

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

The Hague, The Netherlands
28 November – 2 December 2022

NGO Joint Statement:
Chemical Weapons Victims' Health and Rights

Statement prepared by:¹

Homeyra Karimivahed (Organisation for Defending Sardasht Victims of Chemical Weapons - ODVCW); Amin Abdulla (Peace Foundation and International Cooperation); Nawzad Jalal Ebrahim (Kurdish Organisations Network Coalition for the International Criminal Court - KONCICC); Goran Gharib (Halabja Memorial Foundation); Soran Gharib (Halabja Memorial Foundation); Mohammadreza Hajipour (Association for the Defence of Chemical Injuries Fars Province - SCWVSF); Seyed Kamal Lohmousavi (Association for Supporting Victims of Chemical Weapons); Shahriar Khateri (Tehran Peace Museum); Ahmed Majeed (BSOCC); Ali Mahmoud Mhamad (A World Without Chemical and Biological Weapons - WWW); Fatima Mala (Life Organization to Prevent War and Clean up the Environment from War Remnants - L.P.W.E); Nihro Jalal Othman (ICAN Kurdistan Network - IKAN); Dana Mirza (Halabja Memorial Foundation); Diako Azad Sabir (Halabja Memorial Foundation); Aland Avan Omar (Halabja Memorial Foundation); Rezvan Khajeh Salehani (Iranian Green Peace Chemical Weapons Association); Allen Shofe (MWS Global); Hazhar Nooraldin Wali (Armiti Human Rights Organization); Hama Wrya (Peace Foundation and International Cooperation); Kareem Abbas Yaseen (Organization of the Justice Campaign - OJC)

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

Since the course of the First World War tens of thousands have been killed by exposure to chemical weapons and thousands of survivors are still suffering from the consequences of using such unconventional weapons.

Chemical Weapons Victims' long-term health effects are extremely painful but at the same time a hidden suffering. If a person is a spinal cord injury or limb amputation survivor, people can better understand their suffering, but people normally do not grasp the agony of CW victims unless they suddenly cough, at which point people will notice his lung difficulties. According to recent clinical studies, female survivors need more support than men, especially psychological support as they are more vulnerable to oppression and strict social expectations. The cultural

¹ 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.

expectations for married women made recovery even more difficult for female survivors. In addition, the network for male victims is vast and supportive, but very few support outlets exist for women. Tradition expects women to have the important role of keeping the family together, educating the children, cooking, shopping and cleaning. As a gas attack victim, these were things that they do not have the strength to do.

Chairperson,

In view of this, we urge OPCW and the international community to establish a community that connects the victims with the specialized centers to treat cases that have not been treated so far, and that require psychological and educational treatment and a statement of rights and the duties of the competent authorities to follow up on the cases to which the victim is exposed. Moreover, encourage CWC States Parties, individuals and organizations to contribute to the Trust Fund for CW victims so that the Technical Secretariat can conduct more activities under the auspices of the International Support Network for CW victims.

We also call on the OPCW Technical Secretariat to plan and conduct further activities, projects in line with the CSP decision for the establishment of the International Support Network for CW victims including:

- (a) Organizing the second symposium on treatment of CW victims, challenges and hopes following the successful experience of the 1st Symposium in 2018 and in line with the recommendations set out in the Symposium declaration which is available on the OPCW website.
- (b) To follow the recommendations of the 1st OPCW medical Symposium Declaration which was suggested by the world medical experts regarding the health priorities and needs of CW victims.
- (c) To support establishing rehabilitation centers in certain State Parties for the victims of chemical weapons, especially in areas where few centers currently exist, and developing protocols for rehabilitation.
- (d) Supporting a number of Victims Assistance projects proposed by NGOs and institutions who are active in the field of providing medical/psychosocial support for CW victims.
- (e) Conducting more awareness programs regarding the consequences of the use of CW in the past including posting more information (testimonies, eye witness accounts, oral history) on the Victims page of the OPCW website and on other social media.
- (f) To support all Chemical Weapons' Victims against the sanctions on medicine, due to the lack of access to some vital medication as a result of unilateral sanctions against certain State Parties.

CW victims suffer from a range of psychological problems including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and chronic depression. Accordingly, we recommend the following:

- (a) To appoint a group of experts through the Scientific Advisory group or other independent experts to establish a working group on CW victims psycho-social needs and develop a guideline for their health care providers.
- (b) Raise awareness within the families of victims of the problems faced by the victims when they are re-integrating into their families and networks (including due to trauma and stigmatization).

Chairperson,

We must do more to better understand and respond to the unique needs of all chemical weapons victims. Therefore, civil society stands ready to collaborate with you to improve the lives of people who have suffered so heinously.

We thank you for your kind attention and request this statement be made part of the official published proceedings of this Conference.

Thank You!

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*

Daryl G. Kimball, *Executive Director, Arms Control Association*

Maria Espona, *Director, ArgIQ*

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

Mahmoudreza Golshanpazhooh, *Head, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence*

Alastair Hay, *Professor (Emeritus) of Environmental Toxicology, University of Leeds*

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*

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*

Kawa Nader Qader, *Member of the Board of Directors, End Genocide Writer and Activist, ICAN Kurdistan Network-IKN*

Olatunji Salako, *Director, Center for Countermeasure Against Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents*

Hamid Salehi, *Board Member and Chemical Weapons Survivor, Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support SCWVS*

Irene Schwier Dr.rer.nat., *Senior Physico Chemist and Forensic CBRNe Expert, Group of Senior Physicists & Physico Chemists*

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

Deborah Klein Walker, *Edd, American Public Health Association*

Paul Walker, *Vice Chair, Arms Control Association*

