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The OPCW IIT issues its first report regarding alleged chemical weapon attacks in Syria. It does so without having resolved any of the serious scientific and procedural anomalies identified in their Fact Finding Mission Douma report.

Update on the OPCW's investigation of the Douma incident

Paul McKeigue, David Miller, Piers Robinson Members of Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media 1 Summary 2 Irregularities in the published reports of the Fact-Finding Mechanism 2.1 No comparis...

<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/update-on-the-opcws-investigation-of-the-douma-incident>

.... Here is what we know

1) In October 2019 the [@couragefound](#) convened a panel including Jose Bustani, the first Director General of the OPCW, which found that the investigation had been manipulated.

Panel Criticizes 'Unacceptable Practices' in the OPCW's investigation of the Alleged Ch...

"Based on the whistleblower's extensive presentation, including internal emails, text exchanges and suppressed draft reports, we are unanimous in expressing our alarm over unacceptable practices in t...

<https://www.couragefound.org/2019/10/opcw-panel-statement>

Based on the whistleblower's extensive presentation, including internal emails, text exchanges and suppressed draft reports, we are unanimous in expressing our alarm over unacceptable practices in the investigation of the alleged chemical attack in Douma, near the Syrian capital of Damascus on 7 April 2018. We became convinced by the testimony that key information about chemical analyses, toxicology consultations, ballistics studies, and witness testimonies was suppressed, ostensibly to favor a preordained conclusion.



2) This was followed by an open letter to OPCW delegates calling for action to permit all the inspectors who investigated the Douma incident to be heard. Signatories included Jose Bustani, Noam Chomsky, Katherine Gun, John Pilger and Han von Sponeck. couragefound.org/wp-content/upl...

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Yours Sincerely,

José Bustani, Ambassador of Brazil, first Director General of the OPCW and former Ambassador to the United Kingdom and France

William Binney, former technical director at NSA (US National Security Agency)

George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury

Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus, MIT (Linguist, Philosopher and Public Intellectual)

Marcello Ferrada de Noli, Professor Emeritus, former head Research group Cross-cultural Injury Epidemiology, Karolinska Institute. Chair Swedish Doctors for Human Rights – SWEDHR

Anne Gazeau-Secret, former French Ambassador, The Hague

Katharine Gun, former GCHQ (UKGOV), Whistleblower

John Kiriakou, Former CIA Officer and Former Senior Investigator, US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Annie Machon, former MI5 Officer, UK Security Services

Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst and presidential briefer; co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) and of Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence; former Army Infantry/Intelligence officer

Alain Chouet, former chief of the Security Intelligence Service within the French external

3) The OPCW ignored these calls and since then multiple leaks and whistleblower testimonies have emerged to support the [@couragefound](#) findings wikileaks.org/opcw-douma/#OP... [@opcw](#) [@RealDeeptiC](#) [@garethrw](#) [@RobertF40396660](#) [@braha_seb](#) [@samibarrek](#)



WikiLeaks

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OPCW-DOUMA - Release Part 4

27 December, 2019

Today WikiLeaks releases more internal documents from the OPCW regarding the investigation into the alleged chemical attack in Douma in April 2018.

One of the documents is an e-mail exchange dated 27 and 28 February between members of the fact finding mission (FFM) deployed to Douma and the senior officials of the OPCW. It includes an e-mail from Sebastien Braha, Chief of Cabinet at the OPCW, where he instructs that an engineering report from Ian Henderson should be removed from the secure registry of the organisation:

“Please get this document out of DRA [Documents Registry Archive]... And please remove all traces, if any, of its delivery/storage/whatever in DRA”.

The main finding of Henderson, who inspected the sites in Douma and two cylinders that were found on the site of the alleged attack, was that they were more likely manually placed there than dropped from a plane or helicopter from considerable heights. His findings were omitted from the official final OPCW report on the Douma incident.

4) The scientific and procedural anomalies are extremely serious and include obfuscation of inconsistent witness testimony, failure to report chemistry results, obfuscation of toxicology evidence and suppression of ballistics findings

Analytical Points: OPCW Panel

Read the OPCW Panel Statement Quotes from José Bustani, First Director General OPCW and former Ambassador to the United Kingdom and France “The convincing evidence of irregular behaviour in the OPCW ...

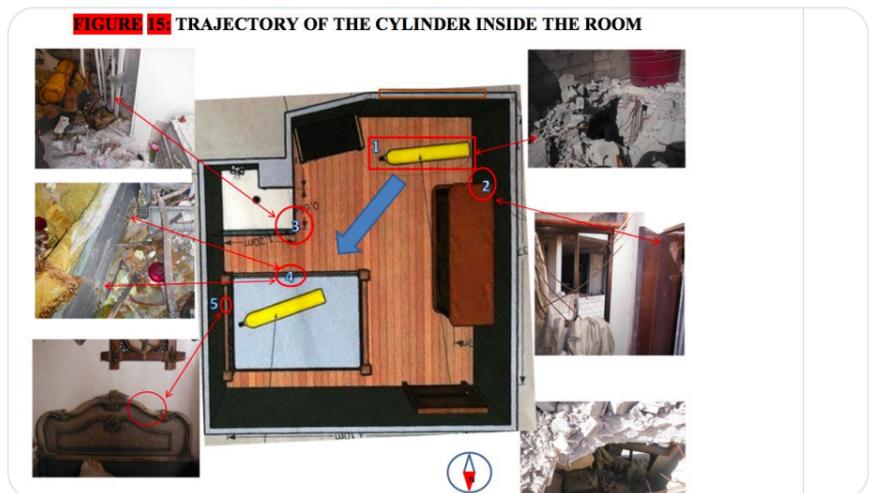
<https://couragefound.org/2019/10/analytical-points-opcw-panel/>

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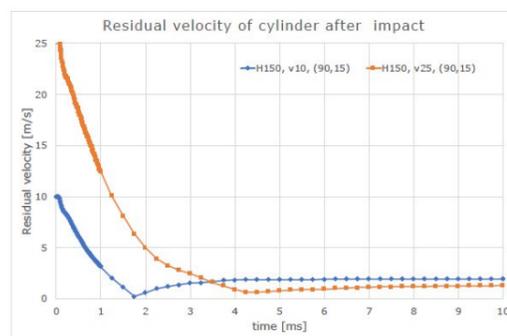
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5) For example, the final OPCW report failed to explain how the gas cylinder at location four performed an extraordinary bounce across a bedroom to land on a bed providing instead an assertion coupled with a nonsensical diagram



8.34 The team consulted experts in mechanical engineering, ballistics and metallurgy to provide qualified, competent assessments of the cylinder trajectory. The results of these assessments indicated that the shape of the aperture produced in the modulation matched the shape and damage observed by the team. The assessments further indicated that, after passing through the ceiling and impacting the floor at lower speed, the cylinder continued altered trajectory, until reaching the position in which it was found.

FIGURE 12: DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING THE POSSIBLE MOVEMENT OF THE CYLINDER AT LOW SPEED



6) And this was done whilst simultaneously suppressing the engineering study produced by their own expert, Ian Henderson working with two universities, which concluded the cylinders were most likely placed by hand.

Assessment by the engineering sub-team of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission investiga...
 Paul McKeigue, David Miller, Piers Robinson Members of Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media 13 May 2019 1 Introduction 2 Commentary on the Engineering Assessment 2.1 Methodology 2.2 Results...

<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/assessment-by-the-engineering-sub-team-o...>

31. Regarding the post-impact movement of the cylinder laterally within the room (i.e. from a position directly below the crater, bouncing onto the bed), it was established that obstacles on top of the building precluded the possibility of this being due to incoming flight trajectory. Examination of walls in the bedroom did not indicate marks that would have indicated the "equal and opposite" forces required to deflect the cylinder in a horizontal direction. And the still-remaining projections of the valve at the front of the cylinder and fins at the rear, precluded the possibility of a direction-changing "bounce". Therefore it was not possible to establish a set of circumstances that were consistent with observations, which could have resulted in that movement.

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Assessment

32. At this stage the FFM engineering sub-team cannot be certain that the cylinders at either location arrived there as a result of being dropped from an aircraft. The dimensions, characteristics and appearance of the cylinders and the surrounding scene of the incidents, were inconsistent with what would have been expected in the case of either cylinder having been delivered from an aircraft. In each case the alternative hypothesis produced the only plausible explanation for observations at the scene.

33. In summary, observations at the scene of the two locations, together with subsequent analysis, suggest that there is a higher probability that both cylinders were manually placed at those two locations rather than being delivered from aircraft.

Ian Henderson



7) The most disturbing issue concerns suppression of toxicology reports regarding how approx. 50 civilians were killed at location 2. The Final OPCW report notes the deaths could not be linked to a specific chemical and that the agent appear to be fast acting.



Analysis of digital information and its relation to toxic chemical exposure

8.96 The location, positions and lack of visible trauma on the victims in the videos taken inside the building indicate exposure to a rapidly incapacitating or a highly toxic substance. The victims do not appear to have been in the midst of attempting self-extraction or respiratory protection when they collapsed, indicating a very rapid or instant onset. This type of rapid collapse is indicative of an agent capable of quickly killing or immobilising.

2.11 Many of the signs and symptoms reported by the medical personnel, witnesses and casualties (as well as those seen in multiple videos provided by witnesses), their rapid onset, and the large number of those reportedly affected, indicate exposure to an inhalational irritant or toxic substance. However, based on the information reviewed and with the absence of biomedical samples from the dead bodies or any autopsy records, it is not currently possible to precisely link the cause of the signs and symptoms to a specific chemical.

2.12 Two yellow industrial cylinders dedicated for pressurised gas with dimensions of



8) But, as we now know from original (suppressed) interim report, this obfuscates the very clear advice from 4 NATO chemical warfare toxicologist that the civilians were not poisoned by chlorine gas coming from the cylinder dropped onto a balcony at location two.

analyse so far.

1.10 Some of the signs and symptoms described by witnesses and noted in photos and video recordings taken by witnesses, of the alleged victims are not consistent with exposure to chlorine-containing choking or blood agents such as chlorine gas, phosgene or cyanogen chloride. Specifically, the rapid onset of heavy buccal and nasal frothing in many victims, as well as the colour of the secretions, is not indicative of intoxication from such chemicals.

1.11 The large number of decedents in the one location (allegedly 40 to 45), most of whom were seen in videos and photos strewn on the floor of the apartments away from open windows, and within a few meters of an escape to un-poisoned or less toxic air, is at odds with intoxication by chlorine-based choking or blood agents, even at high concentrations.

7.82 Pulmonary edema and excessive frothing from the mouth *have* been reported in cases of exposure to lethal doses of chlorine gas or other toxic chlorine-based agents such as phosgene or cyanogen chloride [7] [8] [9]. However, indications are that pulmonary edema, particularly in the case of phosgene, is a late pathological effect of exposure and in cases of high exposure levels death can result before pulmonary edema develops [8] [9]. The white or light-cream colour of the froth presented by victims is not in keeping with exposure to choking agents, where secretions are characteristically pinkish in colour when frothing does occur. The rapid, and in some reported cases,

S/xxxx/2018
page 28

immediate onset of frothing described by victims is not considered consistent with exposure to chlorine-based choking or blood agents. The opinion of a number of toxicologists, specialists in chemical-weapons-related intoxication supported this assessment.

9) Minutes of the meeting with the 4 NATO toxicologists provide further evidence that it was known full well that the civilians could not have been killed by chlorine from this gas cylinder poised over a hole on a balcony.

Purpose of the meeting:

Meeting date: 06 June 2018		Location: Designated Lab of a State Party
Present	, Sami Barrek, 3 Toxicologists/Clinical pharmacologists, 1 bioanalytical and toxicological chemist (all specialists in CW)	
Duration	c. 1 hour	

- Four staff members from the OPCW travelled to a State Party to conduct discussions with experts in toxicology/clinical pharmacology with a professional background in medical CW protection.
- The purpose of the visit was two-fold:
 - To solicit expert advice on the value of exhuming suspected victims of the alleged chemical attack in Douma on 7 April 2018, in particular whether any evidence of exposure to chlorine gas (since no nerve agents had been detected in environmental or bio samples) could be gathered from biopsy samples.
 - To elicit expert opinions from the forensic toxicologists regarding the observed and reported symptoms of the alleged victims of the Douma chemical attack. More specifically, the OPCW team requested an evaluation by the toxicologists on whether the symptoms observed in victims were consistent with exposure to chlorine or other reactive chlorine gas. For this purpose the toxicologists were shown numerous open source videos and photographs of alleged victims at the suspected scene of use of toxic chemicals.

Meeting Minutes

- observed in photos and reported by witnesses would not occur in the short time period between the reported occurrence of the alleged incident and the time the videos were recorded (approximately 3-4 hours).
- The experts were also of the opinion that it was highly unlikely that victims would have gathered in piles at the centre of the respective apartments at such a short distance from an escape from any toxic chlorine gas to cleaner air.
 - The head of the FFM team for the investigation in Douma informed the experts that a second canister, not witnessed by the FFM team, had landed in front of the building where the alleged exposure took place, which could have contained some other highly toxic chemical that might explain the symptoms observed and reported by witnesses. The experts tried to consider what other known toxic chemical might be consistent with the symptoms observed and their rapid onset. The only possibility that came to mind was some highly experimental and toxic carbamates that they described as reversible cholinesterase inhibitors. However they had low confidence in such a possibility as even the lowest molecular weight carbamate would likely be a solid and therefore be difficult to disperse.
 - The OPCW team gathered after the meeting and reviewed the salient points discussed. It was agreed among all present that the key "take-away message" from the meeting was that the symptoms observed were inconsistent with exposure to chlorine, and no other obvious candidate chemical causing the symptoms could be identified.
 - On returning to the HQ the team met with the Chief of Cabinet and relayed the conclusions of the experts.



10) Procedural irregularities amount to scientific fraud and breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As Ian Henderson reported to the UN Security Council, the team who actually deployed to Douma were excluded from the investigation.

Douma false "chemical weapon" narrative: Ian Henderson speaks to UN about OPCW report.



11. All FFM team members were called to attend a briefing from a three-person US delegation on 5 July 2018, where they presented their findings that "proved" the alleged chemical attack and death of victims. I attended the briefing.
12. Over the summer period I worked together with other FFM team members in the 7th floor secure work area assigned to FFM Alpha. At that stage the only FFM personnel working there were the ones that had now been designated as "core team". I did however continue with informal consultations with members of the FFM who had deployed to Douma. The core team announcement caused some confusion as, with the exception of one paramedic/HSS inspector, no FFM team members that had deployed to Douma were included in this so-called core team.

11) As reported by [@ClarkeMicah](#), an attempt was made to secretly alter the original draft interim report signed off by the Douma team. This was only stopped when a member of the team accidentally discovered this duplicity and complained: hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2019/11/new-se...

12) And as [@JonathanSteele](#) reported, the OPCW Chief of Cabinet [@RobertF40396660](#) allowed a US delegation to brief the Douma team, 'informing' them the Syrian government carried out the attack. This is a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The OPCW and Douma: Chemical Weapons Watchdog Accused of Evidence-Tampering ...
Claims that President Bashar al-Assad's forces have used chemical weapons are almost as old as the Syrian civil war itself. They have produced strong reactions, and none more so than in the case of t...

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/11/15/the-opcw-and-douma-chemical-weapons-watchdo...>

[@UK_OPCW](#)

13) To date the OPCW's only response has been to issue a report smearing two of its most senior and experienced scientists. The scientists smeared published a comprehensive rebuttal of the OPCW'S leak report:-

hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2020/02/a-and-...

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14) And further damning statements from OPCW staff have now emerged and which highlight a culture of intimidation within the OPCW:-

Exclusive: New OPCW whistleblower slams 'abhorrent mistreatment' of Douma investig...
A fourth OPCW whistleblower has emerged to defend the two veteran inspectors who challenged a cover-up of the chemical weapons...

[https://thegrayzone.com/2020/03/12/opcw-whistleblower-mistreatment-douma-investigators/...](https://thegrayzone.com/2020/03/12/opcw-whistleblower-mistreatment-douma-investigators/)

and the functionality of the organisation restored.

Full text of statement on Douma scandal from new OPCW whistleblower

As an employee of the OPCW I was horrified and simultaneously unsurprised by recent events in the organisation. The mistreatment of two highly regarded and accomplished professionals can only be described as abhorrent. I fully support their endeavours, in that it is for the greater good and not for personal gain or in the name of any political agenda. They are in fact trying to protect the integrity of the organisation which has been hijacked and brought into shameful disrepute.

Unfortunately this is not a recent occurrence but a continuation of how the previous Director General and management group were operating. Working in the organisation has been an eye-opener and the cause of deep professional shame when I became aware of how a key element of the organisation was and clearly continues to be mismanaged. I am one of many who were stunned and frightened into silence by the reality how the organisation operates. The threat of personal harm is not an illusion, or else many others would have spoken out by now.

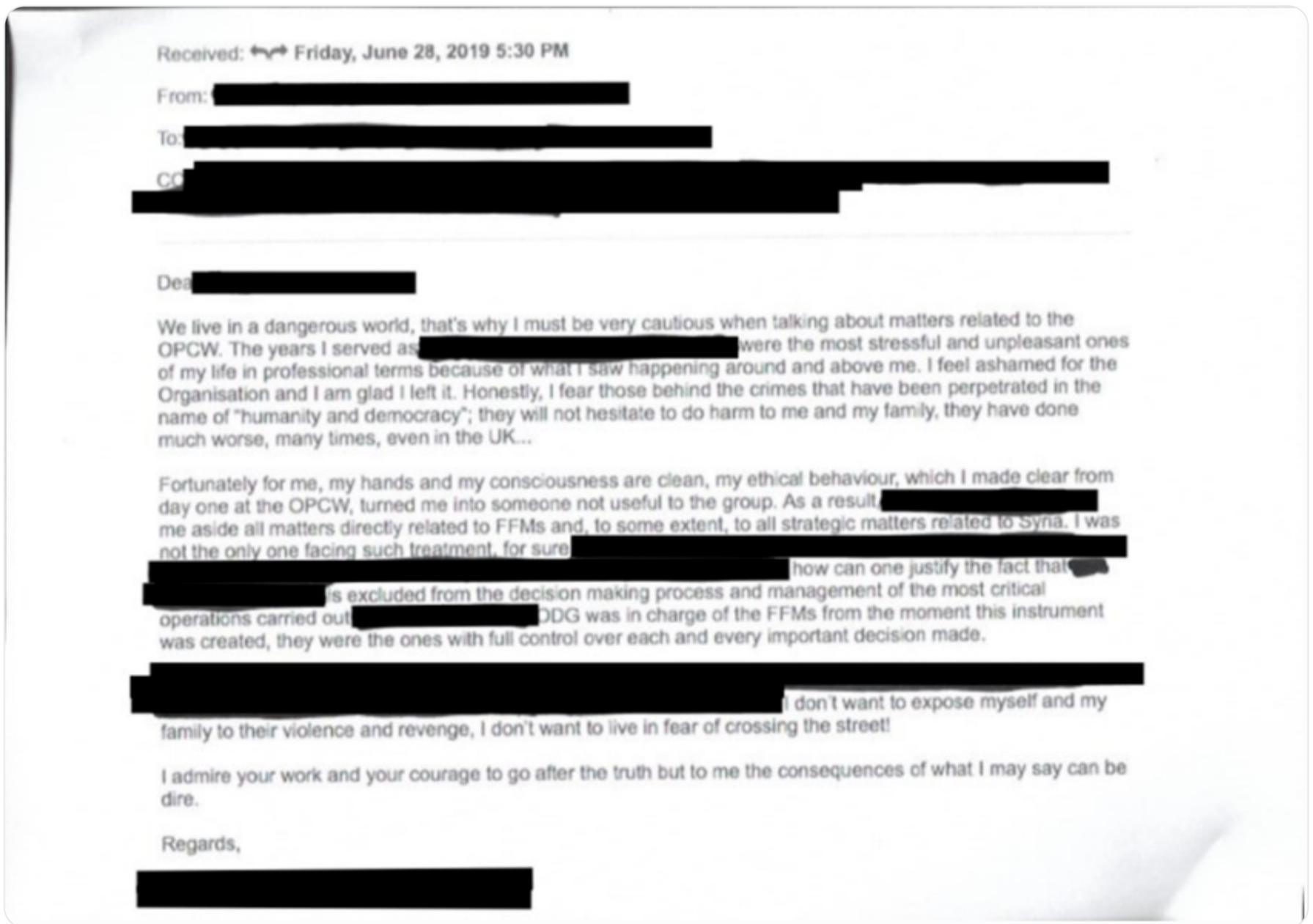
There is still no mechanism at the organisation to enable the calling out of irregular behaviour to protect the integrity of the organisation. It is quite unbelievable that valid scientific concerns are being brazenly ignored in favour of a predetermined narrative. The lack of transparency in an investigative process with such enormous ramifications is frightful. The allegations of the two gentlemen urgently need to be thoroughly investigated and the functionality of the organisation restored.



15) Most seriously, a former senior official has expressed concern both for his safety and the serious irregularities regarding the Douma investigation and the OPCW.

Exclusive: New leaks shatter OPCW's attacks on Douma whistleblowers | The Grayzone
Leaked documents obtained by The Grayzone reveal serious distortions in the OPCW inquiry as well as a campaign of intimidation against internal dissenters.

<https://thegrayzone.com/2020/02/11/new-leaks-shatter-opcws-attacks-douma-whistleblowers/>



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