

Hands Off Syria: UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria “is Acting to Incite Further Massacres”

Hands Off Syria Australia, Press Release

By [Global Research News](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Hands Off Syria (Australia) condemns the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) and calls for its disbanding and replacement by a body which does not act as a partisan propaganda organ for the foreign powers waging war against Syria.

Hands Off Syria member Ms Hanadi Assoud says

‘The Commission of Inquiry has proven itself a partisan body, inciting massacres and protecting the main architects of this crisis: the USA and its proxies, in particular Saudi Arabia.’

Dr Tim Anderson, Hands Off Syria member and academic at the University of Sydney, said

‘There is a fatal conflict of interest here. So long as the sectarian Islamist fighters are backed by the big powers, the COI seems incapable of recognising their well-publicised crimes. The UN should disband the Commission of Inquiry and then reconstitute it excluding the influence of those states promoting war and violence, in particular the USA and the Gulf monarchies.

‘The latest Commission of Inquiry report on the gas attacks in east Damascus, like the general report last month and the report on the dreadful Houla massacre last year actively covered up the crimes of ruthless Takfiri-Islamists. In its report on the Houla massacre (May 2012) the COI investigators were literally led by the hand by the killers. The technical report on the Damascus gas attacks is also being used to set up a major attack on Syria. The COI is being led by the nose by the US-backed sectarian Islamists’, Dr Anderson added.

Ms Assoud said: ‘This Commission of Inquiry is responding cynically to each new provocation, inciting repeated massacres by holding out hope to the terrorists that, if only their next massacre is big enough, they might get US air force backing for their ‘holy war’.’

Dr Anderson: ‘At best the Commission of Inquiry has been arguing ‘a plague on both your houses’, which implies that the Syrian nation cannot act to defend its own people from foreign backed terrorists; at worst the COI recklessly accuses the government, thus inciting foreign intervention. Further, by pretending a moral equivalence between the Syrian Government and the foreign backed terrorists, the COI betrays the Charter of the United Nations, which embodies respect for nations and their right to self-determination, while

selectively ignoring the many U.N. resolutions on the need to combat terrorism.’

Hands off Syria calls for the disbanding of the UN’s Commission of Inquiry, and for a new and independent U.N. body, not shaped those states which persist in promoting the war against Syria. Foreign powers cannot be both aggressors and judges.

Some background on the Commission of Inquiry and the Ghouta incident is attached.

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Background: the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria

The Human Rights Council (HRC) motion S-17/1 that established the U.N.’s Commission of Inquiry on Syria (22 August 2011), immediately condemned the Syrian Government, before any inquiry. The founding text decided there had been ‘continued grave and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities ... including indiscriminate attacks on the Syrian population’. Little wonder the Syrian Government has been reluctant to cooperate.

President of the HRC, Polish diplomat Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, appointed four members, two of whom were from countries (Turkey and the USA) deeply involved in the aggression. The Turkish delegate was soon replaced by Swiss lawyer Carla del Ponte, but the US delegate Karen Koning AbuZayd remains deputy to the chair, Brazilian diplomat Paulo Sergio Pinheiro. Apart from her UN roles, AbuZayd is a board member of the Washington based Middle East Policy Council (MEPC), a body which includes US generals and delegates from the oil-rich Gulf monarchies –the major sponsors of international terrorism against Syria. The Commission was thus poisoned against Syria from the beginning.

The Houla ‘False Flag’ massacre , May 2012

The COI’s second report on the Houla massacre (15 August 2012) relied on interviews organised by members of the Farouk FSA Brigade, then blamed unnamed government militia (‘shabiha’); no motive was given. However a number of independent investigators showed Houla to have been a ‘false flag’ massacre, organised to falsely blame the Syrian Army so as to incite the UN Security Council to intervene.

Interviews by German journalist Rainer Hermann showed that the Houla victims were ‘nearly exclusively families from the Alawi and Shia minorities ... and the family of a Sunni member of parliament who was considered [by the FSA] a government collaborator’. A large FSA brigade, led by Abdurrazzaq Tlass and Yahya Yusuf , had swept aside the small army posts, and carried out the killings. They took over the area and then organised the COI’s access to witnesses. Hermann’s report was supported by Russian journalist Marat Musin and Arabic speaking Dutch writer Martin Janssen. Melchite nun Mother Agnes Mariam also spoke with witnesses and observed the manipulation of bodies as this ‘false flag’ massacre was presented to the world. The COI missed all this, either through wanton negligence or plain malice.

Report of August 16, 2013

The COI produced another partisan report on the violence on 16 August, once again highly

selective and relying on pro-FSA sources. This report was useless in the sense of independent evidence. It also ignored major massacres committed by the Takfiri-Islamists (sectarian Islamists fighting to replace the secular Syrian Government with an Islamic state), such as the August 2012 massacre at Daraya (after the failure of a prisoner swap), the December 2012 massacre of Alawi villagers at Aqrab (documented by a British journalist), the multiple al Nusra-FSA attacks on students at Aleppo University (as part of their close down the university campaign) and the al Nusra Sarin gas attacks on Aleppo in early 2013.

The al Ghouta incidents

On 21 August 2013, some crude chemical weapons seem to have killed many people in parts of eastern Damascus (al Ghouta) under the control of Takfiri-Islamists. Video images were released immediately, accusing the Syrian Arab Army of having attacked and killed hundreds of civilians.

Video also shows a number of people walking through the laid out dead bodies; several of these people have been identified as Islamist fighters.

The publicity given to these killings derailed the attention of the COI team which had just arrived in Damascus to investigate Syrian Government evidence of the sectarian Islamists using sarin gas in the Khan al Assal area of Aleppo, in March 2013. This investigation did not take place because the team was diverted to al Ghouta; a convenient diversion because UN investigator Carla del Ponte had announced earlier that the evidence of sarin use provisionally pointed to 'the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities.' Russia had provided a large brief of evidence to the UN. However the COI's brief was technical and did not include determining who was responsible for the attacks.

Partisan 'evidence' from Washington

The Obama administration immediately asserted that the Syrian Government was to blame; later it presented some circumstantial evidence (30 August). Obama was backed up by the Washington based group Human Rights Watch (10 September). Both claim the Syrian Government's motives were 'to gain the upper hand or break a stalemate' in certain areas. Foreign Policy magazine (11 September), claimed a UN inquiry group would produce a 'strong circumstantial case' against the government. The main US claims are:

1. The 'opposition' (i.e. Islamist fighters) does not have the capacity to make and deploy chemical weapons. The White House and HRW both say that the Islamist 'rebels' have no access to the 140mm and 330mm rockets they say were used in the attack.
2. Communications intercepts show government activity around the attacks, and the extent of social media postings is too wide to have been fabricated. In this area the Obama administration mixes the questions of whether CW were used and who used them.

Independent evidence implicating the foreign-backed fighters

Evidence implicating the foreign-backed fighters, as in previous massacres, is more specific, and the motive is more obvious: to incite a 'humanitarian intervention' that will help them.

1. Islamist fighters in Syria do indeed have chemical weapons and rocket capacity. They have posted video and photos of themselves firing large blue tank-canisters from artillery. In April al Nusra stole 400 tonnes of liquid chlorine from an Aleppo factory. In May six anti-

Syrian 'rebels' were arrested and later indicted by Turkish authorities; 2kgs of 'kitchen variety' sarin was seized. In July the government seized 261 barrels of chemicals from terrorist groups in Baniyas. Then 26 people including soldiers were killed by al Nusra chemicals attacks in Aleppo. The army also discovered a chemical fabrication plant in Jobar (Damascus countryside), making use of ingredients from Saudi Arabia.

2. The first independent interviews of people in al Ghouta indicated that Islamist fighters there were collecting chemical weapons. Jordan-based journalists Dale Gavlak and Yahya Abaneh interviewed: (a) the father of a fighter who said his son had died while mishandling chemical weapons provided by a Saudi man; (b) townspeople who said fighters had been sleeping in mosques and houses while their tunnels were used to store tanks or canisters; and (c) two fighters who complained that they had not been trained in the handling of chemical weapons.

3. Syrian analysts have released video which begins to identify the dead at al Ghouta, and those around them. Establishing who the victims are may be the key to proving who is responsible. Two weeks before the killings in al Ghouta many women and children were kidnapped from the site of an al Nusra massacre in Lattakia. It is believed many of these are amongst the dead at al Ghouta. Video also shows several alive and identifiable, kidnapped government supporters, later seen as dead victims at al Ghouta.

Adam Larson says the crime at al Ghouta was either: 'the perfect gift from the 'regime' to its hostile opponents, or a custom sewn false flag event of great audacity'.

A dozen former senior US military and intelligence officers wrote to President Obama, reminding him of the lies told about WMDs in Iraq. They said 'the most reliable intelligence shows that [President] Bashar al-Assad was NOT responsible for the chemical incident that killed and injured Syrian civilians on August 21 ... [and] the various groups trying to overthrow Syrian President ... have ample incentive to get the U.S. more deeply involved'.

Chemical weapons agreement

The Syrian government has now agreed to a Russian initiative, to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, heading off the immediate threat of missile attacks from US warships, stationed in the eastern Mediterranean. However that agreement does not resolve the matter. The al Ghouta incident was just the latest in a long chain of pretexts for war. The US clearly wants to dominate the entire region, and cannot tolerate any independent state.

Bitterly disappointed at the delay in a direct US attack on Syria, the ruthless and sectarian Islamist fighters will most likely try to stage another 'false flag' attack. The partisan United Nations COI will almost certainly act, once again, to lend them credibility. For its part, the US will pursue any new disarmament commitments as part of its attempts to topple the Syrian government. And double standards in disarmament will continue. Under the Chemical Weapons Convention the USA was due to destroy all its chemical weapons by 2012; Washington now says it will comply by the year 2023.

Selected sources:

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Video identifying persons in the incident at al Ghouta (East Damascus)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdF6aSnxhDs>

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