

Russia blocks Security Council action on reported use of chemical weapons in Syria's Khan Shaykhun

12 April 2017 – With a 'no' vote from permanent member Russia, the United Nations Security Council today failed to adopt a resolution that would have condemned the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria and called on the Government to cooperate with an investigation into the incident.

While 10 of the Council's 15 members voted in favour, Russia rejected the text, as permanent member China, as well as non-permanent members Ethiopia and Kazakhstan abstained. A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council's five permanent members means a resolution cannot be adopted.

The proposed measure – drafted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Council's other permanent members – would have strongly condemned "the reported use of chemical weapons in the [Syria], in particular the attack on Khan Shaykhun," the site of last week's incident that has drawn increasing global attention.

The measure would also have called on the Syrian Government to comply with relevant recommendations of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the [OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism \(JIM\)](#).

In February, Russia and China vetoed a measure that would have imposed sanctions on a number of individuals and entities linked to the use of chemical weapons in cases where responsibility was [established](#) by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

Although the Council came together on 19 December to [unanimously adopt](#) a resolution demanding that all parties to the Syrian conflict ensure immediate and unhindered access for the monitoring of evacuations from eastern Aleppo, over the past five years, Russia has vetoed eight Council texts on the Syrian conflict, while China has vetoed six of those eight.

As the [Syrian crisis](#) enters its seventh year, civilians continue to bear the brunt of a conflict marked by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), 13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance. Moreover, some 6.3 million have been internally displaced by violence.

The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has been facilitating the [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, the latest round of which wrapped up in late March. The discussions are guided by Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#), focusing on matters of governance, including a new constitution for Syria and the holding of elections.

Briefing the Council in a meeting earlier today, Mr. de Mistura said the US and Russia [must find a way to work together](#) to stabilize the situation and support the political process. He said that last week's reported chemical weapons attack, the subsequent airstrikes by the US and intensified fighting on the ground have put the fragile peace process in "grave danger."

"This is a time for clear-thinking, strategy, imagination, cooperation," said Mr. de Mistura.

The meeting today comes as the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is in Moscow meeting with top Russian officials.