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'They can go anywhere they want in Douma': OPCW team arrives in Syria to investigate alleged attack


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The first four chemical weapons experts from the OPCW have arrived in Syria on a fact-finding mission (FFM) into the April 7 Douma incident, while Western leaders continue to blame the government for the alleged attack.

@OPCW

 In response to media queries, the Spokesperson for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirms that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) team is on its way to Syria and will start its work as of Saturday 14 April 2018.

*"We will facilitate the arrival of the team to anywhere they want, in Douma, to check whether or not there was use of chemical substances,"* said Bashar Jaafari, Syria's envoy to the UN in New York, adding that a second team is due to arrive on Friday.

Read more [Mattis: Still no evidence on Syria chemical attack, but I believe there was one](#)



The Damascus suburb of Douma was recaptured by the government this week, so experts from the UN-backed Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are expected to have easier access than on previous occasions when the alleged attacks happened in areas of ongoing fighting or those controlled by radical Islamists.

Syria and Russia both requested an FFM team to be dispatched after opposition groups claimed that the Syrian army executed a chemical weapons attack there, alleging there were scores of deaths and hundreds of casualties.

Both countries have claimed that the incident was “*staged*” with the purpose of galvanizing Western rebel backers after the US earlier announced that it was planning to pull out of Syria, and they say that there may not have been any chemical use at all.

[READ MORE: Macron blames Assad for Douma ‘chemical attack’ before OPCW visits site](#)

In a television interview on Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron said, “*that chemical weapons were used [in Douma] at least with chlorine, and that they were used by the regime of Bashar al-Assad,*” but he did not disclose the nature of the evidence.

A day earlier, the US said that it was “*still assessing intelligence*” and that it was “*confident*” that Damascus was involved.

The FFM experts, whose mission was set up in 2014, are not entitled to place responsibility for the incident on either side, but they are expected to say if and what chemicals were used, and how they were disseminated.