

Comment by the Information and Press Department regarding the OPCW Technical Secretariat's report on inspections at the Barzah and Jamraya Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre Facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic

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We have taken note of a report delivered by OPCW Technical Secretariat Director-General Ahmet Uzumcu on the implementation of a relevant decision adopted at the 83rd Session of the OPCW Executive Council.

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We have pointed out a number of times that the requirements set out in that decision for Syria exceed the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). An attempt to ensure free and unconditional access for OPCW inspectors to any (meaning also secret) military and civilian infrastructure facilities contradicts international law. It is clear that this document was adopted under powerful pressure from the United States and its closest allies. It would be interesting to see what the United States would have done if anyone decided to hold such inspections of its own facilities.

In this particular case, the focus was on the Barzah and Jamraya Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, which was vitally important for Syria's economy. Yes, it was important in the past, but not any longer, because this civilian facility was razed to the ground on April 14, 2018 in a joint missile attack by the United States, Britain and France.

It is obvious to everyone that the airstrike was delivered without a UN Security Council mandate and was an outrageous violation of international law. It was a cynical act of aggression against a sovereign country and a member of the United Nations and that it was launched on the basis of unsubstantiated suspicions that Syria has secretly retained some of its chemical weapons and that it used chlorine in Douma, Eastern Ghouta, which has not been proved either. At the time of the airstrike, the OPCW inspectors had not reached the site of the alleged chemical attack and so had not even started an investigation.

We note the offending and cynical tone of the OPCW report. The organisation is required to inspect the member states' compliance with the CWC. The OPCW confirmed that the Syrian chemical weapons were destroyed with large-scale international assistance and under close monitoring by the OPCW. After the chemical demilitarisation of Syria was completed on January 4, 2016, the OPCW Technical Secretariat sent two inspections to the Barzah and Jamraya facilities in 2017. They have not found any traces of toxic chemicals or their precursors or any evidence of prohibited activities there. The Technical Secretariat duly informed the OPCW Executive Council of these conclusions. However, the latest report does not even say that the Barzah and Jamraya facilities were completely destroyed and the OPCW inspectors had nothing to inspect there. Moreover, the Technical Secretariat's Director-General has announced that OPCW inspectors will make two more visits to these facilities, citing the need to implement the anti-Syrian decision of the OPCW Executive Council.

The Syrian Government several times invited OPCW representatives to visit Barzah to see the damage done by the airstrike and report the findings to the Executive Council, which would have provided grounds for adopting a formal decision to end the inspections.

However, it proceeds from the OPCW report that no constructive steps towards this have been taken. This is understandable, because the Western countries do not want to give an answer to a sensitive question regarding the reasons for delivering the airstrike at the scientific centre after the OPCW had twice confirmed the absence of any activities prohibited by the CWC there.

Overall, this report is yet another example of politically motivated verbal manipulations by the Western countries.