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The Syrian British Council (SBC) Demands Justice for Victims of the Chemical Massacre

Today marks the 7th anniversary of one of the most heinous crimes Syria has witnessed since the uprising in 2011. Early hours of 21 August 2013, rebel-held parts of east and west Ghouta, just on the outskirts of Damascus, were struck by rockets containing the chemical agent sarin. The rockets targeted the towns of Ghouta and suffocated more than 1,125 people to death. 1,400 people died only within hours, more than a quarter of them were women and children. The death toll was estimated to be 1,729. The subsequent investigations by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed that the attack was carried out with Russian- or Syrian-made rockets containing large quantities of sarin and several other investigations by the US and the French governments confirmed the Assad's responsibility of this attack.

The UN Security Council condemned the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons and recognised the necessity to withdraw the chemical arsenal from Assad without any threat or any punitive action. Rather, it indicated that in the event of failure to abide by the provisions for the disposal of chemical weapons, it will proceed to agree on new measures, not automatically transferring to Article 7. The United Nations Inspection Committee issued a report on September 16, 2013, which merely described the attack as a serious crime, and "those responsible for it must be brought to justice as soon as possible," without blaming the attack on anyone. This did not prevent Assad from recurring chemical attacks, whether with sarin or chlorine, and this was documented by UN reports. "The responsibility of the Assad regime was very clear in terms of its possession of the known stockpiles of chemical weapons, the testimony of international observers, and the direct publication of its photos and documents. It is time to stop Assad from conducting further war crimes" Said Dr. Haytham Alhamwi, SBC Chairman.

Seven years after the massacre, the criminal is still free. It used the sarin gas again and again while the international community is still unable to activate the investigation mechanism for chemical crimes. SBC is committed to standing against impunity and believes that crimes do not fall under the statute of limitations. Hence, SBC demands to hold perpetrators accountable and responsible for their heinous crimes. SBC calls on forming an investigation team to carry out inspections and bring the perpetrators to court. The chemical massacre remains a reminder of the brutality of the Assad regime, so we call on the international community to act to stop such a massacre to take place in the future.