

**Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the  
States Parties (CSP-27) to the Chemical Weapons Convention**

The Hague, The Netherlands  
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NGO Joint Statement:

***Attacks on Civilian Chemical Facilities:  
Safety and Security of Chemical Facilities***

Statement prepared by:<sup>1</sup>

Alastair Hay (University of Leeds);  
Daniel Esteban (Consejo Argentino de Relaciones Internacionales (CARI));  
Konadu Benjamin (Altar Relief Foundation);  
Margaret Muturi (Kenyatta University);  
Runak Asaad (Peace Foundation and International Cooperation);  
Allen Shofe (MWS Global)

***Chairperson, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Colleagues,***

Given the diversity of chemical facilities around the world, a diversity which encompasses size of plant, range of products manufactured or stored, and plant capacity, there is an urgent need to ensure these facilities are not attacked either before or during any outbreak of hostilities.

Globally, many chemical facilities exist for the manufacture, storage and distribution of chemicals for peaceful purposes. This industry presents unique challenges for ensuring the safety of the plant, the workers on site, and any civilians in the vicinity should any inadvertent release of chemicals occur.

Security and safety issues are paramount for the chemical industry and require detailed onsite and offsite plans to obviate any unwanted release of chemicals, but should this occur, the plans are needed to mitigate the effects of any such release. As a matter of course chemical plants should all have these plans which detail the products stored, or made onsite, and their quantity, and this information should be shared with local and national authorities including those responsible for air, ground and water quality as well as the local fire brigade services.

The chemical industry, including all those outlets where chemicals are stored for production or simply retail, should, as a matter of course, be required to have detailed safety and security procedures for the site and work with government and other industry partners, or even

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: the following statement reflects the views and opinions of the authors and the co-signers, and does not necessarily reflect the views of all organizations and individuals within the CWC Coalition.

competitors, to ensure employees and the public are not at risk from either the deliberate or inadvertent release of chemicals.

Regrettably, the evidence suggests that the safety and security of chemical facilities varies markedly, with many not safe and secure and, in consequence, presenting unwanted risks to those on and off site.

Evidence exists suggesting attacks on chemical facilities in the Palestinian territories by Israeli forces and of an attack on a nitric acid storage facility in Ukraine by Russian forces in the current war in Ukraine. These incidents require confirmation or refutation. Any attack on a chemical facility which results in the release of chemicals which can harm the local populace is a form of chemical warfare by default, and must be investigated as a matter of urgency. The government of the area affected, and any occupying military force, must be required to grant permission for an investigation by the OPCW. Indeed, it should be part of the OPCW's remit to carry out such an investigation and we call on states parties to make it a part of the organisation's mandate that it investigate attacks on chemical facilities, that it publish its findings, and that those found guilty of the attack are subject to suitable penalties. Any report by the OPCW on attacks on chemical facilities should automatically be transmitted to the UN Security Council for debate and decisions.

Chemical facilities are targets that pose great threat to human life since they are likely to cause mass casualties if attacked. The evidence from chemical attacks on the Kurdish community by Iraqi forces in 1988, and the attacks on Syrian civilians with the nerve gas sarin in Ghouta by pro-Assad forces in 2013, makes it clear that thousands may be at risk, and die, when chemicals are released on a large scale. Everything must be done, therefore, to prevent either the deliberate or inadvertent release of chemicals, or attack by such.

We call on the OPCW to work with national governments and the chemical industry through its relevant associations, be they for manufacturers, distributors, or traders, to ensure that any site which houses chemicals for manufacture, storage or sale, has a robust safety and security policy in place. All such chemical facilities should be required, by national laws, to have an up-to-date inventory of all chemicals on site which they share with appropriate authorities and the local fire brigade.

It would also be good practice for the chemical industry to ensure that its plant, distribution and retail facilities are not located near centres of population, as currently, too many are, and we would encourage the OPCW to communicate this view.

The OPCW should advise states parties to work together with chemical facility owners to reduce the vulnerability of chemical plants to any form of attack or sabotage. New chemical facilities should be built away from human settlement to avoid many casualties in case of an accident or an attack on the facility. Existing facilities should undergo regular (at least annually) chemical

security susceptibility assessments and all should have chemical release mitigation measures in place, tested for effectiveness, and implementable.

The OPCW does encourage state parties to develop robust chemical security related policies, plans and procedures, self-assessment and audit methodologies as well as train staff in conducting chemical facility security assessments and this process must be continued as well as kept under constant review as it is a major part of the prevention of chemical weapons manufacture.

We would like the statement to form part of the final record of the CSP and to be posted on the OPCW's server. Thank you.

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**Statement Endorsements** (Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only):

Faris Hussein Abdullah, *Agricultural Leader and Member of the Board of Directors, Kurdish Organizations Network Coalition for the International Criminal Court (KONCICC)*

Ndham Omar Abdullah, *Writer and Environmental Activist, Kurdistan Without Genocide*

Qasim Kadhim Hama Ali, *Director and Victim of Genocide, Manawa Organization For Martyars & Anfal's Inquiry*

Abdelmajid Azzouzi, *Former English Supervisor, Rif Memory Association*

Karwan Abdulrahman Omar Bibani, *Member, Director, and Board Member; Organization of the Justice Campaign - OJC*

Ali Mahmoud Mhamad, *Member, Director, End Genocide Activist, and Writer, A World Without Chemical and Biological Weapons - WWW*

Adeniji Olawale, *Senior Researcher, Center for Countermeasures Against Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents*

Maria Espona, *Director, ArgIQ*

Chimaoge Anita Ezeigwe, *Program Manager, Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation*

Sameerah Ahmed Hasan, *Director and Women's Activist, Culture & Social Development Society in Kirkuk*

Halwest Abdullah Karim, *Member; Director; Writer and Environmental Activist; Organization Against Weapons of Mass Destruction in Kurdistan*

Oliver Meier, *Senior Researcher, CBWNet*

Nourhan Moustafa, *Director of the International Humanitarian Law and Disarmament Unit, Maat for Peace Development and Human Rights*

Ayad Ismael Muhammed, *Secretary, President of Kurdistan Lawyers Union Erbil Branch, Anfal case lawyer, and volunteer lawyer in the trial of chemical weapons companies, Kurdish Organizations Network Coalition for the International Criminal Court (KONCICC)*

Farhad Khalid Mustafa, *Secretary and Lecturer, Kurdistan Without Genocide*

Nihro Jalal Othman, *Member; Director; and Board Member; ICAN Kurdistan Network-IKN*

Kawa Nader Qader, *Member; Director; Board Member; and Writer; ICAN Kurdistan Network-IKN*

Dashti Sleman Qadir, *Director, Organization Against Weapons of Mass Destruction in Kurdistan*

Animesh Roul, *Executive Director, Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict*

Paul Walker, *Vice Chair, Arms Control Association*

Kareem Abbas Yaseen, *Member; Director; and Board Member, Organization of the Justice Campaign - OJC*