The Syria FFMs and the Douma Investigation

Dear Ambassador and Permanent Representative,

Despite multiple communications with the OPCW DG, there continues to be no response regarding the serious issues raised about the conduct of the Douma investigation. We have now written twice to the new DG, Sabrina Dallafior, but with no acknowledgement or response.

This is despite significant developments this year:

First, early in 2026, the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva (ILOAT) found that the OPCW unlawfully sanctioned former Team Leader and senior scientist Dr Brendan Whelan for alleged breaches of confidentiality related to the Douma investigation and was ordered to pay him moral damages and legal costs. Through the legal proceedings, the following facts were established:

1. That the OPCW not only wrongly impugned Dr. Whelan, but that it also withdrew its allegations that he contributed to the leaking of confidential information, a claim made to Member States on 6 February 2020 by the OPCW Director General. This claim is now shown to be unfounded.
2. That at least one member of the team (Whelan) who had protested the unethical conduct of the Douma investigation was promptly sidelined while still a member of that team.
3. That the OPCW did indeed censor expert toxicology opinion which, had it been included in the final report on Douma, would have fundamentally undermined the conclusion there were “reasonable” grounds the alleged attack occurred.

Second, at the 112th Executive Council, Brazil’s National Statement by Ambassador Fernando Simas noted that recent “recent findings by the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO have pointed to the exclusion of expert toxicological opinions from the final Douma report, which may have had an impact on the robustness of the conclusions of the investigation: “It is important that such issues are addressed in a forward-looking manner, so as to reinforce confidence in the Organisation's work”. To date, we are unaware of any response from the OPCW regarding this statement. Questions about this were also raised this year in the Dutch parliament.

This silence and stonewalling are incompatible with what is reasonably expected of an international organisation like the OPCW. The failure to respond also fits a pattern going back to 2020 when the OPCW, extraordinarily, returned our Statement of Concern – signed by 28 experts and officials, including four former OPCW Team Leaders, and addressed to the then DG – unopened.

We respectfully request that you ask the OPCW's new Director General to, finally, address the serious issues raised by her organisation's own inspectors.

Yours Sincerely

Ambassador José Bustani, Professor Richard Falk, Dr. Piers Robinson and Dr. h.c Hans-C. von Sponeck.

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