

Statement of Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Response to a Question on the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria, 30 August 2013

Q- The Anatolian News Agency has a last minute update to its subscribers regarding the details of the chemical attack in Syria. According to the news report, the attack was reportedly staged from Qutaife and Kasiun in Syria and that the 155th Missile Brigade was involved in these attacks. The report has detailed information such as the names of the units. What is your opinion on this? Could it be said that it is now established that the Syrian regime carried out the attack in light of this precise information?

MR. AHMET DAVUTOĞLU-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - As you know, we had a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on the day of the attack on August 21. We discussed the attack first at the preparatory meeting under the chairmanship of our Prime Minister then at the NSC meeting chaired by the President. From that day on, we started a serious initiative to expand the authorities and work scope of the UN inspectors on site. We made an application to that end along with 37 countries. Meanwhile, our intelligence units and experts made extensive efforts to assess the information at hand. Furthermore, they have been in contact with several intelligence units to assess information in a synchronized way.

Given all the information we have, there is no doubt that a chemical attack took place. Eye witness statements, images from the scene as well as the statements of the health personnel on site all clearly show that people were killed as a result of suffocation or exposure to gas, without any wounds or blood stains and that the wounded showed symptoms definitely indicative of a chemical attack.

This begs a second question. At the end of the day, we will also follow the report of the UN inspectors. In this framework as you know, I met with Ahmet Uzumcu, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in London. The next question that comes to mind is who carried out the attack. The regime had initially denied use of chemical weapons but then had to admit that they were used and imputed this to the opposition and other unidentified elements. However, according to both our national intelligence reports and our assessment of other sources, the regime was clearly responsible for the chemical attack.

First of all, almost all of the loss of life took place in Eastern Gota, a region under the control of the opposition. The opposition wouldn't have killed their own people, their own supporters. The relations between this region and the missile launching venue, the launching angle, where missiles probably landed etc., all strongly suggest, or even prove, that the attack was staged from Kasiun Hill, which is controlled by the regime.

Secondly, the launching equipment. Even if you have a primitive chemical weapon capability, you can't use it unless you have even the most primitive means to launch a missile. All the intelligence we have clearly shows that the opposition doesn't have such a sophisticated ability. It is only the regime who has such sophisticated means. Again, we also have at hand statements from eye witnesses, from first hand humanitarian and intelligence sources, and traces of missile parts of launch equipment. So, according to our national intelligence and our experts' opinions, which considered the launch equipment, launching venue and angle as well as the traces, there is no doubt that the regime is responsible for the chemical attack. Whether the regime used its regular military troops or the Shabihis is another

question. Let me stress again that these are totally our own national intelligence assessments. Our contacts with other intelligence units reveal that they generally agree with our findings.

Of course, a big responsibility falls upon the international community from now on. First I would like to state this utmost clarity. Some people want to paint a picture of Turkey as a warmonger. This is an extremely unjust accusation. The whole world knows how much we have worked for 10 months from January to October 2011, engaging directly, to protect our Syrian brothers against any harm, regardless of ethnicity and sectarian origins. This was when no one else had even made a move away from their capitals.

Turkey acted when those who presently support either one of the sides didn't make any move. We made use of all diplomatic means. But, unfortunately, our friendly warnings and advise, which were as well in the interests of Turkey's security, were not heard. As you know, we first saw snipers, then artillery shootings attacking settlements. And as of the beginning of this year, Scud missiles have been launched targeting civilians 300-350 km. away.

Even in the context of these combats these last attacks have been the most far-reaching attacks against civilian venues recently. It was the most severe massacre the state committed against its own people. Finally, use of chemical weapons, even at war, has been forbidden since 1925. Use of chemical weapons even at war between two countries was forbidden in 1925 in line with a joint international convention. And until now, this considered a war crime. Those who fail to call it a war when a regime uses chemical weapons against its own people, those who fail to see that this is an act of barbarity which requires a reaction, or those who think a war is only starting now and that Turkey is a warmonger, lacks humanitarian conscience.

These images; this war going on for 2.5 years now; a death toll of 100,000; those killed, martyred; are already signs of an ongoing war and a big massacre. Our present call to the international community, our call that we are reiterating after the use of chemical weapons is to put an end to this war, this barbarity, this massacre. We are not pursuing any agenda to get Turkey or any other party to get involved in war. We have naturally shared our findings with the international community. We have received findings from others as well. New information keeps on coming to light. Opposition in Syria provides information; we also have humanitarian and intelligence sources. All of this information should be reviewed and an international initiative to end this war should be launched.