



## 10 QUESTIONS FROM A MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW ON THE DOUMA INCIDENT

Following the recent incident in Douma on 7 April 2018, western news and media outlets released information before any scientific inspection had taken place. The USA, France and the UK justified their recent attacks on Syria based on these unconfirmed reports. Taking into account the vast experiences gained from dealing with and treating chemical victims, including Sarin, during the Iran Iraq war, the following points regarding the Douma incident seem unclear and must be explained by experts:

1- Why do they insist that another gas was definitely used other than Chlorine and that it was a Sarin type nerve gas? Skeptics would conclude that it was because Chlorine gas and its derivatives are widely used for common household and industrial purposes and are therefore not enough to accuse the Syrian government.

2- Although they claim that Sarin has been used but why do they not provide any clear evidence, documentation and clinical signs? Some of the declared clinical signs seem to be copied from ordinary toxicology textbooks or websites and do not reflect accurately our field experiences in the Iraq-Iran war. This is easily distinguishable by experts.

3- There has been a lot of emphasis put on the WHO report confirming the use of nerve gas. Firstly, the report was carried out by Health Cluster partners, not WHO specialists in these types of injuries, and secondly, no exclusive evidences for nerve gas have been noted. All of the clinical evidences mentioned could also result from Chlorine.

4- So far most of the pictures and evidences on the internet point to Chlorine gas. If we attribute a few to Sarin, there is the question that if the attackers intended to "punish" people and used extensive quantities of Chlorine successfully, why would they then add so little Sarin? If the Saudi backed "Army of Islam" carried out the attack, this would make sense. It would probably be due to the fact that they only had access to a small amount of nerve gas and used it for its psychological effect and propaganda impact. It is logical to poison many people with widely available chlorine gas and then use small quantities of nerve gas to accuse the Syrian army.

5- If high concentrations of Chlorine gas are used in an enclosed space, it can cause serious injury and even lead to death. Why do they insist that the severe cases and deaths are due to nerve agents?

6- Blood and Urine samples analyzed by US officials suggested the presence of both chlorine gas and "an unnamed nerve agent" Why haven't the analysis reports and scientific details been published and what was the chain of custody? And why it is assumed the "unnamed gas" is sarin!?

7- Why couldn't the cause of the rapid deaths have been a very simple and deadly compound like cyanide? Is it perhaps because cyanide can be easily produced by the militants, but the production of Sarin is very difficult? If cyanide is declared as the cause of the rapid deaths, the opposition would be accused, but with Sarin the government of Syria can be accused instead. If the Syrian government wanted to "punish" its own people why not use cyanide instead of Sarin?

This will have two "advantages": first, the remnants of cyanide are hard to trace in the blood and the environment and second, by not using Sarin they can avoid being blamed.

8- It is strange that those who have collected samples are all looking for signs of Sarin. Why don't they

carry any tests for other deadly compounds like cyanide? Why are they only looking for Sarin? Why were they so confident that they did not pursue other avenues?

9- If we accept the few clinical signs provided on the internet for nerve gas and Sarin, these signs relate to organophosphate poisoning, and are not unique to Sarin and other military nerve gases. The use of organophosphorous insecticide (especially the undiluted compound), that is widely used for agriculture can have the same signs and also cause similar deaths as Sarin. Why didn't anyone check for organophosphorous insecticide used in farming that could have been weaponized?

10- In the recent Skripal case, there is a striking similarity in the narrative. The chemical compound used is Novichok which is allegedly exclusive to the Russian chemical arsenal. When a target can be killed with a compound like cyanide which does not leave any trace behind, why should a compound be used that only one country allegedly produced and had access to in the past? Perhaps to facilitate the process of accusation? This story is oddly similar to the Douma incident in this regard.

There are other very serious questions that can be raised, which will be left for after the publication of the OPCW report.