

Mr. Hoshmand Morad
Halabja Chemical Victims Society, Iraq
24th CWC Conference of States Parties
The Hague, The Netherlands
November 27, 2019

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General, Distinguished Guests and Delegates,

It is a great honor for me to represent the Halabja Chemical Victims' Society and deliver their message on their behalf.

On the 16th of March 1988, the despotic regime of Saddam Hussain bombed Halabja city and its surrounding areas with chemical weapons, killing 5,000 innocent civilians, of which 67% were females and children. While this brutal violation occurred, the international community was only observing the massacre without taking any actions to stop it. Additionally, as a result of the attack approximately 10,000 people were wounded, and many times this number experienced a silent, painful death later because of chemical effects.

Currently, there are 972 survivors whose wounds and injuries are severe and need urgent and immediate care and treatment. In addition, 110 of the survivors have respiratory and sight injuryies which has made their lives unbearable.

Apart from the great number of injured and martyrs, 211 people, of which 151 were children, have disappeared in neighboring countries. Our society has managed to find eight of those individuals and reunite them with their families. Another 11 children have also been identified and guided to do several required tests and if approved, they will be reunited with their families.

We, Kurdish people, are a peace-loving nation and have always been calling for peace, equity, and freedom, yet we have paid the price of our peacefulness and clearly Halabja chemical bombing is an undeniable example. We have always opposed dictators and all atrocities. We believe and have witnessed that freedom and peace will prevail and tyrants and dictators, who persecute and massacre nations, will have a gruesome and deplorable fate like their predecessors.

I have carried the sorrows and burdens of hundreds and thousands of injured people and their families of my region to this conference to remind everyone of the horrendous consequences of using chemical weapons. I am here, on behalf of the grieving families, to tell you, we firmly call for banning the production and use of chemical weapons under any circumstances by any country or group. We call for establishing peace in the world and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, especially chemical weapons in the entire world, and Middle East in particular because this region often experiences destructive wars and conflicts under different pretexts and slogans, in which horrible atrocities and crimes against humanity are committed. The new and living example is the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta in Damascus.

The heart-breaking fact about war and conflict is that the majority of the victims are innocent. For instance, when our city was bombed with chemical weapons, I was four years old. My siblings and cousins, who were killed in the bombing, were children too. My parents were civilians and philanthropists who were also killed in the carnage. But for the warmongers and their families, the case is different. The bitter fact is that those who take decisions to start any war, are in a safe haven and spared from the horrific aftermaths of it. Their children are not killed, their houses are not vandalized and demolished, and their relatives' bodies are not mutilated during bombing and raids. Therefore, whenever their interests require, they launch war and cause the death of thousands of innocent people.

We, the victims of Genocide and Chemical Weapons, suggest that OPCW and the international community, as well as the United Nations, make a convention and pass laws to prohibit all types of conflicts and wars under any excuse, so that nations can co-exist and live peacefully with each other.

Your Excellency Mr. Chairman, Honorable Guests, Distinguished Delegates,

I would also like to seize this opportunity and put forward three requests with the hope of serious consideration:

1. Chemical bombing victims of Kurdistan in general and Halabja in particular, are living in distressing and harsh conditions. Their wounds and injuries are severe and will not be treated without help and support from the developed countries. Thus, we urge you to help us in treating them and decreasing their griefs and burdens by dispatching modern and up-to-date medical equipment and special medical teams in coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government to treat and supervise the injured.
2. We kindly request the OPCW to hold a special conference on “the consequences of using mass destruction weapons and effective practical mechanisms to ban them” in Halabja city.
3. I would like to announce that Halabja Chemical Victims' Society with several international attorneys are currently working on a lawsuit against companies which had cooperated with Saddam's regime in its creation and use of chemical weapons. We kindly call for your support and cooperation to achieve our lawsuit against those companies that belong to any country.

In conclusion, we extend our thanks and gratitude for those who have held this conference and hope that this conference yield fruitful, practical results.

Long Live Peace.

Long live life and prosperity.

Long live the world without weapons of mass destruction.