



سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice

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February 2018



Syrian Forces Use Chemical Weapons in Duma for a Second Time in a Month

Joint Report: Bellingcat & Syrians for Truth and Justice

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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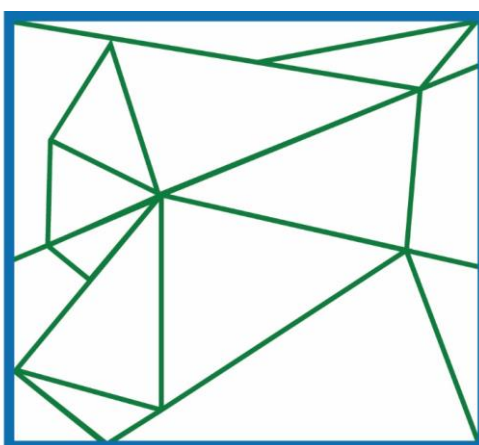
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[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

Syrian regular forces continued their military escalation in several towns and cities in the besieged Eastern Ghouta, as they launched the most violent military attacks on those areas using several types of weapons. On Monday morning, January 22, 2018, the residential neighborhoods in the northwest region of [Duma](#)¹ were subjected to an attack with a chemical agent described as chlorine gas by locals, and according to many testimonies obtained by [Syrians for the Truth and Justice/STJ](#), several rockets loaded with chemicals believed to be chlorine gas fell in those neighborhoods, suffocating 21 civilians including women and children.

The attack came in the context of the military campaign launched by the Syrian regular forces on whole cities and towns in Eastern Ghouta on November 15, 2017, following Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya announced the battle "[They Were Wronged](#)" that began in three phases. The first phase began on November 14, 2017, when the fighting resulted in killing several soldiers of the Syrian regular troops, as well as Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya controlled large sections of the Military Vehicles Management in Harasta. The second phase began on December 29, 2017, when fighting led Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya to impose a siege on the Military Vehicles Management as well as controlling "al-Ajami neighborhood" and the automated bakery in addition to al-Hadaeq neighborhood that stretches along the road between Harasta and Arbin from the west side of the Military Vehicles Management. The third phase began on January 28, 2018, when Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya detonated a tunnel for the regular forces within the Military Vehicles Management in Harasta, killing and injuring a number of the Syrian regular forces.

It is noteworthy that this attack was the second chemical attack on Eastern Ghouta since the beginning of 2018. On January 13, 2018, the area between both Harasta and Duma was also shelled with poisonous gases, injuring six civilians, including women and children, [according to a report prepared earlier by STJ](#).

¹ Army of Islam controls Duma.

Details of the Incident

Nu'man Slick, who hails from Duma and who was near the strike location, spoke to STJ, saying:

"Given the intensity of the shelling on Duma, we took the cellars and shelters as our homes, as we no longer left them unless to serve our necessary needs. Once, while my family and I were in the vault, exactly at 5:30 am, I smelled a strange smell that seemed like chlorine that we use in houses; and instantly I rushed to awaken my children and I took them to a double-locked room. After that, I began to scream in order to awaken the people, and only minutes later, people started to run in every direction. There had been children who felt unconscious and were unable to breathe well; I tried to help them along with some people nearby as we put wet fabrics on their faces."

In another testimony, Mohammed Oyoun, a doctor from Damascus Countryside Specialty Hospital, said that the hospital began to receive suffocation cases at around 5:45 am and there were about 21 cases of suffocation, with symptoms similar to those of toxic chlorine gas:

"The hospitals received 21 suffocation cases, including 8 men, 6 women and 7 children, with a child who is less than three months. The injured showed the following symptoms: dyspnea, a cough and a neurological irritation, in addition, their clothes smelled of chlorine. We were able to cure most of the cases through the spray with oxygen and bronchodilators. Many cases were directly cured, whereas many remained under surveillance for 24 hours; thank God, no casualties were recorded because the concentration of chlorine substance was not so great in the rockets pounded by the regime as I believe, in addition that the sunrise had softened many of the infected numbers because the sunrise had dissipated the poisonous gas."

Videos [filmed after the attack](#) at a local hospital show many of the victims receiving treatment, including 7 children, and 7 adult males, consistent with reports from the Damascus Countryside Specialty Hospital.



Image shows some of the child victims of the on Duma on January 22, 2018.

Photo credit: Activists from Duma.



On January 22, 2018, the Directorate of Health in Damascus and its countryside issued a statement talking about the shelling of Duma with rockets loaded with poisonous gases, which caused suffocation among civilians. It also indicated that it was not the first time that densely populated areas in Duma are subjected to suffocation cases due to exposure to toxic gases, because the city had already been subjected to a similar attack on January 13, 2018.

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: ١٩٧/ص
التاريخ: ٢٠١٨/٠١/٢٢

تعرضت مدينة دوما في حوالي الساعة السادسة صباحاً من يوم الاثنين بتاريخ ٢٠١٨/٠١/٢٢ لقصف بصواريخ تحمل غازات سامة نشرت صورها العديد من وكالات الإعلام تسببت بحالات اختناق متعددة في صفوف المدنيين (٨ رجال و ٦ نساء و ٧ أطفال) وهذه هي المرة الثانية خلال تسعة أيام فقط تتعرض فيها المناطق المأهولة في مدينة دوما لهذه الإصابات حيث انتشرت رائحة الكلور بشكل واضح في أجواء المدينة وتم تشخيص الحالات سريريا بما يؤكد تعرضهم لاستنشاق هذا الغاز.

إن تكرار استخدام غاز الكلور يؤكد مدى الاستخفاف بالقوانين الدولية والأرواح البشرية حيث حدث الاعتداء الأول في تاريخ ٢٠١٨/٠١/١٣م وقد اصدرونا تصريحاً في حينها بذلك.

اننا في مديرية الصحة في دمشق وريفها نستنكر هذه الاعمال الاجرامية ونحمل المسؤولية كاملة للجهات الدولية المعنية بمتابعة استخدام الأسلحة المحرمة دولياً في محاسبة مستخدميها وداعميها، كما نؤكد على خشيتنا من أن تكون هذه الحوادث سياسة ممنهجة جديدة يتم تمريرها لتزيد معاناة أهالي الغوطة الشرقية المحاصرين منذ سنين في ظل نقص حاد في الأدوية والمستلزمات الطبية وسوء التغذية.

مديرية الصحة
في دمشق وريفها



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Image shows the statement issued by the Directorate of Health in Damascus and its countryside on January 22, 2018.

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



On the same day, the local council of the city of Duma condemned the attack against populated areas and stressed that the city had been subjected to a similar attack nine days earlier. The statement appealed to international organizations to assume their responsibilities in protecting civilians.



الجمهورية العربية السورية
محافظة ريف دمشق
المجلس المحلي لمدينة دوما

بيان

تعرضت مدينة دوما اليوم الاثنين 22 / 1 / 2018م لاعتداء باستخدام غازات سامة للمرة الثانية خلال تسعة أيام وقد حدث ذلك في تمام الساعة 5:45 صباحاً.

فيما حدث الاعتداء الأول في 13 / 1 / 2018م وقد أصدرنا بياناً بذلك . وقد قام نظام الأسد بتنفيذ الضربة المذكورة على اجزاء مأهولة بالسكان من المدينة تسببت بحالات اختناق متعددة في صفوف المدنيين وأغلبهم من الأطفال والنساء. إننا في المجلس المحلي لمدينة دوما إذ نؤكد مراراً وتكراراً عن الجريمة المتعمدة بالاستهداف المباشر من قبل آلة نظام الأسد العسكرية للمدنيين في الغوطة الشرقية.

نناشد المنظمات الدولية بتحمل مسؤولياتها في حماية المدنيين من آلة القتل والدمار بجميع انواع الأسلحة بما فيها الأسلحة المحرمة دولياً وهو ما يعتبر جريمة حرب حسب القوانين والإعراف الدولية.

Local council of Douma city 2018 / 1 / 22 المجلس المحلي لمدينة دوما

f Douma.local.council G Douma4all S Douma.lc D Doumalc.com

Image of the statement issued by the Local Council of Duma on January 22, 2018.

Photo credit: The Local Council of Duma.

Mohammed Al-Shami, alias, an armed Syrian opposition member who was near the strike location, spoke to STJ, saying:

"The north-west area within the stadium located in Duma, along with al-Manfoush neighborhood had been targeted with 9 rockets loaded with poisonous gases. Sound of the rocket launch and the way it fell indicated that it was a Katyusha rocket, which was a Russian-made propellant charge that the regime had modified by supplying it with a homemade cylinder and the head was fitted with homemade detonators, leaking poisonous gas immediately after hitting the ground. It should be mentioned that five rockets had fallen directly on residential areas, whereas the four left had fallen in the agricultural areas adjacent to Duma."



Image shows remnants of one of the rockets loaded with a chemical agent used in Duma on January 22, 2018.

Photo credit: STJ



Another image shows several rockets that had been used in the January 22 chemical attack, 2018

Photo credit: STJ

The munitions used in the attack were modified Iranian 107mm artillery rockets, with the explosive warhead replaced with a larger pressurized gas cylinder. Additional tail fins have been added to the rocket to provide additional stability.

Jamal al-Hasan, an activist from Duma who was the first one to reach the impact site, told STJ that one of the rockets loaded with poisonous gases was found embedded in the dirt, and 15 m from its strike location, another rocket was found fallen on a house. The rocket described as found fallen on a house may refer to one rocket it was possible to geolocate, featured in several photographs:



One of the munitions used photographed on the roof of a building.

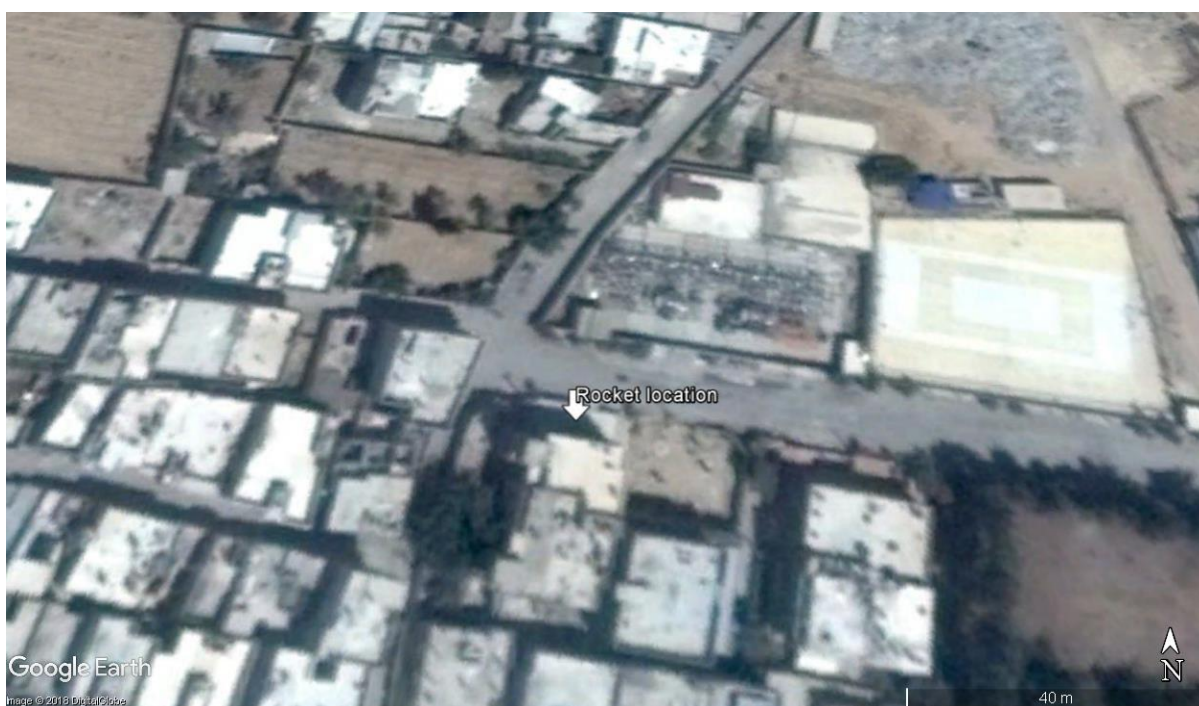
Photo credit: Media activist from Duma (During an interview with STJ's reporter).



The same munition as above, moved to the ground.

Photo credit: Media activist from Duma (During an interview with STJ's reporter).

The location the photograph on the roof was taken is [33.572149, 36.387439](#), on the roof of a one-story structure running west to east on the north side of a larger apartment building. In addition to the geolocation of the photographs, the location was also confirmed by locals who took photographs of the munition.



The location of the rocket photographed on the rooftop.

Photo credit: Google Earth/Digital Globe

Jamal al-Hasan noted that the rocket was carrying a white material similar to ice on its surface. In this regard, he continued:

"With the onset of the sunrise, this white material began to fade gradually, and once I attempted to touch it, it was very fragile, which caused me a severe headache lasted until the evening. Even the animals have not been spared the effect of this poisonous gas, as I saw a dead cat near the impact site."



A photograph published by Bassam Khabieh on Facebook on January 22nd showing a dead cat close to one of the impact sites

Photo credit : [Bassam Khabieh](#)



A photograph published by Bassam Khabieh on Facebook on January 22nd showing the munitions used with frost on the warhead.

Photo credit : [Bassam Khabieh](#)

The white material described by Jamal al-Hasan is likely frost formed as the pressurized gas cylinder depressurized rapidly. Analysis of images of the munitions provided by locals shows the munition would have had a pressure valve on the front, that would have been used to fill the warhead with pressurized gas.



One of the munitions used in the January 22nd attack decorated by the Syrian artist Akram Abo Alfoz with the pressure valve used for filling the munition visible of the front of the warhead.

Photo credit: [Akram Abo Alfoz](#)

The two objects in the rear of the warhead appear to be pressure relief valves, although the exact function is yet to be established. An extensive gallery of images showing the munitions in detail can be found [here](#).



One of the objects removed from the rear of the warhead.

Photo credit: STJ



One of the objects removed from the rear of the warhead dismantled

Photo credit: STJ