

The 2013 East Ghouta Chemical Weapons Attack. Turkey's Alleged Role in Supplying Toxic Sarin Gas to Syrian Terrorists

CHP deputies: Government rejects probe into Turkey's role in Syrian chemical attack

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Global Research, November 06, 2015

[Bousla News](#) 6 November 2015

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

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US](#)

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Two deputies from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) have claimed that the government is against investigating Turkey's role in sending toxic sarin gas which was used in an attack on civilians in Syria in 2013 and in which over 1,300 Syrians were killed.

CHP deputies Eren Erdem and Ali Şeker held a press conference in İstanbul on Wednesday in which they claimed the investigation into allegations regarding Turkey's involvement in the procurement of sarin gas which was used in the chemical attack on a civil population and delivered to the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to enable the attack was derailed.

Taking the floor first, Erdem stated that the Adana Chief Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into allegations that sarin was sent to Syria from Turkey via several businessmen. An indictment followed regarding the accusations targeting the government.

"The MKE [Turkish Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation] is also an actor that is mentioned in the investigation file. Here is the indictment. All the details about how sarin was procured in Turkey and delivered to the terrorists, along with audio recordings, are inside the file," Erdem said while waving the file.

Erdem also noted that the prosecutor's office conducted detailed technical surveillance and found that an al-Qaeda militant, Hayyam Kasap, acquired sarin, adding: "Wiretapped phone conversations reveal the process of procuring the gas at specific addresses as well as the process of procuring the rockets that would fire the capsules containing the toxic gas. However, despite such solid evidence there has been no arrest in the case. Thirteen individuals were arrested during the first stage of the investigation but were later released, refuting government claims that it is fighting terrorism," Erdem noted.

Over 1,300 people were killed in the sarin gas attack in Ghouta and several other neighborhoods near the Syrian capital of Damascus, with the West quickly blaming the regime of Bashar al-Assad and Russia claiming it was a "false flag" operation aimed at making US military intervention in Syria possible.

Suburbs near Damascus were struck by rockets containing the toxic sarin gas in August

2013.

The purpose of the attack was allegedly to provoke a US military operation in Syria which would topple the Assad regime in line with the political agenda of then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government.

CHP deputy Şeker spoke after Erdem, pointing out that the government misled the public on the issue by asserting that sarin was provided by Russia. The purpose was to create the perception that, according to Şeker, “Assad killed his people with sarin and that requires a US military intervention in Syria.”

He also underlined that all of the files and evidence from the investigation show a war crime was committed within the borders of the Turkish Republic.

“The investigation clearly indicates that those people who smuggled the chemicals required to procure sarin faced no difficulties, proving that Turkish intelligence was aware of their activities. While these people had to be in prison for their illegal acts, not a single person is in jail. Former prime ministers and the interior minister should be held accountable for their negligence in the incident,” Şeker further commented.

Erdem also added that he will launch a criminal complaint against those responsible, including those who issued a verdict of non-prosecution in the case, those who did not prevent the transfer of chemicals and those who first ordered the arrest of the suspects who were later released.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced in late August that an inquiry had been launched into the gas attacks allegedly perpetuated by both Assad’s Syrian regime and rebel groups fighting in Syria since the civil war erupted in 2011.

However, Erdem is not the only figure who has accused Turkey of possible involvement in the gas attack. Pulitzer Prize winner and journalist, Seymour M. Hersh, argued in an article published in 2014 that MIT was involved with extremist Syrian groups fighting against the Assad regime.

In his article, Hersh said Assad was not behind the attack, as claimed by the US and Europe, but that Turkish-Syrian opposition collaboration was trying to provoke a US intervention in Syria in order to bring down the Assad regime.

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