

Chlorine, Not Sarin, Was Used In The Khan Sheikhun Incident

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

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Those who blame the Syrian government for the allegedly chemical incident in Khan Sheikhun on April 4 are now playing up the analysis of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). But the results of the OPCW tests are inconsistent with all observed and reported technical and medical facts of the incident.

Yesterday the OPCW Director General Ambassador Üzümcü, a Turkish career diplomat and former Turkish ambassador to NATO, [released](#) the first analytic results of the OPCW investigation into the Khan Sheikhun incident:

The bio-medical samples collected from three victims during their autopsy were analysed at two OPCW designated laboratories. The results of the analysis indicate that the victims were exposed to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance. Bio-medical samples from seven individuals undergoing treatment at hospitals were also analysed in two other OPCW designated laboratories. Similarly, the results of these analyses indicate exposure to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance.

Director-General Üzümcü stated clearly: “The results of these analyses from four OPCW designated laboratories indicate exposure to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance.

“Sarin or Sarin-like substance” is noted three times a row. Sarin is also mentioned in the headline. The OPCW director is pushing that meme – hard.

But the OPCW did not conclude that a chemical attack occurred in Khan Sheikhun. It suggested nothing about the incident itself. It only talked about bio-medical samples of several persons – nothing more, nothing less. It also did not give any hint of how much exposure the persons in question received. Was it a minimal traceable amount that had no effect on them or did they die from it? The OPCW does not say.

The Russian foreign ministry [claims](#) that “western” powers within the OPCW block a full-scale investigation of the incident.

The “sarin like substances” the OPCW mentions could be a different chemical weapon than sarin – soman is a possible candidate. It would be more consistent with the “smell” several witnesses described after the incident (Sarin is odorless). Many general insecticides belong to the same class of chemicals as sarin and soman. They are all organophosphorus

compounds. (Sarin was originally developed as an insecticide). All of such compounds could be a source of the exposure found by the OPCW. These chemicals degrade within hours or days. A forensic analysis will not find the original substance but only decomposition products of some organophosphorus compound. That is the reason why the OPCW result is not fixed on sarin but also mentions “sarin like substances”.



Another question is where those samples come from. Who “collected” them? When? Where? And what is the chain of evidence that connects the samples to the incident? The OPCW has not send an investigation team to Khan Sheikhun. No samples were taken in Khan Sheikhun by its own inspectors. While Russia and Syria have asked for OPCW inspections on the ground, Tahrir al-Sham, the renamed al-Qaeda in Syria which controls the Khan Sheikhun area, has not asked for inspectors. Without its agreement any investigation mission is perceived as too dangerous. None of the OPCW inspectors is interested in literally losing his head to those terrorists.

Al-Qaeda propaganda organizations in Khan Sheikhun were the first to claim that sarin was used on the ground. “Western” media and governments later repeated those claims before any further investigations could have been done. The very first claim I found was made by the former British doctor Shajul Islam who works for the terrorists. This [video](#) of him of “doctors “and “patients” in an emergence room in Khan Sheikhun [is pure theater](#), taken over a longer time period. The main [presenter](#), Shajul Islam, is a well-known [criminal Takfiri](#) with links to the British secret service. He talks of sarin even though the “patients” around him show no signs of sarin effects and the emergency personal in the video is unprotected against potent chemical agents.

A White House assessment later claimed that it had evidence that sarin was used. It used the claim to justify the bombing of the Syrian military airport Al Syairat. But the White House assessment [contains no evidence](#). It includes a number of factually false statements. It [claims](#), for example:

[T]he World Health Organization stated on April 5 that its analysis of victims of the attack in Syria showed the had been exposed to nerve agents

The WHO report from April 5 [stated no such thing](#). It only noted:

[S]erious reports of the use of highly toxic chemicals in an attack in Khan Shaykhun

It WHO made no analysis of its own. It only mentions “reports”.

Immediately after the incident, bodies of dead and wounded were brought to Turkey where they were taken into hospital. Al-Qaeda or al-Qaeda aligned personal must have transported them. It is a three hour car ride from Khan Sheikhun to the Turkish border.

The incident happened on April 4. First reports on that day by the Turkish government news agency Anadolu [mentioned only chlorine](#):

At least 100 people were killed Tuesday when Assad regime warplanes carried out a chlorine gas attack in Syria’s northwestern Idlib province, according to Syrian opposition Health Minister Firas Jundi.

...

A local civil defense official earlier told Anadolu Agency a regime aircraft carried out a chlorine gas attack on the town early Tuesday.

The first OPCW statement on April 4 [referred](#) to chlorine, not sarin or similar:

The OPCW is investigating the incident in southern Idlib under the on-going mandate of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), which is “to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic”.

The first report of the Turkish government also said chlorine. The UN Security Council convened on April 6 to discuss the incident. The Turkish newspaper Hurriyet [reported](#):

Turkey sent a report to the United Nations just before a U.N. Security Council meeting to address accusations that the Syrian government staged a chemical weapons attack on April 4, stating that the gas used in the attack was chlorine gas.

Turkey’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear teams (KBRN) prepared an initial report over the possible material of the alleged chemical attack, relying on the symptoms of and tests conducted on the victims and their testimonies.

The report stated that the initial findings of the tests conducted on around 30 victims brought to Turkey for treatment pointed to a chlorine gas attack.

Thirty victims were immediately brought to Turkey after the incident. But the Turkish doctors and CBRN specialist did not consider sarin, but chlorine gas -a much less potent chemical- to be involved. (Chlorine is not designated a chemical weapon under the chemical warfare regulations. This fact is often obfuscated for propaganda reasons.) The symptoms of chlorine ingestion and the effects of sarin exposure are quite different. It is extremely unlikely that the emergency doctors and chemical weapon specialists misdiagnosed the issue when the patients arrived and were taken care of. The 30 casualties arriving in Turkey were not the casualties of a sarin incident.

But then the Turkish Health Ministry started to [tell](#) a different story:

The poison used in the deadly chemical bomb attack in a rebel-held part of

northern Syria this week was the banned nerve agent sarin, the Turkish Health Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

...
"According to the results of preliminary tests," the statement said, "patients were exposed to chemical material (Sarin)."

...
The Turkish statement did not elaborate on how the sarin had been identified in the assault on Tuesday, but it said some of the telling symptoms seen in the victims included "lung edema, increase in lung weight and bleeding in lungs."

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Emergency Response Database:

At high exposure levels, irritation of the upper respiratory tract and accumulation of fluid in the lungs (pulmonary edema) contribute to a sensation of choking.

But that is from the [CDC entry for chlorine](#).



The CDC entry [for sarin](#) mentions "fluid accumulation in the airways" as one symptom among many more conspicuous ones. It does not mention an edema in the lungs.

Contradicting the first Turkish reports the Turkish Health Ministry claimed "sarin" (in parenthesis?!). But the symptom it described as proof was not of sarin but of chlorine exposure.

The Turkish Justice Minister also [made](#) a statement, but did not mention sarin at all:

Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag told reporters that "Autopsies were carried out on three of the bodies after they were brought from Idlib. The results of the autopsy confirms that chemical weapons were used," quoted by state-run Anadolu news agency.

"This scientific investigation also confirms that Assad used chemical weapons," Bozdag added, without giving further details.

...
Bozdag said autopsies were conducted with the "participation" of officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) in the southern province of Adana together with officials from Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

But WHO immediately countered Bozdag's claims that it was involved in the postmortem, saying the organisation did not conduct autopsies, adding: "It is not our mandate."

...

[It] also stressed that no samples or swabs had been taken by WHO despite claims by the Adana prosecutor that “examples” had been sent to the organisation and the OPCW.

The Justice Minister claimed that samples had been given to the WHO and OPCW from the very first autopsies. But the WHO clearly denies that. I find no OPCW statement on this. Did it receive any of those first samples or only some that were later produced by Turkish authorities?

In 2013 a Turkish court, under Justice Minister Bozdag, set one suspected Ahrar al Sham member [free](#) after he was caught with sarin precursors. The person was later sentenced in absentia as he had fled back to Syria. Ahrar al Sham, while not in charge, has a presence in Khan Sheikhun.

The neuroscientist and neuro-pharmacologist Denis O’Brien, a Ph.D. with a research and teaching career in that field, analyzed the symptoms of the casualties that were depicted in the various videos coming out of Khan Sheikhun. His detailed diagnostics and chemical-biological explanations are humorously titled [Top Ten Ways to Tell When You’re Being Spoofed by a False-Flag Sarin Attack](#).

O’Brien notes the total absence of feces, urine, vomit and cyanosis (turning blue) in the videos. Sarin exposure causes, according to [the CDC database](#), “Nausea, vomiting (emesis), diarrhea, abdominal pain, and cramping.” Sarin effected patients would spontaneously shit, pee and vomit all over. But the casualties in the videos, even the “dead” ones, have clean undies. The “clinic” in the videos has clean floors. The patients show red skin color, not oxygen deprived blue. The patients in the videos were not effected by sarin.

Medical personal and rescue workers in the videos ([example](#)) and pictures also show none of the typical sarin symptoms. Sarin degrades relatively fast. Half of the potency will be gone within five hours after release (depending on environmental factors). But these rescue workers and medical personal were immediately involved with the casualties. They do not wear any reasonable protection. They would have been dead or at least effected if sarin would have been involved in any relevant concentration.



The Turkish doctors and chemical weapon specialists who received the first patients diagnosed chlorine exposure, not sarin. The first news and Turkish reports to the UN speak of chlorine, not sarin. It is only the Turkish Health Minister who mentions sarin – in parentheses, but then lists a symptom of severe chlorine exposure as one of sarin. Neither the casualties nor the unprotected medical personal involved in the incident show any effect of sarin exposure. The only one who claimed “sarin” early on was an al-Qaeda alligend former doctor in a staged propaganda video.

Fifteen days after the incident the OPCW say that samples (it was given?) “indicate exposure to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance”.

Turkey has been the supply and support lifeline for Ahrar al Sham as well as for al-Qaeda in Syria. The samples given to the OPCW were taken by Turkish personal in Turkey. The current head of the OPCW is a Turkish civil servant. It is in the interest of Turkey and its terrorist clients in Syria to blame the Syrian government for chemical weapon use.

The medical and [technical evidence](#) is not consistent with a sarin attack by the Syrian government. All of the videos and pictures of the incident were taken in al-Qaeda controlled territory. All witnesses were under al-Qaeda control. How much of the incident was staged for videos (see al-Qaeda doctor video linked above) or how many of the witnesses were told to lie is not testable under current circumstance. The Syrian government insist that it had given up all its chemical weapons and keeps no stocks. The Russian government also asserts that no chemical weapon attack took place.

The OPCW analysis may well have found that samples it received indicated some organophosphorus exposure. But the chain of evidence for these samples is very dubious. The amount of exposure was not defined.

The observable facts of the incident do not support the conclusion that sarin was present in the Khan Sheikhun incident.

Note:

Part of the above is based on the work and [tweets](#) of [Ali Ornek](#)

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