

Ms. Homeyra Karimivahed
Organization for Defending Victims of Chemical Weapons (ODVCW), Iran

Presentation to the 21st CWC Conference of States Parties (CSP)

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The Hague, Netherlands

28 November – 2 December 2016

Statement of Sympathy and Warning

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

In 1980 the territory of my homeland was invaded by Iraqi Baath military forces, and this terrible war lasted for 8 years. In the course of the imposed war, Iraqi forces used weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, against Iranian troops and civilians, extensively. In one of the most earliest documented cases of using chemical gases and mustard gas by Iraq, more than 8,000 Iranian civilians including women and children were martyred and injured in Sardasht; this city is also known as the first civil human community in the world to become the victim of attacks by chemical weapons.

To announce their concerns about the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons, the people of Sardasht established the “Organization for Defending Sardasht Victims of Chemical Weapons.” The ODVCW, a non-governmental organization, was established to be the messenger of peace for all humankind over the world and its efforts have focused on alleviating pain and suffering of survivors of those horrific attacks. Our members put their hope in God that they are the last victims of such weapons.

Unfortunately, unbearable silence and the indifference of the international community to the Sardasht chemical bombardment set the stage for repeating such horrific incidents by the Iraqi government even against its own citizens in Halabja, (a city in the Kurdistan Province of Iraq), causing the death and severe injuries of more than 5,000 innocent civilians. The worse part of the story is that the use of chemical weapons still is being reported in the Middle East today!

We condemn the ongoing catastrophic armed conflict in Syria and the widespread and systematic violations of international human rights law and grave breaches of international humanitarian law that could amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide; the compelling confirmation that a toxic chemical was used systematically and repeatedly as a weapon in Syria is a great concern and needs to be addressed.

According to its mission, the OPCW has the right to implement the provisions of the CWC in order to achieve its vision of a world free of chemical weapons and of the threat of their use. In spite of the fact that only the member states are committed to implement the CWC obligations, the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors is a great concern and needs to be addressed.

The situation in Syria and perhaps in Iraq indicates that great events are about to take place. So we ask the OPCW Executive Council to pay special attention to this current situation and to examine its options in applying CWC obligations to non-state actors.

We, the ODVCW, observer member of the OPCW, and an active member of the CWC Coalition, hereby declare our sympathy to those who have suffered the pains of war by weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and by any other means and methods that violate international law, norms, and regulations.

And now, last but not least, I would like to thank Director-General Ahmet Uzumcu for his annual statement on behalf of the OPCW to commemorate the Iraqi chemical weapons attack on Sardasht in 1987.

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