

NGO Joint Statement

The Rights and Health of Chemical Weapons Victims

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Excellencies, Director General, Colleagues of the CWC Coalition, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is presented on behalf of the non-governmental organizations supporting victims of chemical weapons.

The main emphasis of the statement is on the "time." We continue to lose precious time. Several CW victims, who participated in this conference and stood on this podium, are no longer among us due to complications caused by chemical weapons. The urgent needs of victims require immediate attention. In June 2023, 4 Iranian chemical victims attended a court in The Hague to sue 2 Dutch companies that provided Sulphur mustard precursors to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, and a month after the court hearing, before the verdict was issued, one of them lost his life. Over 3 decades after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq, still chemical weapons are taking their toll in my country, and many thousands of CW victims are suffering from serious illnesses related to their exposure.

The immediate and long-term needs of chemical weapons victims require urgent attention. We propose the following recommendations to advocate for victims' health:

1. The main priority is providing medical assistance, specifically for the treatment of long-term health effects. National medical communities struggle to understand and provide adequate care for the unique needs of victims of chemical weapons. Therefore, we call upon the international community and organizations such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to encourage CWC States Parties, individuals, and organizations to contribute to the OPCW Trust Fund for CW victims. This will enable the Technical Secretariat to conduct more activities under the auspices of the International Support Network for CW victims.
2. To address both short-term and long-term effects, States Parties should actively support CW victims by providing medical treatment in their home countries, organizing events to raise awareness at the national level regarding victims of chemical weapons, exchanging information on experiences related to treatment of victims of chemical weapons, facilitating materials and equipment-related assistance to States Parties, and conducting more awareness-raising programs regarding the consequences of the use of CW.
3. Moreover, we recommend prioritizing and providing financial support to research projects on the treatment for long-term health effects through international cooperation programs including the WHO and OPCW, providing financial support for victim assistance projects conducted by NGOs, and establishing rehabilitation centers for the victims of chemical

weapons. The issue of physical and mental health is the primary concern of chemical victims, who face numerous medical and psychological problems. These include respiratory problems, eye problems, corneal burns, skin burns, and internal problems, for which they require ongoing treatment, medicine, and hospitalization, often for several decades.

4. We also recommend that a common protocol be adopted to remove the special drugs for chemical victims from economic sanctions.
5. The development of plans for nature-based activities for the chemically injured people can also help to improve their quality of life and health.
6. Finally, we recommend conducting studies on the persistent effects of chemical warfare agents on the environment, especially on soil, plant, and animal species in affected areas, and conducting remediation projects in the exposed areas.
7. We stand ready to actively participate in works focused on chemical weapons victims' needs or any assistance and cooperation with OPCW in this regard.

The presence of chemical weapons victims in this conference and their social activities play a significant role in raising awareness of the severity of the victims' injuries and suffering. Iranian chemical weapons victims participate in this global coalition every year to ensure that what happened to them will never happen to anyone else.

Thank you, and we request that this statement be made part of the official CSP-29 proceedings.