



International Physicians
for the Prevention of Nuclear War

CHEMICAL WEAPONS THREAT IN SYRIA

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We are alarmed by reports that the Syrian government may be preparing to use sarin agents or other chemical weapons. Such an act would be a war crime.

We welcome UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's strong warnings that the Assad regime would be held accountable for their actions if they resort to such weapons of mass destruction. The UN Security Council should affirm the Secretary General's stand and move swiftly to declare its resolve that the use or threat of use chemical weapons would not be tolerated.

Nerve agents, including sarin and VX, and mustard agents are banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention and other relevant international humanitarian law. All of these agents are capable of inflicting rapid, mass casualties, without discrimination between civilians and combatants. Nerve agents are extremely toxic chemicals capable of causing death within minutes. A milligram of sarin may constitute a lethal dose for a healthy adult.

Given the chaotic and deteriorating conditions in Syria, it is highly unlikely that any meaningful medical care could be rendered to the victims of a chemical weapons attack, who could number in the tens of thousands. The use of these weapons against a neighboring country would have incalculable consequences.

The nearly two year old conflict in Syria has already claimed tens of thousands of innocent lives and caused untold injury and trauma to the civilian population. The diplomatic community watched in silence when Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iran and his own people. This cannot happen again.

We also urge the international community to set an early date for the UN-sponsored conference on creating a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East that was scheduled to take place this month in Helsinki but was regrettably postponed.

