

Misattributed Statements on White Helmets and Alleged Gas Attacks in Syria

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SWEDHR have performed several analyses around reports on alleged chemical attacks in Syria, which mostly have been originated in claims by the White Helmets and associates. In the main, our conclusions were that the alleged evidence appear clinically and epidemiological flawed. For instance, in regard to the Khan Shaykhun incident, as put forward in a document by the SWEDHR chair recently published by the United Nations Security Council. [1]

We have also asked for independent, non-biased investigations done by meritorious scientists, instead of politically appointed investigators. In spite that was all we have centrally said on the 'gas attacks' issue, we have been unjustified attacked by some mainstream media in Sweden, led by Dagens Nyheter, [2] and elsewhere by Der Spiegel, [3] Le Figaro, [4] etc., and in social media -including deleterious references to our organization by Mr Kenneth Roth, [5] president of Human Rights Watch.

However, in recent weeks, the United States Defence Secretary, **General (Ret.) Jim Mattis**, announced in a press conference that they do not possess evidence of a sarin attack in Syria. [6] Days after, the French Defence Minister, **Ms Florence Perly**, declared that neither France has confirmed evidence of chlorine attacks in Syria attributed to the government forces. [7] Both statements bring unequivocal support, and further credibility, to the conclusions on the very same issues we achieved at SWEDHR, published in April, May and November 2017, respectively (See Notes & References).

Concomitantly, our firm stance about the probe-issue regarding allegations on gas attacks in Syria, by no means contradicts our equally solid stance of considering the eventual perpetration of such an attacks a hideous war crime. Neither our demand for a beyond-doubt evidence regarding the alleged responsibility of the Syrian government represents a per-default political endorsement.

SWEDHR is by definition opposed to the notion of war. [8] Unlike HRW, we have not advocated for the bombing of Syrians, [9] or for a No-Fly Zone, such as the White Helmets and associates do [10] - which in practical terms would only enable the intensification of belligerent input from jihadists fighting for an Islamic State in Syria. [11] We have instead repeatedly advocated for a prompt settlement of the Syrian conflict via negotiations. We view the Sochi peace talks as positive and crucial in those regards, and we concur with UN Special Envoy **Staffan de Mistura**, that the progress made in Sochi may be also seen as contributing to the Geneva process. [12]

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