

In the name of God

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Impact Assessment of chemical weapons (sulphur mustard) on the environment

Association for the Defence of Chemical injuries in the Fars Province (SCWVSF), Iran

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Mister Chairman, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to discuss our impact assessment of chemical weapons (sulphur mustard) on the environment.

At the outset I would like to emphasize that the issue of the environment is global in nature and therefore any contamination will not be limited by boundaries and ultimately will affect us all.

The use of chemical weapons in war or any other context is considered abhorrent in the eyes of the public worldwide. Therefore, it is no surprise that the use of such indiscriminate weapons have been prohibited within international law and public consciousness.

The following pacts and treaties aimed at the disarmament of chemical and biological agents:

- A) Geneva Protocol 1925 (prohibition of using chemical weapons)
- B) The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) 1972 prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons and calls for their destruction.
- C) Convention on Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 1993 likewise calls for the prohibition of developing, stockpiling and using chemical weapons, with calls for their destruction.

Despite these conventions and treaties prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, unfortunately during the imposed 8-year war between Iran and Iraq—Saddam Hossein's regime was provided with a large quantity of chemical agents (about 2,800 tons) mostly sulphur mustard, sarin and tabun gas by more than 56 western companies (European and American) as either a gift or sold under the pretense of commercial goods or samples.

In this research of chemical agents used by Saddam's regime during the imposed war (1980-1988), we concluded that the most commonly used chemical agent were sulphur mustard. Furthermore, we looked into 286 cases where almost 1,800 ton of such chemical agents were used against civilians and Iranian troops.

We have expanded our research by looking into the environmental impact of the chemical weapons by assessing the soil and plants in the impacted region of Shalamch & Sardasht. For this assessment, we analyzed 50 mixed samples of soil and plants. Our research (currently in pilot form) aims to analyze whether sulphur mustard agent (HD) and all its derivatives are present in the soil and plant structures or not.

The need to expand our research to include the environmental component is driven by the plausible impact chemical weapons may have played in disrupting the complex ecosystem in the region. Particularly as the areas under this research are suffering from soil deterioration, surface and underground water depletion.

Ultimately, by considering that the international commitment of countries to confront weapons of mass destruction (chemical weapons), all analysis of the mentioned project are performed in line with the framework of related provisions, regulations (use of GC_MS system) and lab processes of the OPCW authorities.

The international community needs to take serious steps in reducing greenhouse gases and addressing the challenges from climate change (in accordance with United Nations Agenda 21). My country, Iran, is no exception and likewise is facing the impact of climate change, in particular the regions in the country that had been inflicted with most harm during the 8-year war (South and South-West region).

Therefore we call upon the international community, including NGOs and relevant organizations to collaborate, partner and assist us with our nascent research on the environmental impact of chemical weapons (sulphur mustard). This partnership can assist in the monitoring and observing the environment of the regions most affected by chemical weapons. Furthermore, we seek assistance in the decontamination of these areas as to revive the natural ecosystem and in doing so contribute to the socioeconomic and environmental vitality of this area. Our collective effort will ensure we can transform destruction left by these weapons into a chapter for the environment and its people.

Thank you all for your attention and we look forward to our collaboration in this worthwhile endeavor.

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