

US Applies Useful Double Standard to Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

Both Turkey and the U.S.-allied Kurds have been accused of using chemical weapons in Syria, but the U.S. has had two very different responses.

By [Whitney Webb](#)

Global Research, February 22, 2018

[MintPress News](#) 20 February 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Military Militarization](#)
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On Saturday, Syrian news agency [SANA reported](#) that six men had been hospitalized after an alleged Turkish chemical weapons attack on a small town near the city of Afrin in Northern Syria. Jiwan Mohammad, the director of the Afrin Hospital, told SANA that the men's symptoms were indicative of those experienced after contact with chemical weapons, including "difficulty breathing, coughing and burning all over the body."

The pro-Syrian-opposition reporting group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), [also confirmed](#) the attack to the AFP news agency, stating that "shelling from either Turkey or allied factions hit Al-Sheikh Hadid [30 km west of Afrin] and left six people with enlarged pupils and breathing difficulties."

Though various videos and images of the alleged victims were made available on social media, reports could not be independently confirmed.

Turkey has denied any and all responsibility. Yaskin Aktay, chief adviser to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, [told Al Jazeera](#) that "it is out of the question for Turkey to use an internationally prohibited war tool in Afrin." Turkey has been launching attacks within the Afrin province since late January as part of an offensive it has ironically called "Operation Olive Branch." Turkey launched the offensive after the U.S. [announced](#) it would be using its Kurdish allies in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to create a "border force" of 30,000 fighters.

Turkey condemned the proposed force as a "terror army," owing to the fact that the SDF is largely composed of forces belonging to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which Turkey has long considered a terrorist group. Turkish President Erdogan [has vowed](#) to "suffocate this terror army before it is born."

Useful U.S. double standard

The Trump administration, in marked contrast to its earlier responses to alleged chemical weapons attacks in Syria, took the Turkish government at its word and said that it was "[extremely unlikely](#)" that Turkish forces had used chemical weapons against the Kurds in Afrin. This response was especially odd given that the Kurds in control of Afrin are ostensibly allied with the U.S.

Given that both Turkey, an ally of U.S.-dominated NATO, and the Kurdish militia, allied with the U.S., [have each been accused](#) of using chemical weapons in the past month, it seems that the U.S. is willing to turn a blind eye to such attacks when its allies are implicated.

In these instances, the U.S.' response has been [drastically different](#) from its response to alleged chemical weapon attacks where the accused party has been the Syrian government – even when the U.S. [has admitted](#) that it has never had evidence of Syria's chemical weapons use. Yet that lack of evidence didn't stop the U.S. from [calling for](#) a "no-fly zone" in Syrian government-held territory after an alleged chemical weapons attack in 2013, and a [unilateral attack](#) against Syria after another alleged chemical weapons attack last year.

In the most recent case, [an alleged chemical gas attack](#), which was said to have injured a single person, was blamed on the Syrian government earlier this month. The evidence given was the verbal testimony of members of the White Helmets, long exposed as a "[propaganda construct](#)" and logistics group for the terrorist group al-Nusra. Al-Nusra and other so-called "rebels" in Syria have also [been accused](#) on [several occasions](#) of chemical weapons use, but these accusations have also failed to draw a response from the U.S. — even when these groups [admitted to using](#) the prohibited weapons.

In contrast, the case in Turkey was documented by both pro-opposition groups and pro-Syrian government groups and there was video footage. However, in this case, the accounts of the U.S.' Kurdish allies are apparently not as trustworthy as those of the al-Nusra-affiliated White Helmets.

Whether or not the chemical weapons attack in Afrin actually happened, the event proves that the U.S. is not interested in stopping the use of chemical weapons nor in protecting the lives of Syrians – even when those Syrians are their allies. Instead, the U.S. has shown that it finds the alleged use of chemical weapons worth investigating or condemning only when it can be blamed on the Syrian government in order to justify more aggressive efforts to bring about the U.S.' [long-standing](#) goal of regime change in Syria.

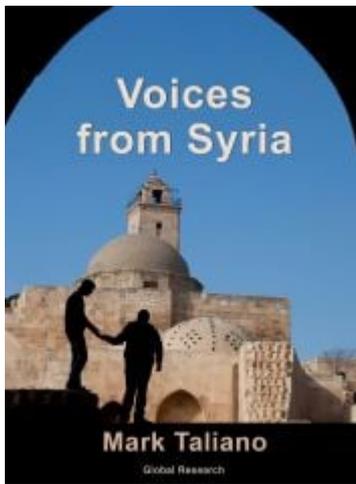
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Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News who has written for several news organizations in both English and Spanish; her stories have been featured on ZeroHedge, the Anti-Media, and 21st Century Wire among others. She currently lives in Southern Chile.

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