hospitals have been out of service recently because they were targeted by the regime and allies. Once I arrived at one of these medical points, I began to feel dizziness, and itch and redness in the eyes. Soon, the necessary treatment was provided to me; my clothes were removed and my body was washed with water and soap. In addition, we were given antibiotics and we were subjected to spray with the oxygen. At last, I got out from the hospital."

In testimony obtained from Hasan Qaddour, one of the medical personnel in Saraqib who treated the victims, he stated they had received several cases of suffocation due to the inhalation of toxic gas, believed to be chlorine gas, on the evening of February 4, 2018:

"The injured showed symptoms such as nausea, redness in the eyes, shortness of breath and burns in the throat, and all these symptoms indicate that they inhaled poisonous gases that could take away their lives if they were not provided the necessary care quickly. The medical staff at the medical points worked to provide health care to patients directly; we have documented 12 civilians who suffered from suffocations, including one child and three volunteers in the Civil Defence. All injuries ranged from light to medium."



A civilian who was exposed to the gas used in the attack in Saraqib on February 4, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



One of the injured who was exposed to the gas used in the attack in Saraqib on February 4, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ

Origin of the Attack

One of the supervisors of the Aviation Observatory, which monitors the movement of warplanes in Saraqib skies, told STJ that at 9:00 p.m. on February 4, 2018, a helicopter with a designation “Alpha 253” had taken off from al-Manjazrat School, located in Hama countryside, and headed towards the north of Syria. The officer added:

“The helicopter entered the airspace of Saraqib from the south heading to the north, and when it reached the city from the east, it dropped two barrels, which did not explode and were loaded with poisonous gases.

Immediately, we delivered appeals to the people in the Eastern district of the city to evacuate the place after we heard through the wireless walkie-talkie that the helicopter successfully completed the mission and was on its way back.”

The Impact Site and Munitions Used

According to Bellingcat, the impact site was filmed by [SMART News Agency](#), and photographed by the [Edlib Media Center](#), and [Naba News](#). Using these images it is possible to geolocate the impact site to [35.863044, 36.820206](#), on the east side of Saraqib, in a large grassy area surrounded by residential buildings.



The February 4th 2018 impact crater in Saraqib, Syria

Photo Credit – [Edlib Media Center](#)

In these images it is possible to see a large area of yellowed grass surrounding the impact crater. This yellowing is likely caused by the release of the chlorine gas damaging the plants, a well recorded phenomenon, also seen in prior chlorine attacks in Syria.



Yellow of plants at the site of the February 1st 2018 chlorine attack in Douma, Damascus

Image Credit – [Syrian Scene Agency](#)

[A video](#) from Syrian Civil Defence in Idlib Governorate and a photograph published by the Syrian Network for Human Rights shows a heavily damaged yellow gas cylinder reportedly recovered from the impact site:



The yellow gas cylinder recovered from the impact site

Photo Credit – [The Syrian Network for Human Rights](#)



The gas cylinder was also photographed on behalf of STJ:





Three images showing one of the gas cylinders used. Photo credit - STJ

This type of yellow gas cylinder has been documented at the site of multiple chlorine attacks over the past 4 years, such as examples used in this Human Rights Watch graphic showing examples of gas cylinder documented at the sites of chlorine attacks in Aleppo in late 2016:

Remnants of Chemical Munitions

Aleppo, November 17-December 13, 2016

During the final weeks of the battle for Aleppo, Syrian government helicopters repeatedly dropped gas cylinders filled with chlorine, affecting hundreds of civilians. Journalists, first responders and activists photographed and filmed remnants from at least seven yellow cylinders in different locations.



Masaken Hanano, Aleppo,
November 18, 2016
© 2016 Aleppo Media Center



Al-Sakhour, Aleppo,
November 20, 2016
© 2016 Syria Civil Defense



Tariq al-Bab, Aleppo,
November 20, 2016
© 2016 Syrian Institute for
Justice and Accountability



Karm al-Jazmati, Aleppo,
November 23, 2016
© 2016 Omar Arnaout



Karm al-Qaterji, Aleppo,
November 28, 2016
© 2016 Firas Badawi



Found in Aleppo
on December 8, 2016
© 2016 Private



Found in Bustan al-Qasr, Aleppo,
on December 10, 2016
© 2016 Private

Examples of gas cylinders used in chemical attacks in Syria

Image Credit – [Human Rights Watch](#)

At the impact site in Saraqib, multiple pieces of metal debris were documented. These include strips of metal, and wider metal plates, some of which are attached to each other:



A metal strip and metal plate attached to each other photographed at the impact crater in Saraqib.

Photo credit – [Edlib Media Center](#)

These pieces of metal appear to be the remains of an external structure added to the chlorine cylinders to add tail fins and an impact fuze, earlier examples of which can be seen in the above Human Rights Watch graphic. One of the clearest examples of this is from a chlorine attack in August 2017 in Khan al-Assal, Aleppo, where a nearly fully intact example of this type of modified gas cylinder was recovered:



The modified chlorine cylinder recovered from the site of the Khan al-Assal chlorine attack in August 2017

Image credit – [Syrian Civil Defence Idlib Governorate](#)

[Video footage](#) published by the Civil Defence of Idlib on February 5, 2018, showed that 12 civilians had been injured, including three members of the Civil Defence, with suffocation from inhaling poisonous gas that was used on Saraqib on February 4, 2018.

The Syrian-American Medical Society (SAMS) [documented](#) the arrival of 11 people with symptoms of suffocation on the evening of February 4, 2018 in Saraqib, and reporting the symptoms indicated the inhalation of poisonous gas, believed to be chlorine gas. The Society indicated that the attack has been the first of its kind in Saraqib since 2018.

The City Council of Saraqib confirmed through a statement issued on February 5, 2018, that Saraqib was subjected to a toxic gas attack by a helicopter affiliated with the Syrian regular



forces that had taken off from al-Manjazrat School located in Hama countryside precisely at 9:02 pm on February 4, 2018, injuring many civilians.



المجلس المحلي لمدينة سراقب The local council Saraqeb

بيان حول استخدام " غاز الكلور " على مدينة سراقب

الأحد ٤ شباط ٢٠١٨ الساعة ٩,٢٥ مساء استمررا للعدوان المستمر على الشعب السوري عموما وعلى مدينة سراقب مؤخرا، واستكمالا لعمليات القتل والتهجير التي يشنها نظام الإرهاب الأسد، الطيران المروحي التابع لجيش النظام المجرم في دمشق يلقي برميل على مدينة سراقب محملا بـ "غاز الكلور" المحرم دوليا أسفر- وبحسب منظمة الدفاع المدني السوري (الخوذ البيضاء) عن إصابة ستة مدنيين وثلاثة عناصر من الدفاع المدني نقلوا إلى المراكز الطبية خارج المدينة، دون توضيح درجة إصابتهم. ومن هنا نطالب الأمم المتحدة ومجلس الأمن التدخل لوقف هذا العدوان الهجومي على الشعب الاعزل وفتح تحقيق في استخدام سلاح " محرم دوليا " ضد المدنيين العزل مما يتنافى وأبسط القيم الانسانية ألا وهي حق الحياة كما ندعو تقديم مرتكبي هذه الجريمة إلى العدالة الدولية لينالوا جزاء ما اقترفت ايديهم .

تعقيب: المروحي الذي نفذ "الكلور" في سراقب يحمل الرقم ١٢٥٣ انطلق من مدرسة المجنزرات الساعة ٩,٠٢ ثم وصل لهدفه في سراقب، و تسبب بحالات اختناق لبعض المدنيين .

سراقب ٥ شباط ٢٠١٨

الرحمة لشهدائنا والشفاء للجرى والنصر لثورتنا

Announcement Concerning the Use of " Chlorine Gas " Against Saraqeb City

Sunday, February 4, 2018, 9:25 PM Local Time ,Helicopters belonging to the criminal regime's army are bombing Saraqeb city with barrels filled with internationally-banned chlorine gas, as a continuation of the regime's aggression against the Syrian people in general, and of the recent campaign against Saraqeb city in particular, and in order to further its deadly campaign to kill people and force them from their homes. The Syrian Civil Defense--The White Helmets--recorded six civilians injured in the latest attacks, in addition to three White Helmets, who were transported to medical centers outside of the city, while the extent of their injuries remains unclear.

On this basis we ask that the United Nations, and the Security Council, intervene to stop this barbaric campaign against defenseless civilians, and open an investigation into the use of internationally-banned weapons against defenseless civilians, which contradicts the most basic human rights, including the right to life. We ask that the perpetrators of this crime be brought to international justice, so they might face just punishment for the crimes they have committed.

Commentary: The helicopter that dropped "chlorine gas" on Saraqeb city had the number 1253 on it. It took off from the Tank School at 9:02 PM, and reached its target in Saraqeb, where its attack suffocated civilians.

Saraqeb, February 5, 2018

We ask mercy for our dead, swift recovery for our injured, and victory for our revolution

Statment issued by the Local Council of Saraqib on February 5, 2018

Photo credit: [the Local Council of Saraqib](#).