

Homayra Karimivahed
Organization for Defending Victims of Chemical Weapons
Sardasht, Iran

Presentation to 20th CWC Conference of States Parties (CSP)
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague, The Netherlands, December 2015

Painful Memories from Sardasht

Mister Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Homayra. I am 26 years old, the daughter of a family who has lost 11 members in Sardasht's 1987 Chemical Bombardment. I would like to tell you a brief story of this event. Sardasht is a small city located in the northwest of Iran, close to the border with Iraq. Between 1980- and 1988 the territory of my homeland was invaded by Iraqi Baath military forces and this imposed war lasted 8 years. During this period of time the non-militarized city of Sardasht was subjected to sudden assaults. Sardasht is the third city in the world. after Japan's Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to become the target of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the first civil human community that fell victim to a chemical attack. Hundreds of civilians were martyred and about 8.000 injured as a result of this brutal action.

When I asked my father about this disaster, he replied; disappointed from overcoming Iran in the war fronts, the Iraqi Baathist Regime imagined that it would be able to impose its demands on the Iranian nation through chemical attacks. Hence, on June 28 and 29, 1987, Iraqi bombers attacked four crowded parts of Sardasht with chemical bombs and engulfed its residents with fatal chemical gases.

Unfortunately, this awful and disastrous chemical attack brought many negative effects and consequences for residents, animals, birds, and the environment. Still many resistant and noble citizens of Sardasht are suffering from negative effects of this attack.

Aiming to support the rights of victims, 14 years ago an NGO under the title of the Organization for Defending Sardasht Victims of Chemical Weapons known as (ODVCW) was established. From then on, according to its mission, ODVCW followed all issues related to chemical warfare victims. fully recognized as injured by the government and other official support organs, and to help bring these victims some necessary health care, general support, and insurance. Every year coincident with these sinister days, we celebrate the memory of those martyred and injured, and of those who still suffer the effects of that event including long-term respiratory problems as well as immune system and genetic disorders.

ODVCW participates in the OPCW's annual conference and follows the decisions made by member states of the CWC. A few years ago we offered our city to be named as a "city of peace" and we propose it once again.

We brought a lawsuit against *Frans Van Anraat*, a Dutch businessman who sold raw materials for the production of chemical weapons to Iraq during the reign of Saddam Hussein. We also filed claims against Saddam Hussein in Iraqi trial courts. In addition to these actions, we will be taking further such steps in the futures.

Despite the passage of 28 years from the chemical bombings in Sardasht, the families of victims urge the international community to bring the main perpetrators of these crimes against humanity to justice, but their calls seem to have been futile so far.

We again call on the international community to carry out their "legal and moral responsibility" towards the victims of chemical warfare and their families and to facilitate the punishment of the perpetrators and supporters of such inhumane acts.

And now, last but not least, I would like to thank the Secretary General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his annual statements on behalf of the OPCW to commemorate the chemical weapons attack on Sardasht in 1987.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the external server and website.