

# Press Releases: Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding an Alleged Incident in Saraqib, Syrian Arab Republic on 4 February 2018

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 17, 2018

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On May 15, 2018, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-Finding Mission, released its report regarding an alleged incident in Saraqib, Syrian Arab Republic on 4 February 2018. The FFM *“determined that chlorine, released from cylinders through mechanical impact, was likely used as a chemical weapon on 4 February 2018 in the Al Talil neighborhood of Saraqib.”*

The FFM conducted a comprehensive investigation including analysis from interviews, supporting material submitted during the interview process, analysis of environmental samples, and subsequent cross-referencing and corroboration of evidence. In addition, patients who sought treatment at medical facilities shortly after the incident showed signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to chlorine. This attack bears all the hallmarks of similar past chemical weapons attacks by the Assad regime against its own people. The Syrian regime’s offensive around Saraqib was also marked by its characteristic brutality and disregard for civilian lives.

The OPCW’s Fact-Finding Mission does not attribute responsibility for an attack. Unfortunately, Russia has vetoed the renewal of Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was the only impartial and independent body with the mandate for attributing responsibility, at the UN Security Council five times.

For seven long years there has been no let-up in the atrocities committed by the Assad regime, enabled by its backers, Russia and Iran, in flagrant violation of international law. The suffering that has been inflicted on the Syrian people by the Assad regime and its Iranian and Russian backers is

abhorrent. Russia, which promised the world in 2013 that it would guarantee the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stocks, is ultimately responsible for their continued use there.

We condemn, in the strongest terms possible, the use of chemical weapons. As President Trump said, these are not the acts of a man, but of a monster. We are committed to ensuring that all those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria are held to account. We will not rest in our efforts to seek justice for the victims of these abhorrent chemical weapons attacks.

As part of our determination to hold those who use chemical weapons accountable, senior officials from over 30 nations will gather in Paris on May 18, 2018, for a Ministerial Meeting of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. The Partnership ministerial will address recent chemical weapons use by States and non-State actors, in addition to actions the Partnership can take to contribute to the deterrence of future use and attribution in cases where use has occurred.

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## **[Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan Travel to Argentina and Brazil](#)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 17, 2018

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Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan will travel to Buenos Aires, Argentina from May 20-21 to lead the U.S. delegation to the G-20 Foreign

Ministers' Meeting. The G-20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting offers an opportunity for foreign ministers to exchange views and collaborate on global economic, political, and security issues of mutual concern, including sustainable development and the role of multilateralism. These conversations will set the stage for the G-20 Leaders' Summit in Argentina in November. On the margins of the G-20 ministerial, Deputy Secretary Sullivan will meet with a number of foreign ministers for bilateral discussions.

Following the G-20, the Deputy Secretary will travel to Brasilia, Brazil to meet with leaders and launch the U.S.-Brazil Security Forum, a bilateral law enforcement cooperation initiative to address transnational crime and threat networks of mutual concern. He will also discuss our joint economic growth agenda and global issues, including Venezuela's humanitarian crisis and regional support for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

While in Brazil, the Deputy Secretary will also engage with U.S. Embassy staff and members of Brazilian civil society.

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## **Press Releases: Close of Candidate Registration Period for Cambodia's National Elections**

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May 17, 2018

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The United States deeply regrets the Royal Government of Cambodia's decision to prohibit leading figures from the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) from participating in the July 2018, national elections. This decision prevents millions of Cambodian voters from exercising their democratic right to vote for candidates of their choice and calls into question the integrity of the electoral process. We urge the Cambodian government to reinstate CNRP candidates immediately.

In addition, in keeping with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's recent conclusion that CNRP leader Kem Sokha's imprisonment is arbitrary, we renew our call for his immediate release.

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## **Press Releases: Landmark U.S.- Uzbekistan Agreements Signed on Education and Culture**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
May 16, 2018

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During the official working visit to the United States of President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, South and Central Asian Affairs Senior Bureau Official Alice Wells and Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov signed two agreements today between the governments of the United States and Uzbekistan. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recognizes the launch of a program based in Uzbekistan that will support partnerships between U.S. universities and higher education institutions across Central Asia over the next three years. The second MOU expands funding for English language

programs across Uzbekistan to include instruction for university students, journalists, and professionals; capacity building programs for Uzbek English teaching professionals, and online learning opportunities for both teachers and students.

These agreements mark the beginning of a new era of U.S.-Uzbekistan cooperation in the field of education, and are symbols of the broad and deepening partnership between our nations.

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## **Press Releases: Release of Anwar Ibrahim**

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May 16, 2018

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The United States welcomes the release from prison and the full pardon of Malaysian political leader Anwar Ibrahim. His conviction and detention raised serious concerns about the rule of law in Malaysia.

We are glad that he has been reunited with his family.

We look forward to working with the new government in Malaysia to further strengthen the U.S.-Malaysia Comprehensive Partnership.

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