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## **Syria: UN team must get full access to investigate ‘chemical weapons’ claim**

In response to the publication of a series of videos apparently showing that chemical weapons have killed scores of civilians, including many children, on the outskirts of Syria’s capital Damascus, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui said:

“The allegations of use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians, which Amnesty International has not been able to verify independently, underscore the urgent need for the United Nations team currently in Syria to have a full mandate and unimpeded access to all locations to investigate these and any other incidents of alleged use of chemical weapons.”

“What would be the point of having a UN team of experts in the country if they are not allowed to access the sites of the alleged attacks, collect samples and investigate?”

“The Syrian authorities who claim no responsibility should immediately facilitate the visit of the UN team to Eastern Ghouta and other locations”.

“If the latest allegations are corroborated, the attacks would amount to war crimes. The only way to deal with the endless catalogue of abuses we have witnessed in Syria is for the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court, as Amnesty International has been urging since 2011.”

"It is a gross violation of international law to manufacture, stockpile, transfer or use chemical weapons, which cannot distinguish between civilians and combatants."

Amnesty International has also sent the videos to medical and other experts to verify their authenticity and to establish if the symptoms shown by those affected are congruent with the use of chemical weapons. In addition, the organization is in contact with individuals and organizations in Syria to try and gather further information about the current medical condition of people in the area.