

# Leading International Voices Call on OPCW and its Scientific Advisors to Allow All Douma Investigators 'To Be Heard'

*Controversy Continues Over the OPCW's Investigation of Alleged Chemical Attacks in Syria*

BERLIN, GERMANY, April 15, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After three years of controversy surrounding the 2018 alleged chemical weapon attack in Douma, Syria, involving repeated leaks and protests by dissenting OPCW scientists, [a new proposal](#) has been issued this week to 193 OPCW member states and the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board calling for all of the original Douma inspectors to be heard. The proposal follows on from the recently published [Statement of Concern](#) regarding the OPCW's investigation of alleged chemical weapon use in Douma, Syria and which was signed by 28 internationally respected persons among them OPCW's first Director General, former OPCW inspectors and two former UN Assistant Secretaries-General. The new proposal was issued on behalf of the [Berlin Group 21](#) which has been established to help restore the reputation of the OPCW as an 'independent, objective and scientifically rigorous organisation'.

In April 2018, approximately 50 civilians were allegedly killed in a chemical weapons attack in the town of Douma, Syria. Within a week, the US, British and French Governments had carried out retaliatory airstrikes based upon the assertion that the Syrian government was responsible for the alleged attack and before an OPCW investigation had been conducted. The OPCW deployed a Fact Finding Mission (FFM) shortly after the alleged attack and issued a first interim report in the Summer of 2018 and a Final Report on March 1 2019. The final report found there were reasonable grounds to believe chlorine had been used as a weapon and implied that the attack had been carried out by the Syrian Air Force.

Controversy quickly ensued with the leaking of an internal OPCW engineering study which cast doubt on the official version. The OPCW initiated an internal investigation to identify who had leaked the engineering study. Late in 2019, a former OPCW official detailed major scientific and procedural irregularities to a panel hosted by the Courage Foundation in October 2019.

Since then, multiple documents have been published via Wikileaks and the Grayzone whilst the OPCW leak investigation failed to identify the source of the engineering study leak but instead castigated two of its former scientists who had raised concerns about the FFM investigation. Two Arria formula meetings of the UN Security Council have included statements from a former OPCW scientist whilst formal UN Security Council meetings have seen a statement of concern

read on behalf of the first Director General Jose Bustani (UNSC, 5 October 2020) and direct questioning of the OPCW Director General Fernando Arias (UNSC, 11 December 2020). In late 2020, in an apparent attempt to smear one of its former scientists, a letter was leaked from the OPCW to the open source investigation organisation known as Bellingcat. It subsequently transpired that the leak story published by Bellingcat was in fact incorrect and possibly a consequence of deliberate disinformation.

The new proposal to OPCW members states and its scientific advisory board has been issued in the run up to the Conference of the States Parties (CSP 25, 20-22 April 2021) sets out the following proposal:

- The OPCW's Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) might provide a suitable body through which the claims of the dissenting inspectors can be evaluated.
- A process involving the inspectors and the SAB, behind closed doors and without media involvement, could facilitate objective and informed commentary, recommendations and judgements relevant to the on-going controversy.
- The results of such a process can then be made public thus allowing full transparency and accountability.

The Berlin Group 21 believes that:

'leaving the scientific debate to the scientists, who best understand the issues at hand, would provide a more objective and rational approach to begin resolving this unfortunate and highly damaging controversy that surrounds the OPCW and indirectly endangers global security by eroding confidence in future findings relevant to alleged uses of chemical weapons'.

The new proposal can be read here:- <https://www.berlingroup21.org/bg21-proposal>.

Press Inquiries should be addressed to the 'The Berlin Group 21' via email:-  
contact@berlingroup21.org

The Statement of Concern and Supporting Signatories can be read here:-  
<https://www.berlingroup21.org>

Additional Background information provided by the Berlin Group can be read here:-  
<https://www.berlingroup21.org/background>

Press Contact  
Berlin Group 21  
contact@berlingroup21.org

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/538579944>  
EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors

try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2021 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.