



Assad Chemical Era

**Syrian Civil Society
Recommendations to the
Syrian Government, the
National Commission for
Transitional Justice, and State
Parties to the OPCW**



TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT

- **Ensure a Holistic National Response to CW across Ministries and within Transitional Justice Framework**

A holistic approach to transitional justice requires that the Syrian government coordinate efforts across all relevant ministries (including justice, health, social affairs, and foreign affairs) together with the National Commission for Transitional Justice. The government has a duty to guarantee that each ministry incorporates transitional justice considerations into its sectoral strategies related to CW, thereby fulfilling Syria's obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law.

- **Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)**

The Syrian government should ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This step is crucial not only to enable Syria's engagement with international accountability mechanisms but also to serve as a structural guarantee of non-repetition, ensuring that future violations of this scale and nature are deterred through credible avenues for justice.

- **Continue Full Transparency and Compliance with OPCW Obligations**

The Syrian government should continue to engage and cooperate in a genuine and transparent manner with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including by providing full disclosure of CW sites, production facilities, and stockpiles. The government must also ensure the destruction of remaining CW traces within the country, in compliance with OPCW verification standards.



TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

- **Implement a Comprehensive Survivors-Based Approach to Truth, Justice, Reparations, and Non-Recurrence**

The National Commission on Transitional Justice bears the responsibility of designing and implementing a comprehensive strategy that integrates truth-telling, accountability, reparations, and institutional reforms to address the use of Chemical Weapons by the former regime of Bashar al-Assad and ISIS. International standards emphasize the indivisibility of these pillars.

- **Ensure Criminal Justice Reforms to Effectively Prosecute CW-related Crimes, including by advocating for the Ratification of the Rome Statute**

The National Commission for Transitional Justice, as an independent body, should play an active role in advocating for Syria's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). In parallel, it should also promote reforms to align Syrian legislation with international criminal law and human rights standards, ensuring that chemical weapons-related crimes, alongside other core international crimes, are properly codified in domestic law and can be effectively prosecuted.

- **Integrate Domestic Transitional Justice with International Universal Jurisdiction Proceedings**

The National Commission for Transitional Justice should establish mechanisms to engage with ongoing universal jurisdiction cases abroad. This includes systematically documenting evidence and coordinating with relevant Syrian civil society organizations, including CW survivor-led groups, and foreign prosecutors. Such integration not only strengthens the credibility of domestic transitional justice measures but also ensures that Syrian victims benefit from accountability processes outside Syria. A fragmented approach that ignores Universal Jurisdiction proceedings risks duplicating efforts and undermining victim-centred justice.



TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

- **Develop Effective Institutional Coordination with International Investigative Mechanisms**

The National Commission for Transitional Justice should establish effective institutional coordination procedures and channels with international mechanisms that have documented and collected evidence of CW-related crimes in Syria in the past decade, including the CoI, IIIM and OPCW-mandated entities (FFM, JIM, IIT). The coordination should ensure evidence preservation, consolidation and access to evidence for future domestic prosecutions, in accordance with international law standards.

- **Apply a Gender-Sensitive Approach to Chemical Weapons-Related Violations**

The National Commission for Transitional Justice must ensure that its truth, justice, and reparations strategies incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective in relation to the impact of chemical weapons attacks. Women and girls, as well as men and boys, experienced differentiated harms, including health consequences. Reparations programs must reflect these gendered harms, ensuring access to healthcare and psychosocial support. Such commitment to a gender-sensitive approach must be grounded in and built upon the expertise and experiences of Syrian civil society organizations, including women-led organizations and CW survivor-led groups, which have led this work in the past decade.

- **Guarantee Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach and Civil Society Engagement and Partnerships in Transitional Justice Processes**

The National Commission for Transitional Justice should institutionalize mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of victims and survivors of CW attacks, both individually and through victims' associations, in the design, implementation, and monitoring of transitional justice strategies. Processes must be tailored to prioritize victims' rights to truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition. The Commission should establish structured engagement with Syrian civil society organizations, which have played a critical role in documenting violations, amplifying victims' voices, and advancing accountability on the CW file in the past decade. Effective engagement with civil society not only enhances legitimacy and inclusivity but also strengthens oversight and accountability of transitional justice institutions.



TO OPCW STATE PARTIES

- **Promote Comprehensive Accountability for Chemical Weapons Crimes**

While the Syrian government initiates domestic pathways for accountability through the National Commission for Transitional Justice, the international community and States Parties to the OPCW must also play a role in ensuring that perpetrators, enablers, and facilitators of chemical weapons crimes in Syria are held accountable. The pursuit of justice for the victims and survivors of chemical weapons in Syria should not be only a responsibility of the Syrian Government; instead, all States have an international responsibility in ensuring individuals responsible for the use of Chemical Weapons against the Syrian people are brought to justice. This requires complementary and supportive action across several fronts:

1. **Enforcement of Arrest Warrants:** States must cooperate with French judicial authorities and other jurisdictions that have issued arrest warrants against senior Syrian officials.
2. **Commit to Transnational Judicial Solidarity:** All States, in accordance with their international law obligations, bear responsibility to ensure the investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for the use of CW in Syria. All States should use all means and tools at their disposal and exercise their jurisdiction to ensure investigations of such crimes, and the arrest of an individual present on their territory.
3. **Preventing Safe Havens:** States hosting suspects must not allow their territory to become a refuge for perpetrators. They should conclude extradition agreements with Syria's government or with other jurisdictions exercising effective jurisdiction on the crimes.
4. **Corporate and Third-Party Liability:** Accountability must extend to companies and intermediaries that supplied chemical precursors or equipment used in Syria's chemical weapons program. States should investigate potential liability of their national companies that supplied chemical precursors or equipment used in Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons program.



TO OPCW STATE PARTIES

- **Support the Establishment of a Victims' Fund**

To ensure justice and effective remedies for all victims of international crimes in Syria, including but not limited to victims of chemical weapons attacks, the international community could facilitate, in partnership with the Syrian Government and the National Commission for Transitional Justice, the establishment and sustained financing of a dedicated Victims' Fund. This fund could support in providing reparations to victims of gross human rights violations, in alignment with future reparations programs as outlined by the National Commission for Transitional Justice, and could be funded through different means, including the repurposing of frozen assets of the Assad regime, in agreement with the Syrian Government.

- **Secure Evidence Preservation from International Mechanisms**

Over a decade of investigative work by bodies such as the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has produced an unparalleled body of evidence and expertise. As these mechanisms approach the end of their mandates, the international community must ensure effective preservation, consolidation, and accessibility of their archives for future accountability processes. Without sustained investment in preserving these evidentiary and technical records, future prosecutions risk being undermined by evidentiary gaps.

- **Support Syria's National Capacity Building Needs**

Following the departure of the Assad regime, limited information remains available regarding the so-called Assad Chemical Era. Syrians are facing an exceptionally complex file that requires coordinated national and international efforts. The gravity and urgency of the file highlight an increased need to develop robust national capacities to address the destruction of the Assad chemical arsenal, as well as to prevent and counter the proliferation of chemical weapons within Syria. Accordingly, the international community bears a critical responsibility to support the establishment and strengthening of Syrian national capacities, in line with the priorities and needs identified by Syrians.



TO OPCW STATE PARTIES

- **Support Syria's Genuine and Sustained Engagement with the OPCW**

Following the fall of the Assad regime, Syria's government will remain bound by its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The international community should provide technical, financial, and political support to enable full cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

- **Revise the Previous Decision regarding Rights and Privileges of Syria as a Member of the OPCW**

As part of accountability efforts related to CW crimes by the Assad regime, and due to the failure of the Assad regime to cooperate with the OPCW, the Conference of State Parties in 2021 adopted Decision C-25/DEC.9 to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention pursuant to Article XII of the Convention. The decision confirmed that Syria's rights and privileges will be reinstated by the Conference only once the Director-General has reported that Syria has completed all the required measures laid out in Decision EC-94/DEC.2. State Parties to the OPCW should revise the Decision and consider its repeal, amendment or enactment of a new Decision to ensure the ability for the Syrian Arab Republic to effectively serve as Member of State Parties to the Conference, while also ensuring ongoing monitoring on Syria's regular compliance with previous Decisions and requirement to resolve all outstanding issues concerning CW in Syria.

- **Draw Lessons from Syria to Strengthen the Universal Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

The Syrian case illustrates both the catastrophic consequences of chemical weapons use and the critical importance of a robust, enforceable international regime. States should systematically extract and apply lessons learned from the use of CW by the former Bashar al-Assad regime to reinforce global prevention and ensure that no other civilian population will be subjected to the same atrocity crimes in impunity. This includes ensuring consistent political enforcement of the prohibition, closing international legal gaps that allowed perpetrators to evade justice, and ensuring rapid-response mechanisms for investigation, attribution, and effective deterrence.



List of signatories

- Action For Sama
 - Afak
 - Amal Healing and Advocacy Center
 - Association for Supporting and Empowering Women
 - Association of Detainees and The Missing Sednaya Prison
 - Association of Victims of Chemical Weapons
 - Balloon
 - Bond Community Development Association
 - Change Makers
 - Civil centre
 - CNRD / Civil Network for Rights and Development
 - Damma hug
 - Dar Justice
 - Dawlaty
 - Deirna Nexus
 - Do Not Suffocate Truth Campaign
 - Dozana
 - Emissa for Development
 - Euphrates Ears
 - Eve Humanitarian Association
 - For feminist
 - Global Harmony Foundation (GHF)
 - Green Heart Association
 - Hitma for Cultural and Social Development
 - Horan Foundation
 - House of Citizenship Organization
 - Humanitarian Care Cherity
 - Innovative powerful vision IPV
 - Isharqah Women's Center
 - JA-SYRIA
 - Justice and Development Rights Association
 - Karam Foundation
 - Kesh Malek
 - LACU
 - Lelun association for victims
 - Lyktan Sweden
 - Mahabad Organization for Human Rights MOHR
 - Malva for Arts
 - Mazaya Women's Organization
 - MedGlobal
 - Mnemonic - Syrian Archive
 - Mobaderoon
 - Musawa
 - Music Friends Association
 - Ornina
 - PÊL- Civil Waves
 - Rise together Initiative
 - Souriyat Across Borders (SAB)
 - Space Of Peace
 - SYE Initiative
 - Synergy Association for Victims
 - Syrian American Medical society
 - Syrian Forum
 - Syrian Network for Human Rights
 - Syrian Network In Denmark
 - Syrian Women's Association
 - Taafi initiative
 - The Syria Campaign
 - The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
 - The Syrian Legal Development Programme
 - Together for Aljarnya
 - Transformative pathways
 - Truth and Justice Charter
 - Truth Guardians
 - Vision
 - Warsheh Team
 - Women now for development
 - Women's Voice team
 - Youth empower platform
 - Zorna development organization
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