

Halabja: Never Again

The case against
chemical and
biological weapons

Public Meeting

Held by
the Joint Committee
on Kurdistan



June 17th 1988



"Like figures unearthed at Pompeii, the victims of Halabja were killed so quickly that their corpses remained in suspended animation. There was the plump baby whose face, frozen in a scream, stuck out from under the protective arm of a man, away from the open door of a house that he never reached.

Nearby, a family of five who had been sitting in their garden eating lunch were cut down - the killer gas not even sparing the family cat or the birds in the tree, which littered the well-kept lawn.

The Iraqi bombers first struck last Wednesday, dropping the chemical agents relentlessly and leaving behind the groans of the mustard gas victims, the trail of refugees and the haunting wax work figures frozen by cyanide vapour.

Halabja was once a prosperous market town surrounded by green pasture on the shore of Dar Bandikhan lake, overlooked on three sides by the snow-capped mountains of Kurdistan."

THE TIMES - TUESDAY MARCH 22 1988



Halabja WAS a market town in Iraqi, Kurdistan - Governorate of Sulaimaniya. Some 15km from the Iranian border. The name derives from Halab (the ancient city of Aleppo in Syria) and Ja, Kurdish for little. Little Aleppo was a bustling town on the old caravan route to Persia.

Surrounded by mountains to the East and North and the plains of SHEHRAZUR to the West, American archaeologists have found evidence that indicate Shehrazur to be the site of the first human settlement and cultivation in history. The town was surrounded by green pastures and orchards with an abundance of fruits and vegetables. It was also a centre for Kurdish handicrafts, arts and literature. Many poets and writers originated in Halabja, including GORAN (1904-1962) who received the international Peace Prize in Moscow from Kruschew in 1960, and who is considered to be the most eminent Kurdish poet of this century.

On the afternoon of 16th March 1988 Iraqi warplanes dropped chemical agents, nerve gases, on the Kurdish civilian population. If Guernica was the first city to suffer mass bombing, and Hiroshima nuclear weapons, then Halabja must be the first town to suffer a deliberate and concerted chemical attack.

The population (40,000) was nearly doubled by the time of the chemical attacks due to the large scale deportations and campaigns of terror by the Iraqi Army against the surrounding villages and hamlets.

Early reports indicated that some 5000 citizens of the town died instantly as a result, many more of the initial survivors have died since. It is estimated by Kurdish resistance groups, and independent observers that the total figure of dead exceeds 10,000. The U.S., U.K., Switzerland, Austria and Germany accepted only a total of 29 victims to be treated at their own expense.

THE WARNING :

◆ In a 26 page report issued by the U.N. on March 14 1986, an International team of military and chemical experts concluded that Iraq is guilty of using chemical weapons in its war with Iran.

◆ **Panorama, BBC, Monday October 27 1986**

"The Secrets of Samarra" proved beyond doubt that Saddam Hussien, ruler of Iraq, is engaged in developing a formidable chemical warfare facility located in the desert near the town of Samarra. The programme gave details of Western companies and multinationals providing Saddam with materials and expertise to help manufacture chemical weapons. These included K.B.S. and Melchennie in Holland, Quast and Karl Kolbe in W.Germany, Montedison, the Italian giant state-owned chemical company.

Herr Klaus Franzl, head of Karl Kolbe in Baghdad for many years has been identified as the co-ordinator for the Iraqi chemical warfare programme and the Western companies. S.E.P.P., the Iraqi State establishment for Pesticide Production, a sub-division of the Iraqi organisation for chemical industries, operating through a Post Box number in Baghdad has been the main contractor for large supplies of "restricted" chemicals from the West.

◆ **Mr John Howes**, principle deputy assistant secretary U.S. State department said in October 1986 that Iraq has built "this capacity" over a number of years, "not I am afraid without the help of the West".

◆ The U.K. board of trade confirmed the sale of thousands of kilos of the basic

ingredients of nerve and mustard gas to Iraq/Iran. In 1983 2000 kgs methyl phosphoryl difluoride went to Iraq. This is a basic ingredient for Sarin/nerve gas GB, dimethyl methylphosphorate - another GB ingredient - also went to Iraq.

Quantities of methyl phosphoryl difluoride and thioglycol were supplied to Iran. Thioglycol is an ingredient of mustard gas. (*Guardian, April 6 1984*)

◆ In an urgent appeal to the U.N. secretary general on 5.5.1987, about the campaign of genocide conducted by the Iraqi regime against the Kurdish population, Mr Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, states in the 2nd point of his memorandum :

2. "In order to terrorise Kurdish villagers and force them to leave, the Iraqi government have been using chemical weapons. On 15, 16 April, for instance, 20 villages in the Solaymania and Arbil governorates were hit with these weapons. Later, these weapons were used in bombarding a number of villages in the provinces of Karadagh, Mawat and nearby areas killing dozens of children, women and elderly people as well as seriously wounding more than 300 people. Names of 33 children, women and elderly people from the village of Sheikh Wassan in Shaklawa, Arbil, were sent abroad through our representatives. They all died on 16 April as a result of the chemical bombardment of their village. Names of 30 wounded from the same village, were also sent abroad."

◆ In another urgent appeal to the U.N. and Humanitarian organisations on 20th February 1988, **Mr Jalal Talabani** the

General Secretary of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, states in points 1, 2 & 3 :

1. "Since April 1987, the Iraqi government has, at least on 6 occasions, bombarded the liberated areas of Kurdistan (both civilians and combatants) with poison gas (mustard gas) which has resulted in hundreds of fatalities. (Some names of victims of these chemical attacks are listed in Appendix E)."



2. "In addition to the destruction of the towns of Penjween, Tawele, Khormal, Mawat, Qardag, Agjeler, Gelale, Kanimassi and Attrosh, the Iraqi authorities have recently completely destroyed the town of Chwarta and the district towns of Sorekalat, Kalacholan, Kareze, Kinaroi and Berzinja. *We have reliable information that the Iraqis are planning to destroy the sizeable towns of [Halabja], Koysanjak, Taktak, Rawandooz and Kaladize.* This would undoubtedly result in the displacement

of hundreds of thousands of people."

3. "386 Kurdish civilians wounded in the chemical attacks in April desperately sought medical treatment in the main hospitals of the Kurdish cities in Hewler (Arbil), Sulimania and Kirkuk. The Iraqi authorities issued strict orders to all hospitals not to treat any of these victims unless they sign a statement and appear on Iraqi television claiming that Iran was responsible for the chemical attacks.

"However, the 386 victims were denied medical treatment and were later rounded-up and sent to a secret prison in the city of Arbil. The prison in question is located opposite the Arbil "Military Club" and used to house the "Department of Education" which was later changed to a students' hostel before being converted to a prison. According to reliable eye-witness reports, which we received in the past few days, all the 386 victims have recently been executed and buried by the government in an attempt to cover-up all traces of this horrendous crime. Names of some of these victims are listed in Appendix F."

In this appeal Mr Talabani has accurately forecast the destruction of Halabja, by the Iraqis, nearly a month before the event.

The fears of Kurdish leaders and political parties about the sustained campaign of genocide by Mr Saddam Hussien's regime, and their well documented memos to democratic governments and international organisations met with muted reactions and speculation by an indifferent world. And except for sporadic reports in the media few voiced their concern, encouraging Saddam Hussien to commit the massacre of Halabja.

Extracts from **Mr Jeremy Corbyn's** speech in the House of Commons
Friday 25 March 1988, 11.12am

"The most shocking and appalling thing has been the use of chemical weapons and chemical warfare against the Kurdish people. It is clear that the Iraqi Government are using poison gas against the Kurdish people in Iraq. Since mid-April 1987 - just less than one year ago - there has been continued shelling with mustard and diphosgene gases, which have been used to kill people. This week some disturbing news has arrived, which has been adequately reported in some newspapers. Anyone who doubts the existence and use of such chemical weapons - the Iraqi ambassador in this country denies the use of chemical weapons - is referred to a secret document that has been smuggled out of Iraq, from the general commander of the Erbil district, which clearly confirms the existence of those weapons. The document is headed :
"Subject : Control over distribution of biological and chemical (materials)".

It goes on to ask for a half-yearly

stock-taking of those weapons and gives guidance on their use."

"I hope the House will understand that the full horrors of the Iran-Iraq war have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, but within that conflict the most appalling savagery is being perpetrated against the Kurdish people. This week's cyanide attacks have at last hit the world's press headlines. It is time for the Government to act by doing what is requested by the Kurdish people, which is, first, requesting that the United Nations immediately sends observers to ascertain the full extent of the attacks that have taken place; secondly, demanding that the Iraqi Government allow the International Red Cross into the country to take medical and humanitarian aid to those people; thirdly, and above all, demanding a complete stop to all arms and chemical sales to either Iran or Iraq. They should also stop propping up the Iraqi Government by the use of trade, aid and credits, which I am afraid the British Government have been doing in the credits that they have passed on to Iraq. This House should make its views clearly known on this matter."



PRESS RELEASE

THE IRAQI AMBASSADOR IN LONDON HAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS BY HIS GOVERNMENT AGAINST KURDISH CIVILIANS IN HALABJA WHERE 4000 INNOCENT KURDS WERE SUFFOCATED BY CYANIDE GAS.

THE KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (KDP) IS PUTTING FORWARD TWO HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS CAPTURED BY OUR GUERRILLAS IN THE IRAQI BASE AT DERALOK IN JAN. 1988. THE CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENTS PROVES IN ITSELF THAT THE IRAQI REGIME ARE COMMITTED TO THE USE OF POISON AND NERVE GASSES.

KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY
24th March 1988

Document

In the Name of God the Compassionate the Merciful

Headquarters "Victory is Ours"
The Command of Erbil District
"Operations"

No. - HI 277
Date - 3/8/1986

To : All units of the District (24th Battalion)
Subject : Control over distribution of biological and chemical (materials).

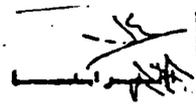
(With reference to) the letter of the Interior Ministry personal and highly confidential 288 on 18/5/1986, and the letter of the Defence Ministry personal and highly confidential 10/35 on 25/6/1986 which was sent to the training office by Ref 36 on 27/5/1986 and based on the original letter of the special bureau of the Army Chief of Staff personal and highly confidential 5801 on 26/5/1986 which was sent to us through the command of the Fifth Army Corp personal and highly confidential 1530 on 21/6/1986 which referred to the sub-committee letter on the control over the distribution of Biological and Chemical (Materials) personal and highly confidential 32 on 23/6/1986 which was sent to us accompanied by the letter of the command of the Light National Defence Forces /15 personal and highly confidential 2/2 on 24/7/1986.

It is required to carry out a half-yearly stock-take for all materials at the disposal of units. Please note that the stock- take lists must be submitted (by all the command bodies) to us by 6/8/1986, and we should be informed in due course.

General
De'ah Abdul Wahab Ezzat
Commander of Erbil District

تاسمة
تاسمة: تاسمة اربيل
((المرسلات))
العدد / ح / التلايح /
التاريخ / ٢ / ١٩٨٦ / ٨ /

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
سوى للاهلية وشخصي



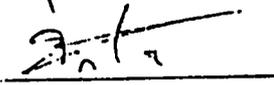
الس / وحدات التاطيح ((ش ٢٠٠٤))
المدون / المخطوط على - اولى الماتوجبة الكبارية

كتاب ولاية ادي خلة السوي للاهلية والشخصي ٢٨٨ في ١٨ / ٥ / ١٩٨٦ وكتاب ولاية ادي خلة السوي للاهلية والشخصي ١٠٩٢٥ في ٢٥ / ٨ / ١٩٨٦ الصالح باعانه د ابراهيم الهادي ١٢٦ في ٢٧ / ٥ / ١٩٨٦ المصنف على اصول كتاب ولاية اربيل الجبل المكعب الناشر السوي للاهلية والشخصي ٥٨٠١ لسري ٢٦ / ٥ / ١٩٨٦ الصالح بكتاب قيادة اربيل الناشر السوي للاهلية والشخصي ١٥٢٠ في ٢١ / ٦ / ٨٦ واملحوظ على كتاب اللوحة الفرقة السيطرية مع - اولى المواد اوبولوجية والبيانية السوي للاهلية والشخصي ٢٢ في ٢٢ / ٦ / ١٩٨٦ والصالح ايليا بكتاب اتحاد قنات جمال ادي خلة السوي / ١٥ السوي للاهلية وشخصي ٢١٢ في ٢٢ / ٧ / ١١٨٦ .

تصنف اجراء جرد نصف سنوي لكافة المواد للمصدر ملحقا او الوحدات التي تتعامل بها على ان
هذا اما قوائم الجرد لاول عام ١٩٨٦ / ٨ / ٦ هي المرسلة لطايرها من العاريج والاهلية .


الامين
تصنيف: عبد الوهاب مزق
تقرت: لم اربيل

سوى للاهلية وشخصي

٢٠٠٤


The Aftermath :

Some weeks after Halabja was devastated Saddam Hussien resumed his chemical attacks upon Kurdish villages well inside Iraq and far away from the warfront with Iran. The PUK reported that some 15 villages in the Qaradagh district have been attacked. The KDP issued the following Press Release on 17/5/1988:

"Iraqi warplanes continue their chemical attacks upon civilians in Kurdistan. On 15.5.1988 at 7.30am warplanes of the Iraqi airforce dropped chemical and gas bombs on the villages of Weri, Doli Balisan, Kolka Resh, Nazaninc, Smagouli and Werti, in the Erbil province, inflicting great damages upon people and livestock. In Werti alone 40 people have died as a result. Many of the severely affected victims continue to die inside Iraq, the final number of dead remains unknown.



After few days of public outrage, coverage by the media and weak indecisive protestations from some western governments, Halabja was forgotten, it seems that the Kurds' claim of a "conspiracy of silence" about the tragic situation in their homeland is true;

IRAN AND IRAQ: IN BRIEF

BBC reportedly cancels programme on Halabjah "massacre": London, 17th May: A radio programme about Iraq's chemical massacre at Halabja, to have gone on the air last week, has been cancelled by the BBC. According to the British working party on chemical and biological weapons, the documentary was due to be transmitted last Tuesday on the BBC's "File on Four" series, but was withdrawn and superceded by a more general programme on chemical weapons. "It could not be completed because the BBC's "International Assignment" programme did it and they felt that it must not be overdone," co-ordinator for the working party Elizabeth Sigmund offered the excuse to IRNA Monday. She said that the "File on Four" documentary would have been "more about Iraq's attacks on Kurdistan" rather than the more general perspective on chemical warfare and the Geneva talks offered by the other BBC programme.

At a meeting in Parliament last month, journalists said that their editors were reluctant to report stories critical of the Iraqi regime and especially about its chemical massacre at Halabja, which killed over 5,000 of its own citizens and maimed 7,000 more. No one was available at the BBC's "File on Four" to comment on the cancellation, but "International Assignment" said that it was not aware of the other department's intentions. The working party also understood that the independent Granada network was also preparing a feature about Iraq's chemical genocide by its "World in Action" team, but again the official said that it had no knowledge of this.

(IRNA in English 0702 gmt 17 May '88)
ME/0155 A/2

WORKING PARTY ON CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

in association with the Lansbury House Trust

The Working Party on CBW have studied all aspects of CWs for around 20 years. Their worst fears were of seeing CWs used between military personnel in protective clothing and gas masks, with medical treatment at their disposal. Never had this group envisaged the deliberate use of nerve gas and mustard gas against large numbers of unprotected civilians as we have seen at Halabja and many other sites in Kurdistan. The effects, both in immediate deaths and on the casualties, are more horrific than the public has yet realised.

Nerve gas

The agents which have been used appear to be two forms of nerve gas, tabun and sarin. Both act with great speed on the central nervous system, causing blindness, vomiting, convulsions and death from asphyxiation within minutes of exposure. They enter the body by penetrating the eyes, the skin, by inhalation or ingestion (breathing or swallowing).

People downwind of an attack may not know that they have been contaminated as these gases are colourless and virtually without smell or taste. Such people are likely to suffer long term and delayed effects of great severity, such as paralysis, convulsions, mental derangement and a variety of central nervous system disorders.

Mustard gas

The other gas used is mustard gas. This is a blistering agent which takes a little time to show its effects. It attacks the eyes, the skin (in particular moist and enclosed areas such as armpit and groin), causing terrible blisters, and it also attacks the lining of the throat and lungs causing intense suffering and congestion of the lungs, often leading to death. The secondary effect of mustard gas is from infections which can kill, such as pneumonia.

Prohibited by the law

The use of both these gases is totally prohibited under the international agreement known as the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which was signed by Iraq in 1931.

Protection

Protection against gases requires not just gas masks but also total body-covering protective clothing such as the so-called Noddy suits with which NATO troops are equipped.

The Working Party tried in every way possible to find detection equipment, protective masks and clothing from British firms; they announced that they are not allowed to sell such equipment for use in the Gulf war. It may be possible to get such equipment from Denmark and Sweden, as they have plans to protect their civilians in case of war. Britain has no such plans.

We have drafted a resolution for the UN Security Council on the subject of strengthening the total ban on the use of all CBWs, and to allow the provision of detection and protective equipment for non-combatants.

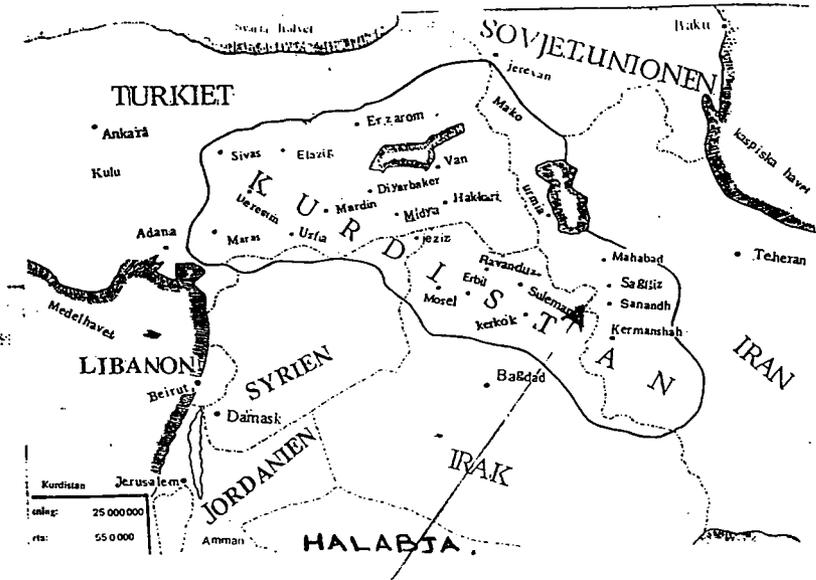
Leaflet

Several of our scientists have compiled a leaflet which explains how the Kurds can use commonly occurring materials to protect themselves in some fashion; they have also written a questionnaire which will establish the types of weapons and the areas in which they have been used. Both these documents have been translated into Kurdish and are in use in Kurdistan now.

War crimes commission

The condemnation of the monstrous use of such horrific weapons of war has not been loud or clear enough. We consider that a war crimes commission should be set up at once to collect and assess the evidence, and mete out such condemnation as is fitting. Otherwise the world may see the use of these weapons proliferating out of control in the years to come.





Today there are some 1m Kurds, mostly villagers and peasants living in the mountainous regions adjacent to the Turkish and Iranian borders. The Iraqi regime is trying to dislodge them from their ancient homelands, and force them either to flee the country into Iran or Turkey or force them into the big cities and population centres under the control of the army and security forces. This Baathist plan to depopulate the countryside and inaccessible regions of Kurdistan, and create a cordon sanitaire along its Turco-Iranian border, has in recent months taken a cruel turn even by Iraqi standards, for by the use of chemical weapons, they have succeeded in implementing their plans, with "an economic and efficient way" as the bulk of the Iraqi Army is tied in the war with Iran.

To date nearly 80% of the Kurdish countryside in Iraq has been denuded of its population, as the victims flee for

their lives. The Turkish authorities are directly and indirectly helping the Iraqis in this plan to destroy the Kurdish entity from the region, they have sealed their border to all humanitarian and fact finding missions and make regular forays into Iraqi Kurdistan to destroy guerilla bases engaged in fighting Iraqi forces and defending their villages.

The Iranian government, although in conflict and at war with Iraq, has been cynical and manipulating, regarding the tragedy.

Meanwhile a million people, besieged and totally isolated from the outside world, are left to the mercy of a vindictive ruthless and well backed regime. They wait quietly for death, the official world and the U.N. has ignored their pleas.

Surely we mustn't.

Jeremy Corbyn M.P.

Halabja: Never Again

**PUBLIC
MEETING**

**The case against
chemical and
biological weapons**



Chaired by: Bruce Kent

Video and film documentation on the
chemical war in Kurdistan.

Speakers

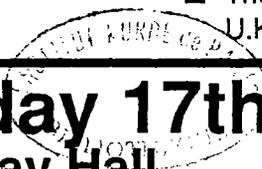
- Jeremy Corbyn (MP)
- Meg Beresford (CND)
- Dr. Alastair Hay (Chairman of WPCBW)
- Dr. Munir Morad (A specialist on Middle East affairs)
- Dr. Ibrahim Baravi (SMSK)

Supported by

- National Peace Council
- CND
- European Nuclear Disarmament (END)
- The working party on chemical & biological warfare (WPCBW)
- Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq
- Kurdish-British Scientific & Medical support for Kurdistan (SMSK)
- The Kurdish Organisations in the U.K.

Organised by

**The Joint Committee on
Kurdistan**



Date: Friday 17th June 1988

Venue: Conway Hall

7.00PM

Red Lion Square

London WC1 (Holborn Tube)

Groups campaigning against Chemical & Biological Weapons

Compiled by: **The NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL**
29 Great James Street
London WC1N 3ES
Tel: 01-242 3228

Chemical & Biological Weapons Working Group

Contact: Elisabeth Sigmund: Tel: (072 687) 782
Pencalenick, Lanteglos-by-Fowey, Polrey, Cornwall, PL23 1NH

Chemical Weapons Action Group

Chair: Paul Rogers
37 Pemberton Drive
Bradford
Other Contact: Angela Gunning: c/o PPU Tel: 387 5501

Groups concerned with the situation in KURDISTAN

Kurdish-British Medical & Scientific Support Group (SMSK)

Contacts: Prof. Steven Rose, Open University
Dr. Alastair Hay Leeds University
or through Liz Sigmund (tel. number above)

Kurdish Cultural Centre (KCC) 13-15 Stockwell Road, London SW9

Tel: 274 6251
Contacts: !
HOSHYAR RESHID, (tel: 274 6251)

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

PO Box 1504
London W7 3LX

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

BM Box 5576
London WC1N 3XX

Kurdish Workers Association
81A Stoke Newington Road
London N16
Tel: 01-254 0442
Contact: Ihsan Qadir

Kurdish Observer
BM Box 9099
London WC1 3XX
Contact: B. Jaf

Kurdistan Press
81A Stoke Newington Road
London N16
Tel: 01-254 0442
Contact: Muhammed Xani

Groups concerned with the situation in IRAQ

**Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq
(CARDRI)**
Details: CARDRI, PO Box 210, London N16 5PL

Published by: **The Joint Committee on Kurdistan**

Edited & Collated by : **The Kurdish Observer**
BM Box 9099
London WC13 XX