

# The Mastermind of the Chemical Attacks in Syria

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*The man who orchestrated the chemical attacks in Syria has died in Idlib. Mohamed Amin Khalid al-Hamoud was a chemical engineer, who was in control of the chemical weapons for Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), headed by [Mohamed al-Julani](#).*

According to HTS's media, al-Hamoud died of a heart attack, but other sources in Idlib say he was poisoned to death. He began with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which has dissolved into the current HTS.

The Syrian armed conflict has been over for years. The last terrorist-occupied territory is Idlib, west of Aleppo. [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham](#) (HTS) holds about 3 million residents as human shields. HTS runs Idlib like an Islamic State, and Julani was formerly a member of ISIS, before creating his own Al Qaeda branch in Syria, Jibhat al-Nusra.

When the US designated [Jibhat al-Nusra](#) a terrorist group, Julani changed the name of the group to HTS, and the act of re-branding allowed him to live in freedom in Idlib, despite the 10-million-dollar bounty the US had placed on his head. But, that lucrative prize has not been awarded, even though American journalist [Martin Smith of PBS](#) interviewed him in Idlib, and UN and other international aid agencies hand-deliver millions of dollars in aid directly to Julani.

In the PBS interview in February 2021, Julani said,

“For example, till now there’s still international recognition of Bashar al-Assad, although he carried out tens of chemical attacks against his people. Actually, it was said over 100 attacks.”

In March 2011, the beginning of the US-NATO attack on Syria for regime change began in Deraa.

On August 21, 2012, [US President Obama](#), the architect of the US-NATO attack on Syria, gave a speech in which he said that the US would consider the use of chemical weapons in Syria as a ‘red line’. His threat was directed at the Syrian government in Damascus, but it was the US-supported armed opposition who took heed and began their plans.

Obama’s ‘red line’ speech was a ‘green light’ for the armed opposition, which had been trained, funded, supplied, and armed by the US. The US media presented them as freedom fighters and [Sen. John McCain](#) lobbied for them in Congress to keep their funding. They called themselves [the Free Syrian Army](#) (FSA). Despite the billions of dollars poured into the group, by 2017 President [Trump shut down the CIA program responsible for the FSA](#).

The very [first use of chemicals in the Syrian conflict occurred on March 19, 2013](#), just seven

months after Obama's 'red line' threat.

[Khan al-Assal](#) is a village just west of Aleppo on the road to Idlib. The town was inhabited by farmers and livestock. The FSA had attacked the village previously, but the residents had fought back and repelled the attack. The second attack on the town utilized chemical weapons and marked the very first use of chemicals in the Syrian conflict.

Western media blamed the SAA, while the Syrian media blamed the FSA. Syrian TV news reporters were on the scene both at the site of the attack and among the survivors who were being treated at the hospital. Eyewitnesses said a missile fell and a smell of chlorine was present and both people and livestock had died, which was filmed by the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA).

The Syrian government wrote a letter of complaint to the UN requesting a UN delegation of chemical investigators to come to Syria to investigate the chemical attack. The UN replied that it was too dangerous in that area to send a team of investigators.

On [August 21, 2013, a chemical attack east of Damascus, in the suburbs of Ghouta](#), occurred. The video uploaded by the FSA showed horrific scenes of rows of dead children lying on the floor. The video was shown globally for days. There was no verification of the source of the video, or its authenticity. But, as the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Immediately, most were unified in their conclusion that the SAA had carried out the chemical attack. What was missing in their long-distance jump to conclusion, was the fact the Syrian government had been requesting the UN chemical investigators to come to Syria to investigate Khan al-Assal, and the investigators had just arrived finally in Damascus the day before the Ghouta attack. They had just unpacked their bags when a new chemical attack occurred very near where they were staying.

Fred Pleitgen, a journalist with CNN, was in Damascus to follow the UN investigation story, and he reported on going to all the hospitals in Damascus after the attack looking for victims or survivors and found none.

On April 17, 2014, [Seymour Hersh](#) published an expose in the London Review of Books, which explained why Obama had changed his mind, and not attacked the Syrian government in response to the Ghouta chemical attack.

According to Hersh,

"Obama's change of mind had its origins at Porton Down, the defense laboratory in Wiltshire. British intelligence had obtained a sample of the sarin used in the 21 August attack and analysis demonstrated that the gas used didn't match the batches known to exist in the Syrian army's chemical weapons arsenal. The message that the case against Syria wouldn't hold up was quickly relayed to the US joint chiefs of staff."

On December 29, 2016, the SAA entered East Aleppo, which had been occupied by the FSA, Jibhat al-Nusra, and other allied international terrorists for years. The terrorists had been either killed or taken in a surrender deal to Idlib.

CNN's Fred Pleitgen was with the SAA as they entered for the first time areas previously

under occupation by the terrorists. On camera, Pleitgen was interviewed by Christiane Amanpour. Pleitgen was in a dusty room, which he identified as a chemical workshop. Large barrels and supplies were seen in the room he stood in. Amanpour asked him if that room of chemicals had been on the government side. Pleitgen answered equally directly, that no it could not, as the area was just recovered by the SAA moments ago.

The terrorists fighting the Syrian government realized that Obama had let them down, and had not delivered on his promise to them, that if chemicals were used the American military would take decisive action in Syria, and the terrorists took that to mean the Damascus government would fall.

The goal of the FSA and their allies has always been the downfall of the secular government in Damascus, and the formation of an Islamic State in Syria, governed by Islamic law. This is the global goal of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which has members throughout the US and Europe. During the Obama administration, the MB was elevated to key positions of power, after [Trump tried to get the US Congress to designate the MB as a terrorist organization](#), he was stopped several times.

The terrorists refused to give up on their dream of a US response to the use of chemicals, and on April 17, 2014, they used chemicals in a small village of [Khan Sheikhoun](#), near Idlib.

In a last-ditch, the 'Hail Mary' pass aimed at victory, the terrorists carried out the [April 7, 2018 chemical attack in Douma](#), near Damascus.

The Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) investigated the Douma attack and prepared a report. But, [Professor Emeritus of MIT, Theodore Postol](#) received some leaked documents which caused Postol to say the "conclusion is clear; that the cylinder was placed near this hole that was already produced by a mortar shell or an artillery rocket in order to make it appear on the surface that this chlorine cylinder injected chlorine into the building. This is a staged event, no question about it, unambiguous."

Postol took a look into a previous chemical attack report by OPCW and said, "And incidentally, the report on [Khan Sheikhoun](#) has similar problems. In the case of the Khan Sheikhoun report, which is an event that occurred a year earlier, they cite evidence that when you look at the evidence, it's also inconsistent with what they claim."

On [May 19, 2024](#), protesters in Idlib were calling for the ouster of Julani and HTS. Protests had been ongoing, Julani had stopped all aid going to the residents, and some people on the HTS payroll were cut off.

On [May 25, 2024](#), the protests continued against Julani and HTS. The protesters told how their relatives had been imprisoned and tortured to death by HTS. Julani is arresting members of HTS in a cover-up, preparing for the day when he would be captured, or perhaps escape.

His benefactor, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, had turned against HTS and in the summer of 2024 had been attacking HTS, as Erdogan prepared to normalize his relationship with President Bashar al-Assad.

Turkey, Russia, and Syria are united in their agreement to clear Idlib of terrorist control and open the M4 highway to Aleppo for civilians and commercial traffic.

On September 5, 2024, [Robert Wood, a US official at the UN](#), issued a statement, "Resolution 2118 said those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable."

Wood directs his statement at the Syrian government, but fails to mention the possibility that the US-supported armed opposition carried out the chemical attacks to elicit a military response from the US.

Mohamed Amin Khalid al-Hamoud is dead, and he cannot testify to his role as the mastermind of the chemical attacks in Syria. He may have gotten a taste of his own medicine.

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*This article was originally published on Mideast Discourse.*

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**Michel Chossudovsky**

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