

A PHOTO REPORT ON:

THE CHEMICAL MASSACRE IN HALABJA

BY IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS





May 1988

IN THE NAME OF THE MOST HIGH

Halabja has been left ruined and deserted — an open grave. Bodies lie in the dirt streets or sprawled in rooms and courtyards of the deserted villas, preserved at the moment of death in a modern Middle East version of the disaster which struck Pompeii.

DAILY TELEGRAPH (MARCH 22, 1988)

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The Kurdish-populated town of Halabja, which once had a thriving population of 70,000 is located in Iraq's Sulaimaniya province, some 260 kms northeast of Baghdad. The Darbandikhan lake and its dam which supply electric power to the Iraqi capital are a few kilometers west of the town. Towards the east a bare 16 Kms lies the Iran- Iraq border, and the Halabja region forms part of an arable and green tract in largely rugged Kurdistan. A thick forest belt covers much of its vicinity and Halabja residents are mostly farmers while some others are engaged in husbandry in the rich pastures which provide excellent fodder for their sheep and cattle.





Iranian troops gained full control of the Kurdish town of Halabja in Iraq's Sulaimaniya province in major military operations code-named 'Val-fajr-10' in March, 1988.

Since a great number of the 70,000 Kurdish people of Halabja who have a long record of struggle against Iraq's central government, did not abandon their homes and instead went about their daily work alongside Iranian forces, the Iraqi air force carried out an extensive chemical bombing of the town and its nearby villages which lasted 48 hours. As a result 5,000 of the innocent people of Halabja lost their lives and over 7,000 more were maimed. Thus, March 17 and 18, 1988 earned an eternal place in the 'dark pages' of human history.

Inhabitants of Halabja are the only people being so ruthlessly massacred by their own forces in a war between two countries. The corpses of thousands of women, children and men lying here and there in the city streets and inside homes, remind one of the 'Sabra and Chatila' Palestinian refugee camps and evoke memories of the U.S. atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

The green environment in Halabja turned bleak as waves of Iraqi warplanes in their attacks used 'Hydrogen cyanide' gas which suffocate and kill man in less than a minute. They also extensively deployed 'mustard' and 'nerve' gases.

The following snaps of Halabja taken by Iranian photographers depict scenes from a crime which even Hitler did not commit.

IRAN PHOTO FOUNDATION



**These are not scenes from the Hiroshima atomic bombing nor snaps
from Hitler's crimes in the German town of Dachau. What you see here
are scenes from Halabja, a Kurdish city in Iraq subjected to the Iraqi
regime's chemical bombings.**

JEUNE AFRIQUE (APRIL 6, 1988)



























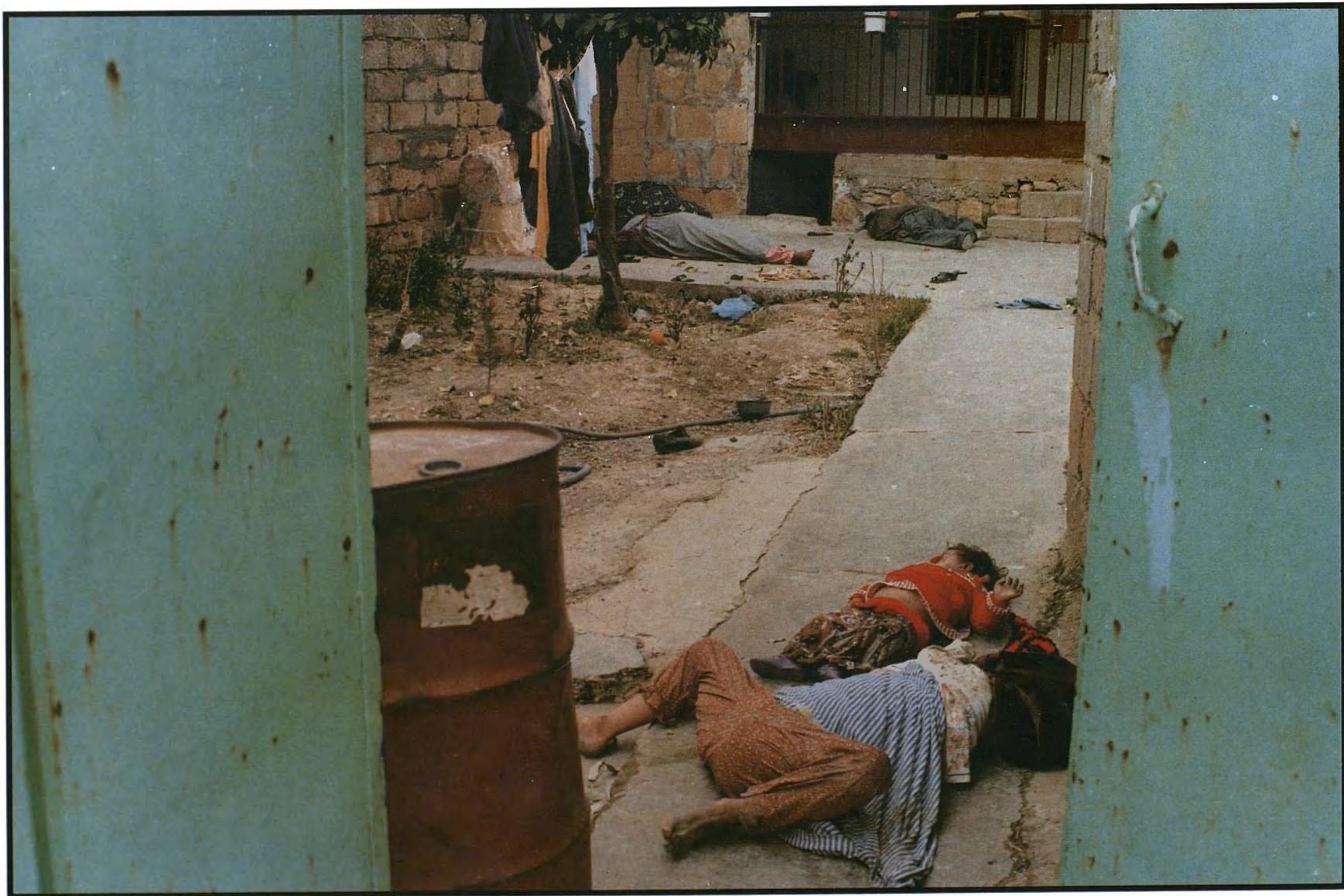


































MAYOR OF NAGASAKI (MARCH 25, 1988):

The news of the horrid chemical bombing made me and all the people of Nagasaki highly depressed and concerned. We strongly condemn use of these lethal weapons.













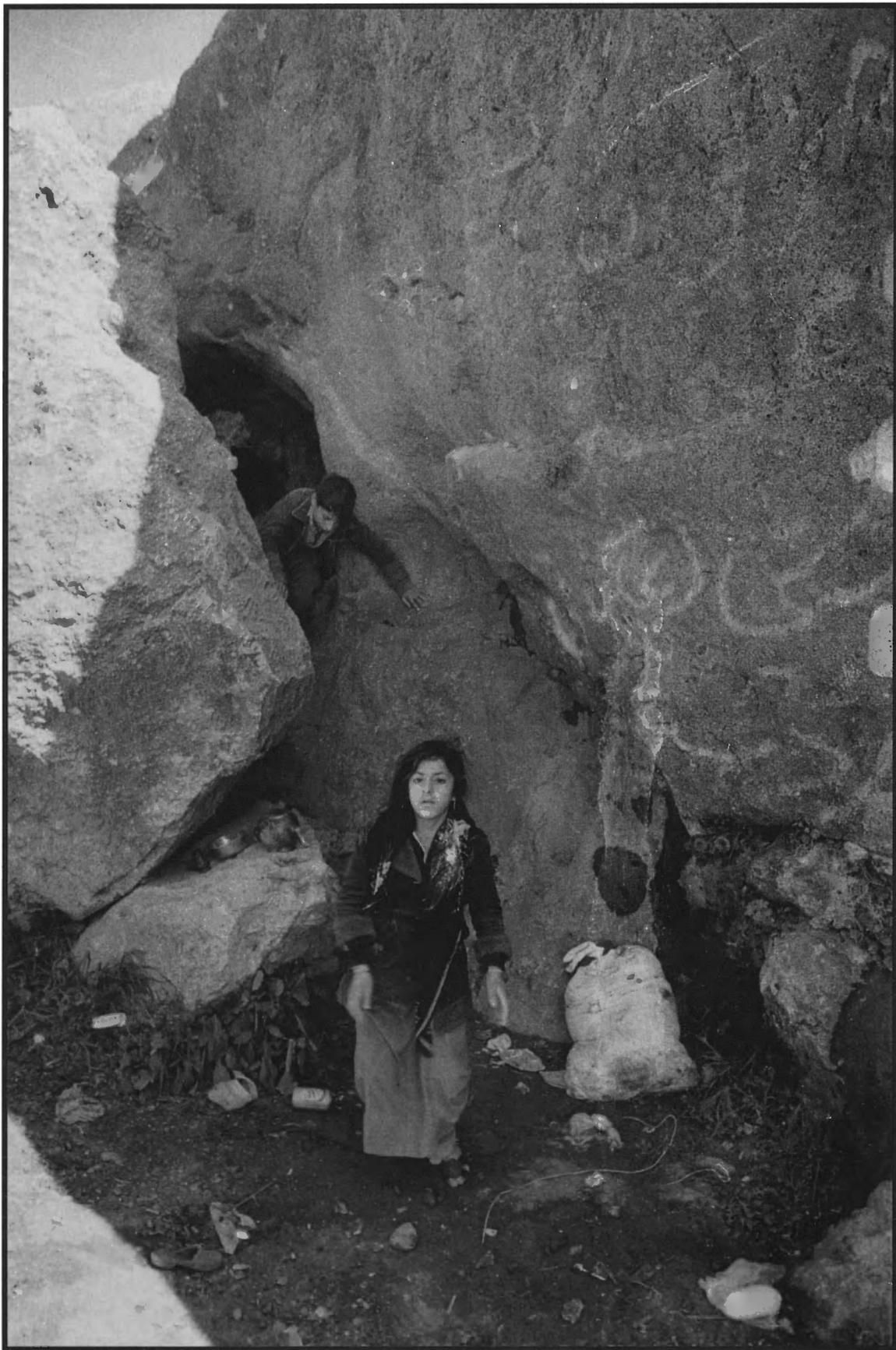


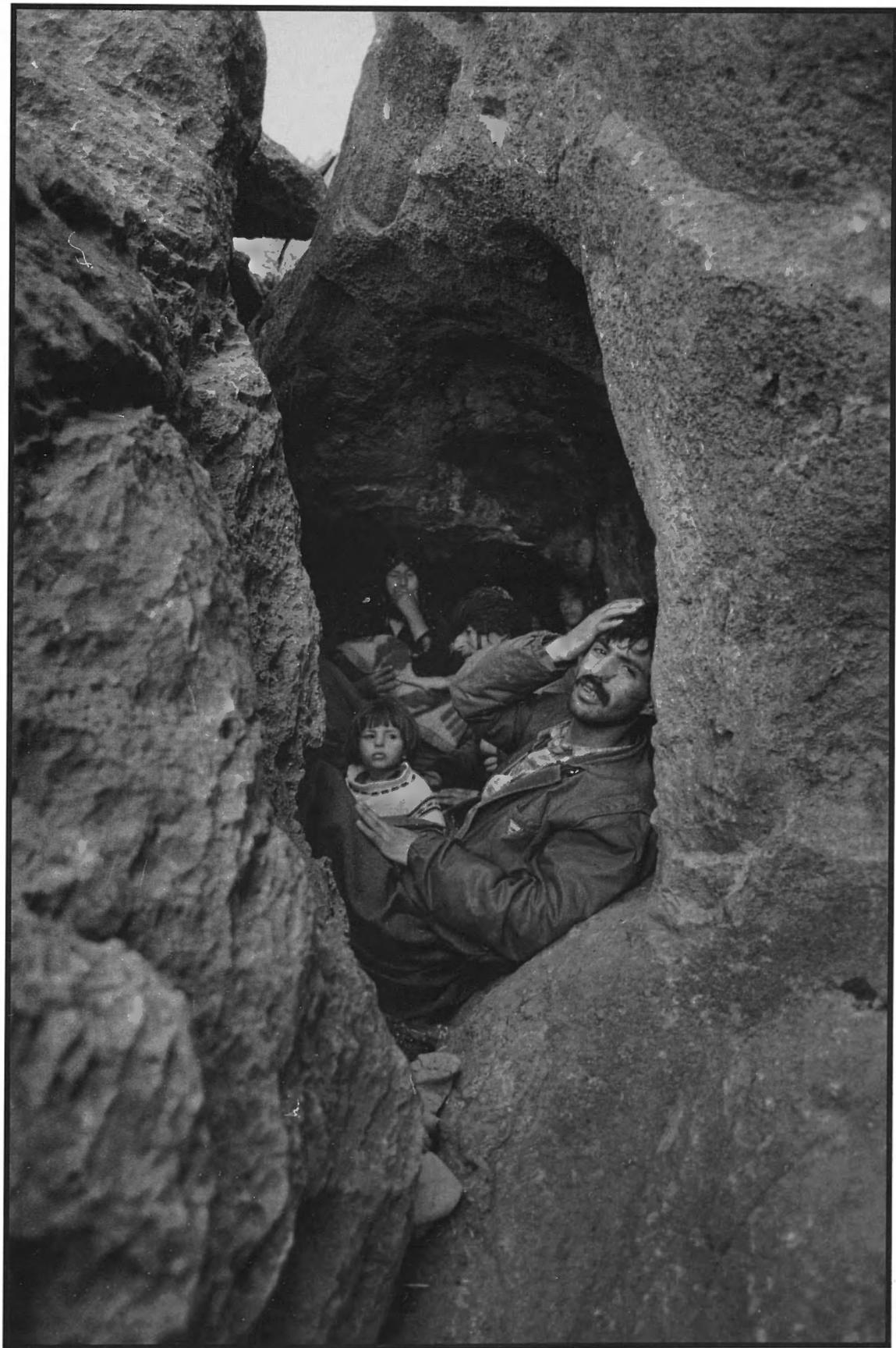


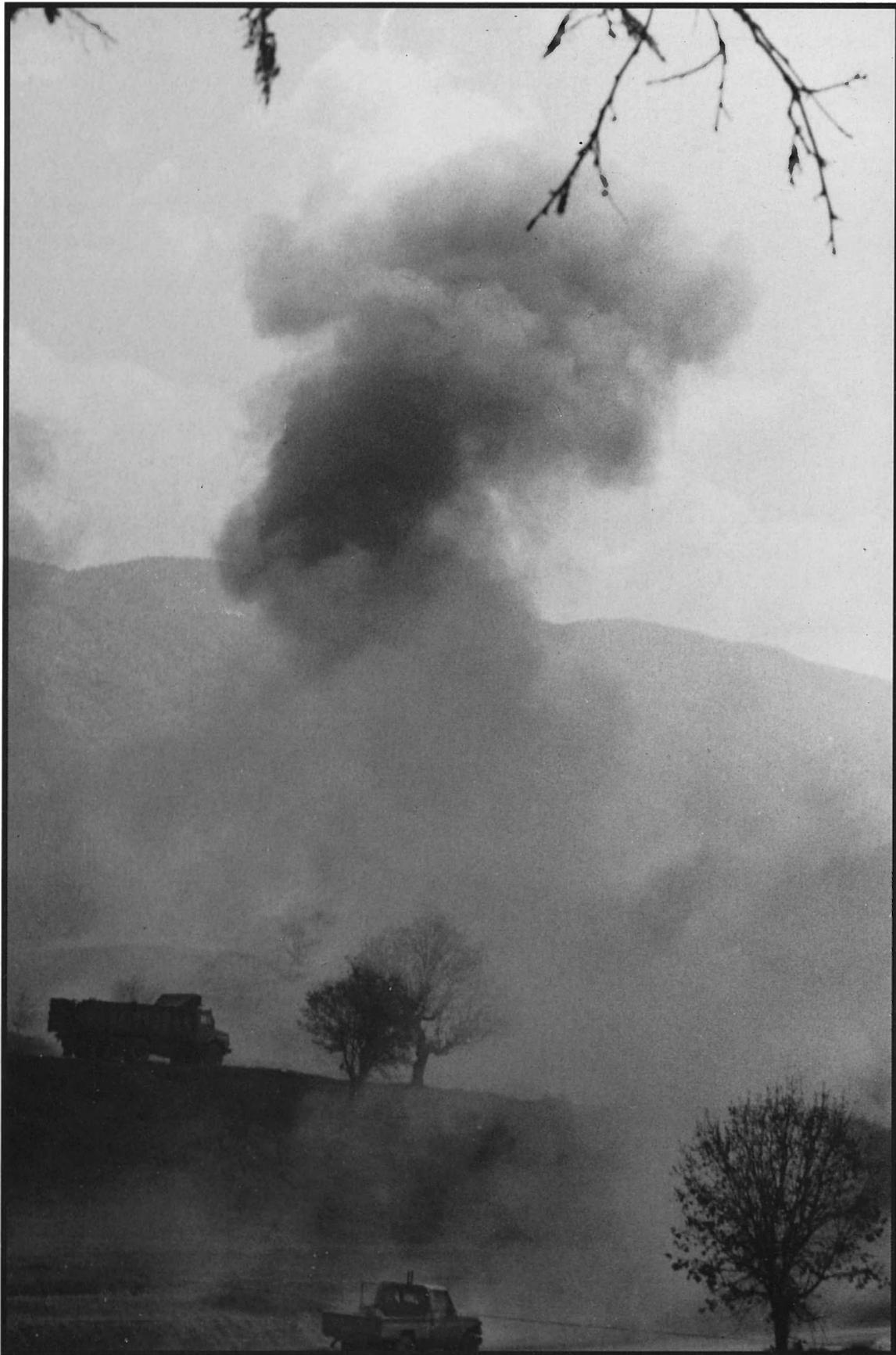


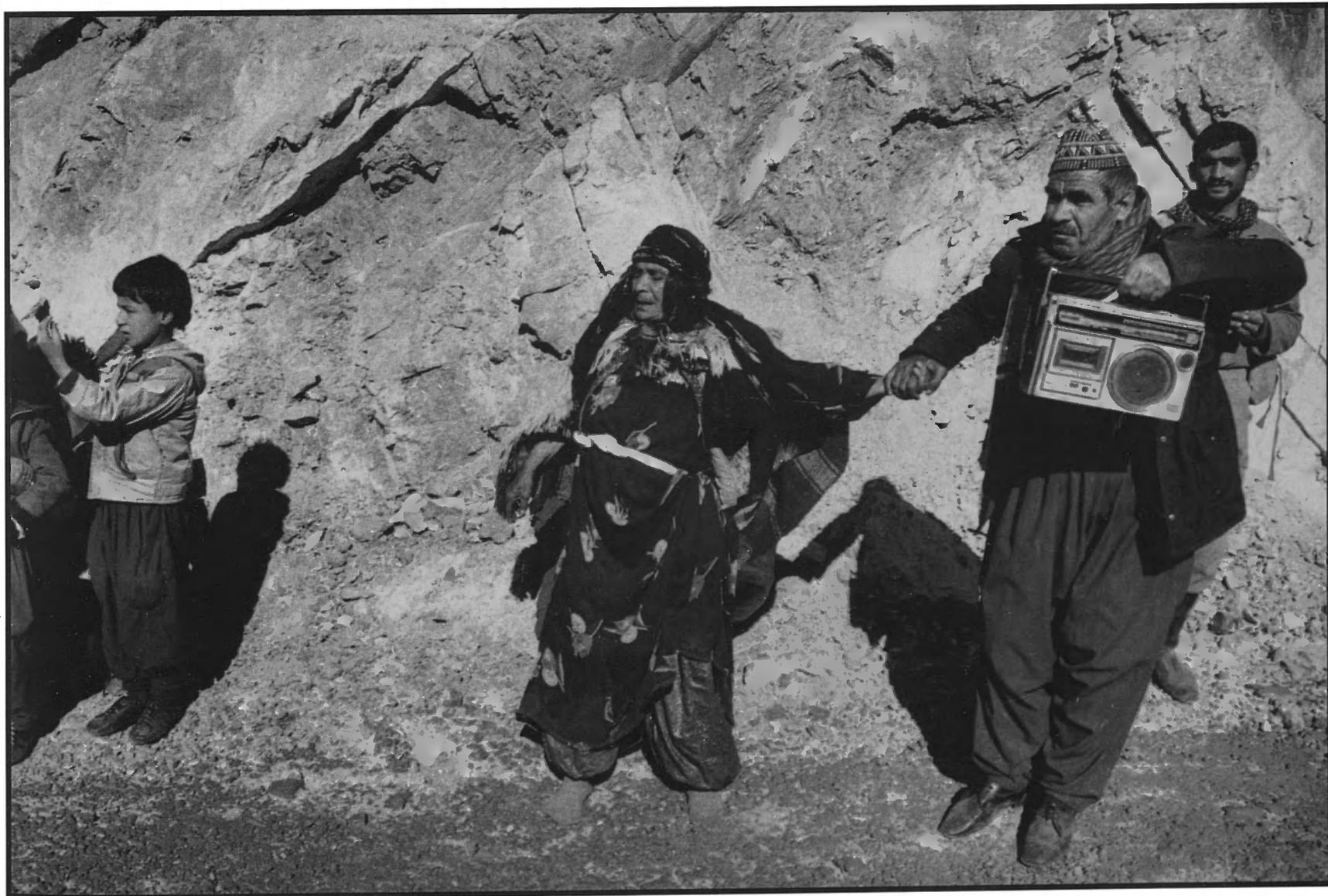
















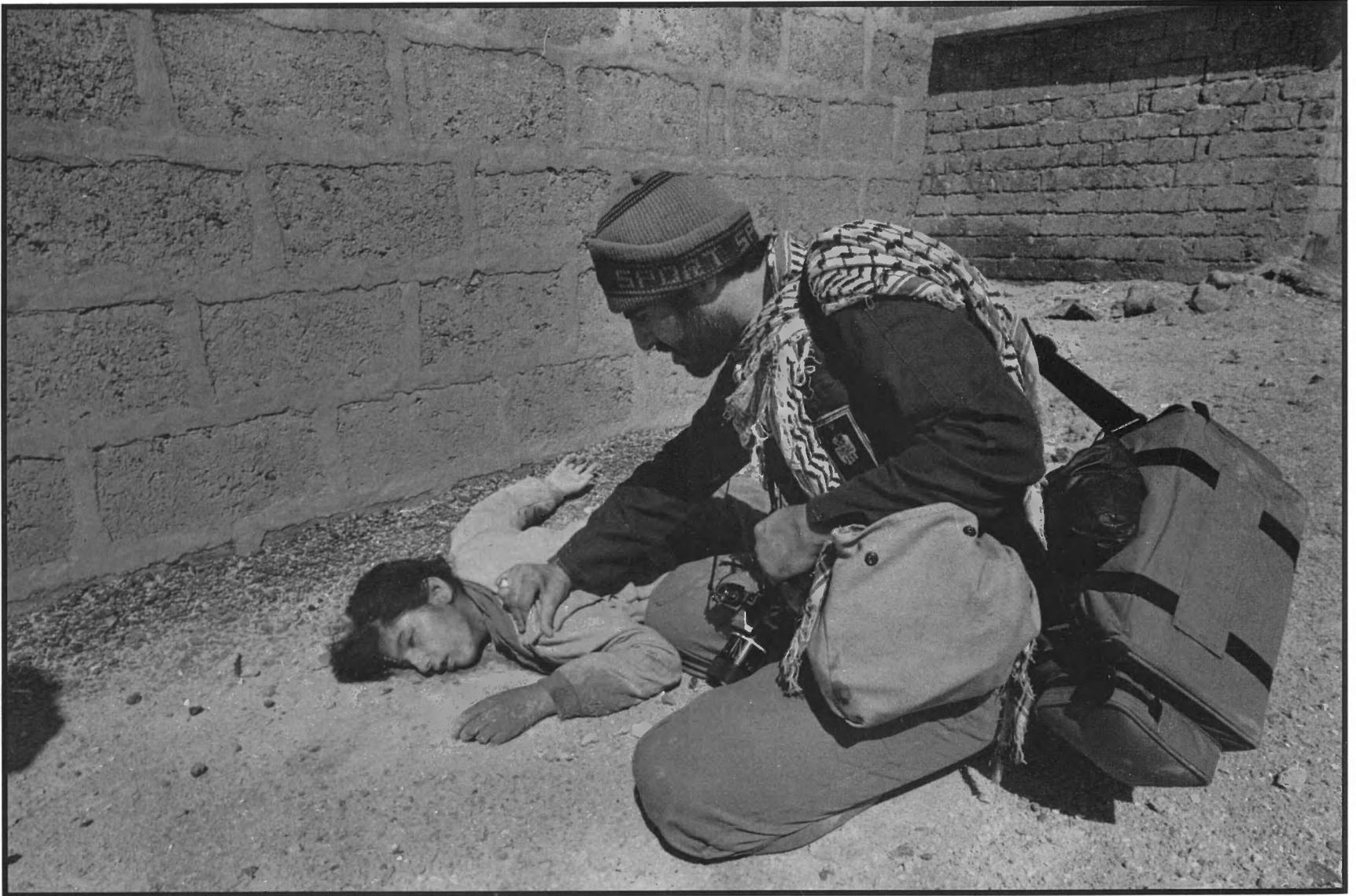


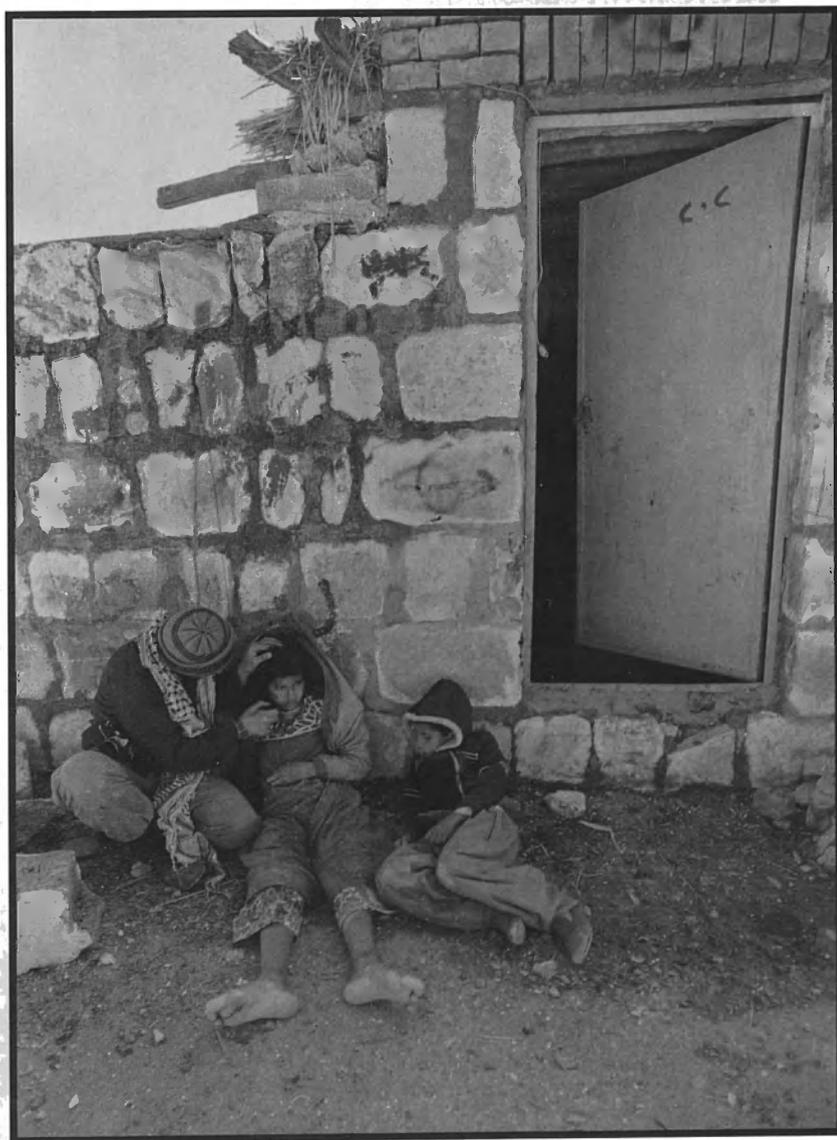
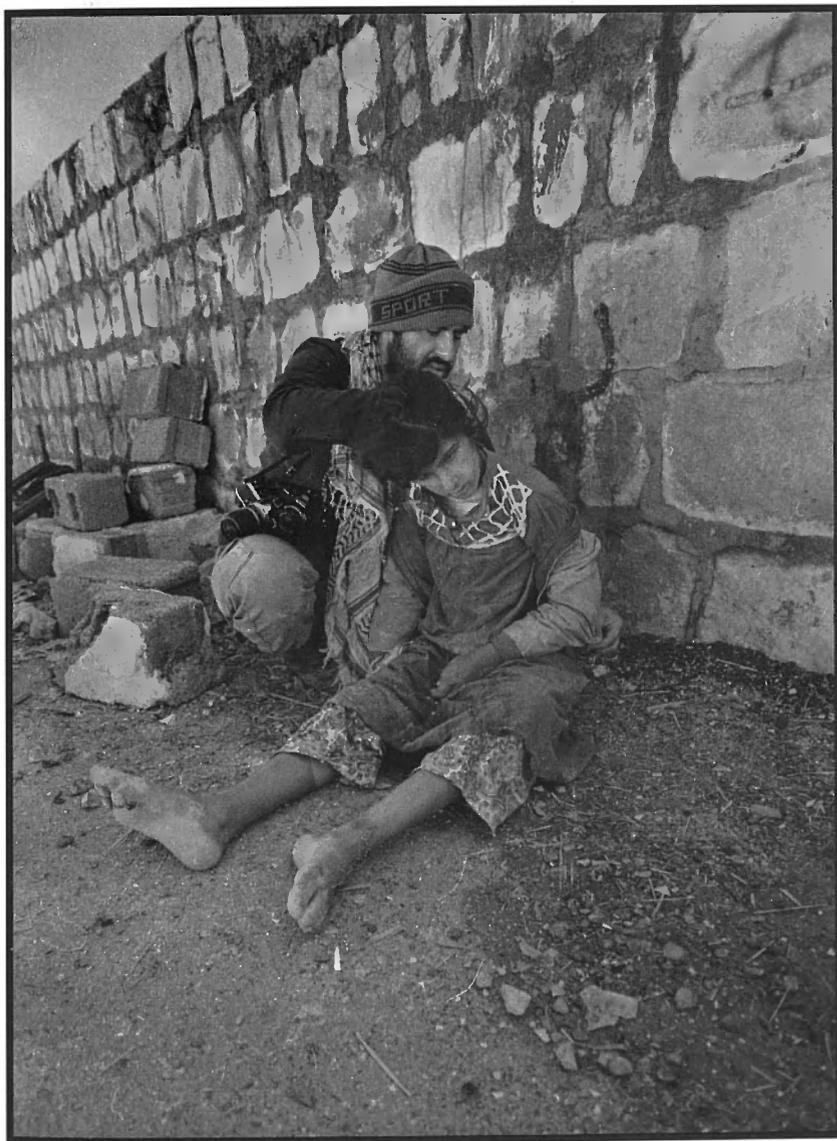
It was noon, March 17, 1988. A group of Iranian reporters were busy filing reports around Halabja in the Valfajr-10 operational region in northern Iraq, when suddenly the area echoed with the sound of bombing. although faint compared to the deafening blasts of exploding TNT. They immediately set off for Halabja on foot and an hour later after a few kilometers trek reached the hapless town.

The sight which greeted their eyes was ghastly. Not the normal scenes which accompany bombardment like collapsed houses, blood-spattered bodies or disjointed limbs of victims but it was a brazenly cruel sight of defenceless civilians, dead and stiff like statues caught in different bodily postures, with no signs of wounds or blood on their lifeless bodies.

The victims included men, women and children of different age groups and frozen stiff in the very act they were busy at the moment or trying to flee the chemical smog. The whole town seemed polluted with a repugnant odour engulfing the atmosphere.

As reporters they were placed in a dilemma — especially as war reporters are — should they rush to help those who are still breathing, or should shoot pictures and file reports?

























ENGLAND: THE BBC QUOTING SUNDAY TELEGRAPH'S NORMAN KIRKAM (MARCH 26, 1988):

I have no doubt that a considerable number of people have been killed in Halabja town and I am confident the Iraqis have done this.

THE MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC DIGEST (MARCH 29, 1988):

The chemical attack on Halabja is the most horrifying crime in Iraq's war against Iran. By this act, Baghdad revealed the extent of its concern over the Kurdistan developments.

THE BBC (MARCH 26, 1988):

Two Belgian and Dutch physicians from the World Health Organisation (WHO), known as "physicians without frontiers" and a chemical substances expert unanimously confirmed that chemical weapons have been used against civilians in Halabja and its surrounding areas.

REUTERS (MARCH 22, 1988):

Reporters interviewed survivors of the (Halabja) incident with symptoms of poison gases evident on their bodies, including those with blisters and suffering from respiratory problems.

The charges brought against Iraq on deployment of chemical weapons will probably provoke a new round of international opposition against the Iraqi government.

ITALY: CORRESPONDENT OF 'IL GIORNALE' (MARCH 27, 1988):

The crime the Iraqi regime committed in Halabja was 'thoroughly brutal' and although I have visited sites of many incidents around the world, I have never seen such a crime throughout my life-span.

'CORRIERE DELLA SERA' (MARCH 28, 1988):

Traces remaining on the (chemical) victims' bodies indicate that (Halabja) townspeople have lost their lives because of 'ypret' and cyanide gases.

'IL GIORNALE' (MARCH 28, 1988):

Halabja resembles a ghost town struck by a neutron bomb, and Iraq's chemical attacks still continue on other Kurdish-populated villages.

FRANCE: LE NOUVELLE OBSERVATEUR (MARCH 25, 1988):

This time Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq did not hesitate to use even chemical weapons against his own people in Halabja and this is something monstrous and unprecedented anywhere in the world... If we French are supposed to become an accomplice in these bestialities, we would better forget for ever the commemoration of the French Revolution's bicentenary.

LE NOUVELLE OBSERVATEUR (APRIL 1, 1988):

According to international law, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's order to chemically bomb the Kurdish populated areas in his country as well as positions of Iranian troops is a 'war crime'... Today, the Baghdad rulers seem to be heedless even of this (Geneva) convention... during the second world war. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, despite possessing substantial chemical stocks, did not dare to use them even under most pressing circumstances.

JEUNE AFRIQUE (MARCH 30, 1988):

The Iraqi regime after losing these areas (Halabja and several other towns and villages in Sulaimaniya province) issued orders for their chemical bombardments. It dropped suffocating gases even over Iraqi deserters fleeing towards Iranian borders.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (APRIL 1, 1988):

Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan captured by Iran and twice chemically bombed by Iraq on March 17 and 18 seems like a ghost town. Static and still in a deep slumber... You would feel the city is haunted by evil spirits, with the only signs of animation being the shrapnels landing here and there in its vicinity...

LIBERATION (APRIL 1, 1988):

Baghdad's Baathist regime has openly admitted its resorting to chemical warfare which has thrown thousands of Kurdish people into the jaws of a sudden and horrific death. Iraq has also assumed responsibility for future possible massacres through deployment of these (chemical) weapons.

U.S.A.: NEW YORK TIMES (MARCH 26, 1988):

The deed is in every sense a war crime. It is compounded by Iraq's lame official denials and unofficial alibis for using a dastardly weapon. Iraq signed in 1931 (accord banning toxic use), and now it violates both letter and spirit of the treaty.

NEW YORK TIMES. (MARCH 28, 1988):

The U.S. does not want Iran to win the war. But Baghdad should know that if it expects continued support from west and east, it should halt its war crimes.

TIME (APRIL 4, 1988):

Families died together in their homes or in cars. The dead were among the hundreds and possibly thousands of victims of one of the worst chemical warfare attacks since world war I.

CBS (MARCH 23, 1988):

This is the first evidence that chemical gases have been deployed against the civilian population. Although Iraq has been using toxic gases against Iranian troops since the last five years the acts received only mild protests.

WALL STREET JOURNAL (MARCH 31, 1988):

Halabja stands as a reminder that treaties, protocols, and conventions are unlikely to ever restrain a regime such as Iraq's. Let those who tell us to take comfort in the verification procedures of the newest arms control pact, the INF accord, go take a look at the corpses at Halabja.

**WEST
GERMANY:**

RADIO COLOGNE (MARCH 29, 1988):

... but since world war one chemical weapons have never been deployed in such an unmanly and barbaric manner...

... According to humanitarian organisations Iraqi armed forces attacked some 200 Kurdish villages in northern Iraq with chemical bombs last year.

TURKEY:

THE CORRESPONDENT OF 'GUNES' (APRIL 1988):

The Iraqi Baathist regime committed the biggest massacre of the century... as a human being, I was deeply ashamed when I passed the lifeless alleys and streets of the ghost town.

THE CORRESPONDENT OF 'SABAH' (MARCH 29, 1988):

Our hands trembled when we tried to focus the camera on the heart-rending scenes, because these are not the scenes that everyone can easily witness. Iraqi pilots who by their toxic bombardment piled up the town's alleys and streets with corpses of Iraqi women and children, were hailed by their commanders as war heroes on return. The logic of the Iraqi regime in Halabja was: "Those who are not with us should be with no one else." And as a result thousands of Iraqi women and children died by mustard, cyanide and nerve gases.

'MILLI GAZETE' (MARCH 31, 1988):

Suppose if Iranians had committed such a massacre, heads of big powers and especially international circles would have been making a big hue and cry, but since the Iraqi regime is the culprit these circles have kept an ominous silence.

BELGIAN RADIO COMMENTARY (MARCH 24, 1988):

The chemical massacre of Halabja people by the Iraqi regime evokes memories of Nazi 'Gas chambers in open space.' Although the plants manufacturing chemical weapons are on Iraqi soil, but once again the main responsibility lies on the west.

RADIO AUSTRALIA (MARCH 30, 1988):

Evidences abound showing that Iraq is lying. This is not the first time Iraq has deployed chemical weapons when the situation in the war fronts gets critical. Even the U.S. which backs Iraq in the (Persian) Gulf war says it has access to independent evidences confirming Iraqi use of toxic gases in Halabja.

FINNISH T.V. (MARCH 25, 1988):

Iraq has once again used chemical weapons in its war against Iran, and this time the number of victims, mostly women and children, is unprecedented in the history of chemical wars.

YUGOSLAVIA: 'OSLOBODJENIE' (MARCH 30, 1988):

Iraq, indirectly confirmed its deployment of chemical weapons by saying it has the right to use every possible means to defend itself. This incident proves the earlier information that Iraq has used chemical weapons on its own soil in the past.

SPAIN: 'EL PAIS' (MARCH 26, 1988):

Thousands of Kurds injured in Iraq's chemical bombings of Halabja are facing eventual death.

SWISS T.V. NEWS (MARCH 23, 1988):

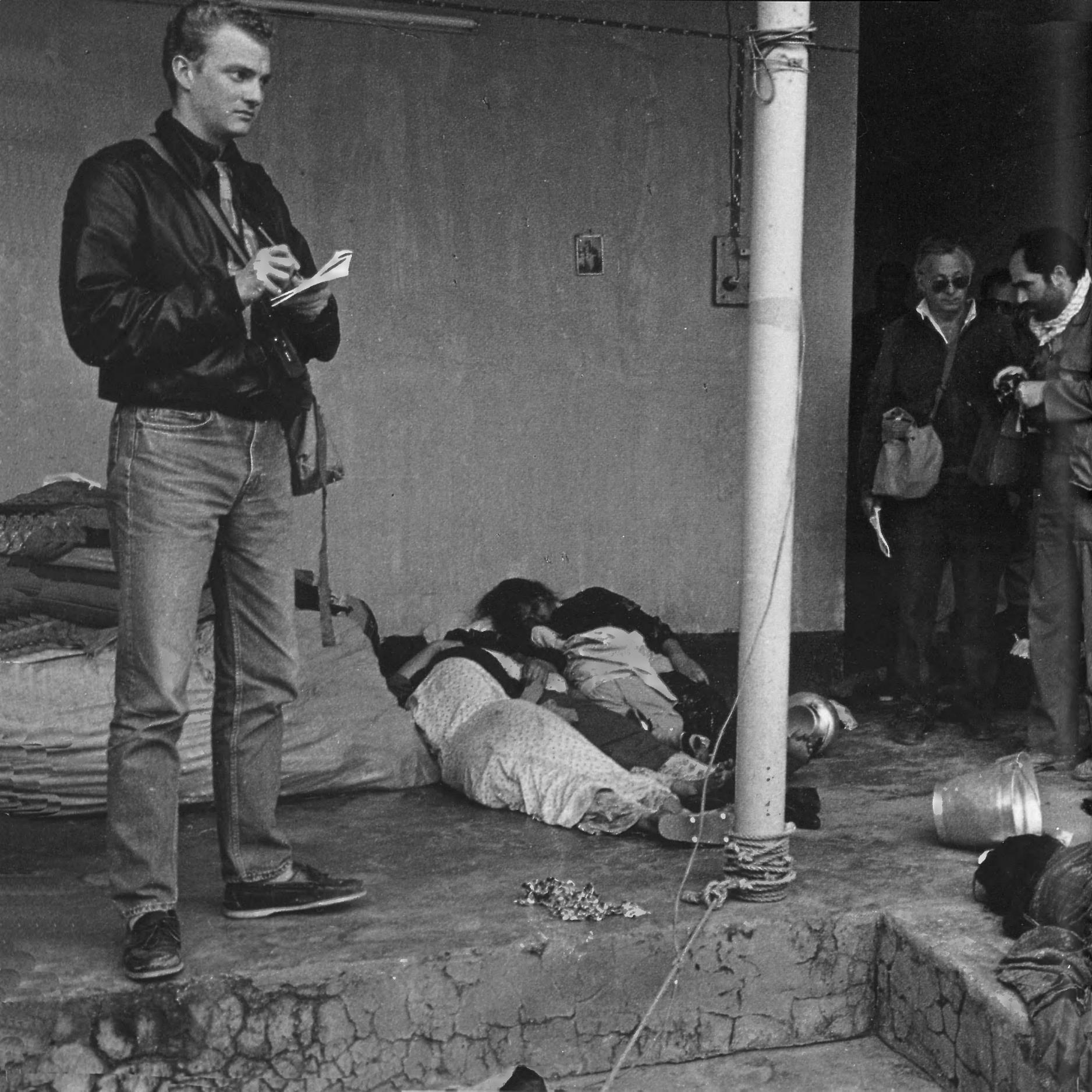
Over 5,000 people were massacred in Halabja during the Iraqi chemical bombardment... Iraq has been condemned by the United Nations for its deployment of toxic gases. But the condemnation has not prevented their (chemical weapons) further use.

DUTCH T.V. NEWS (MARCH 25, 1988):

Iraq has once again used chemical weapons and this time, it has deployed lethal cyanide gas in addition to mustard and nerve gases against defenceless civilians. The world has never witnessed a similar act...

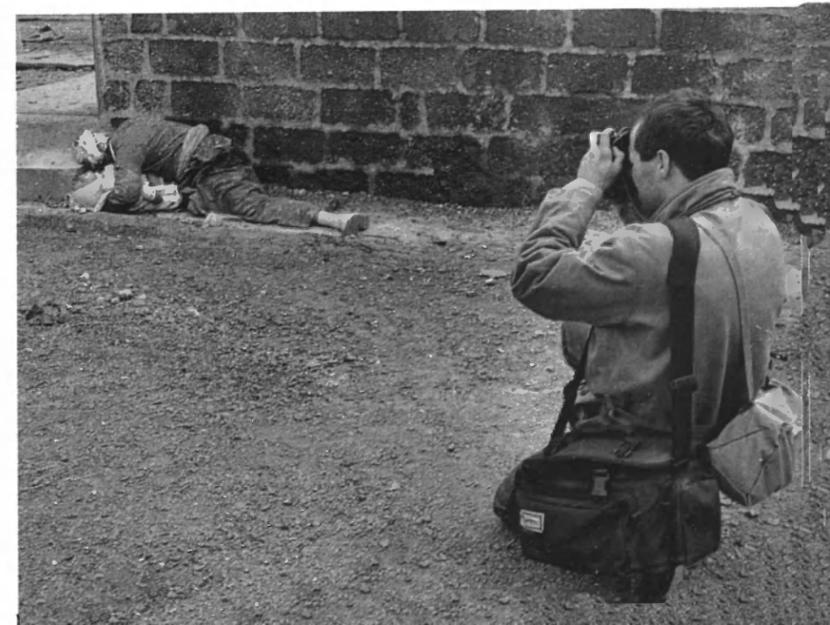
ITALY'S 'IL GIORNO' (MARCH 30, 1988):

Halabja has been assured an eternal place in history, however, the world's mute silence vis-a-vis the inhuman crime is totally unacceptable... the daylight massacre in Halabja was perpetrated without warning ... and the Iraqi regime resorted to this 'insane crime' under the pretext that some of them (Iraqi Kurds) were cooperating with Iran ... no justification can be offered for such a crime.

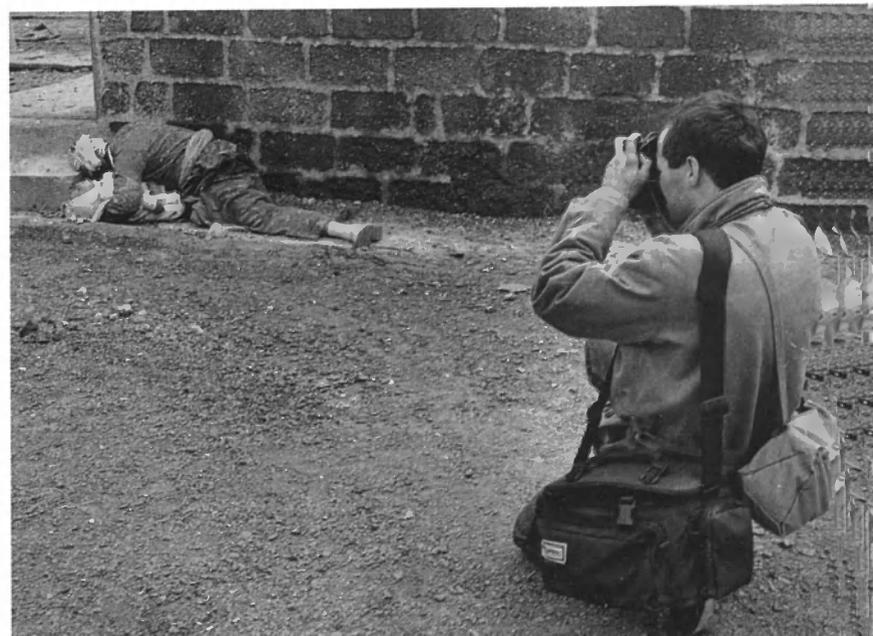






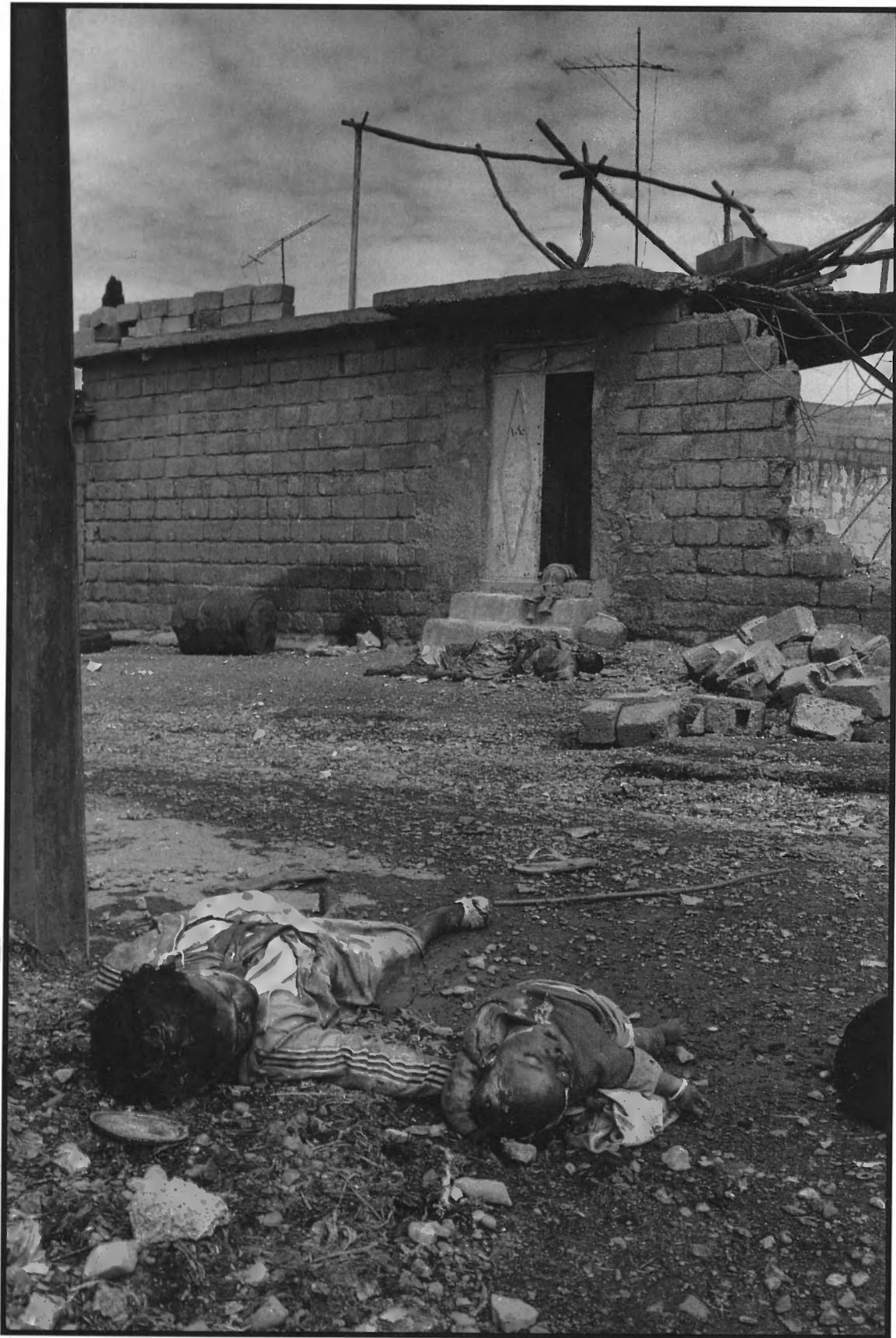


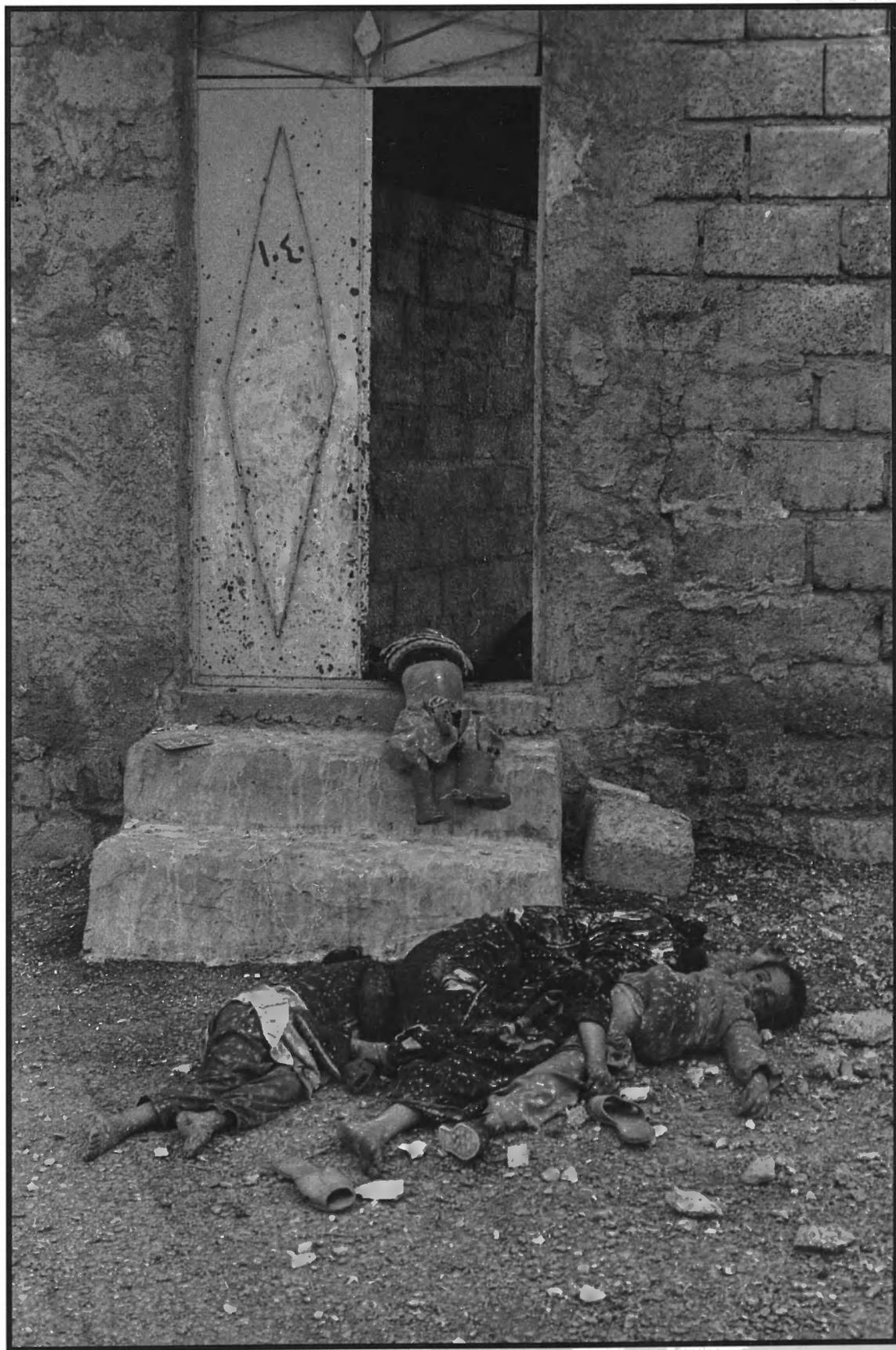














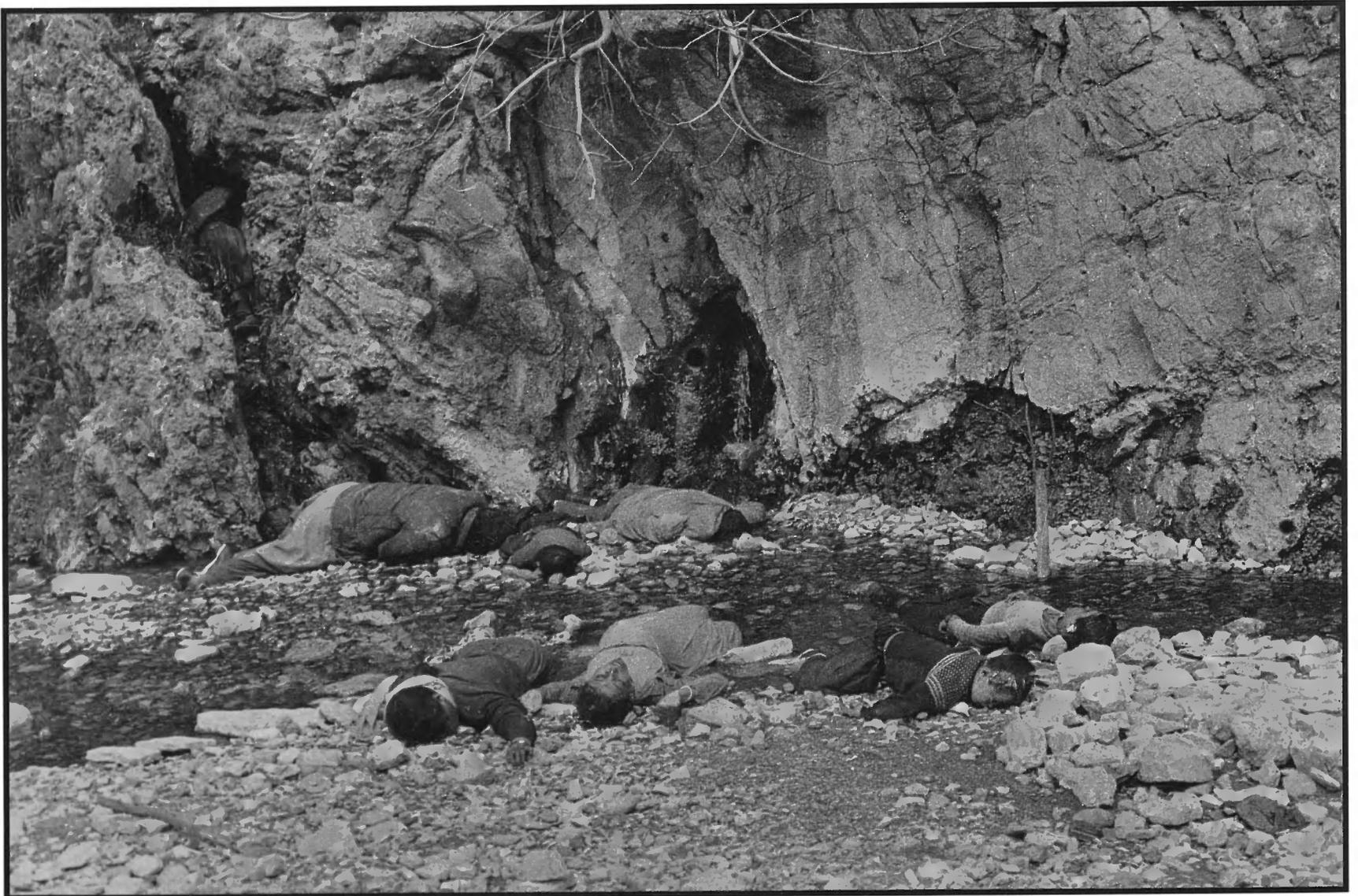












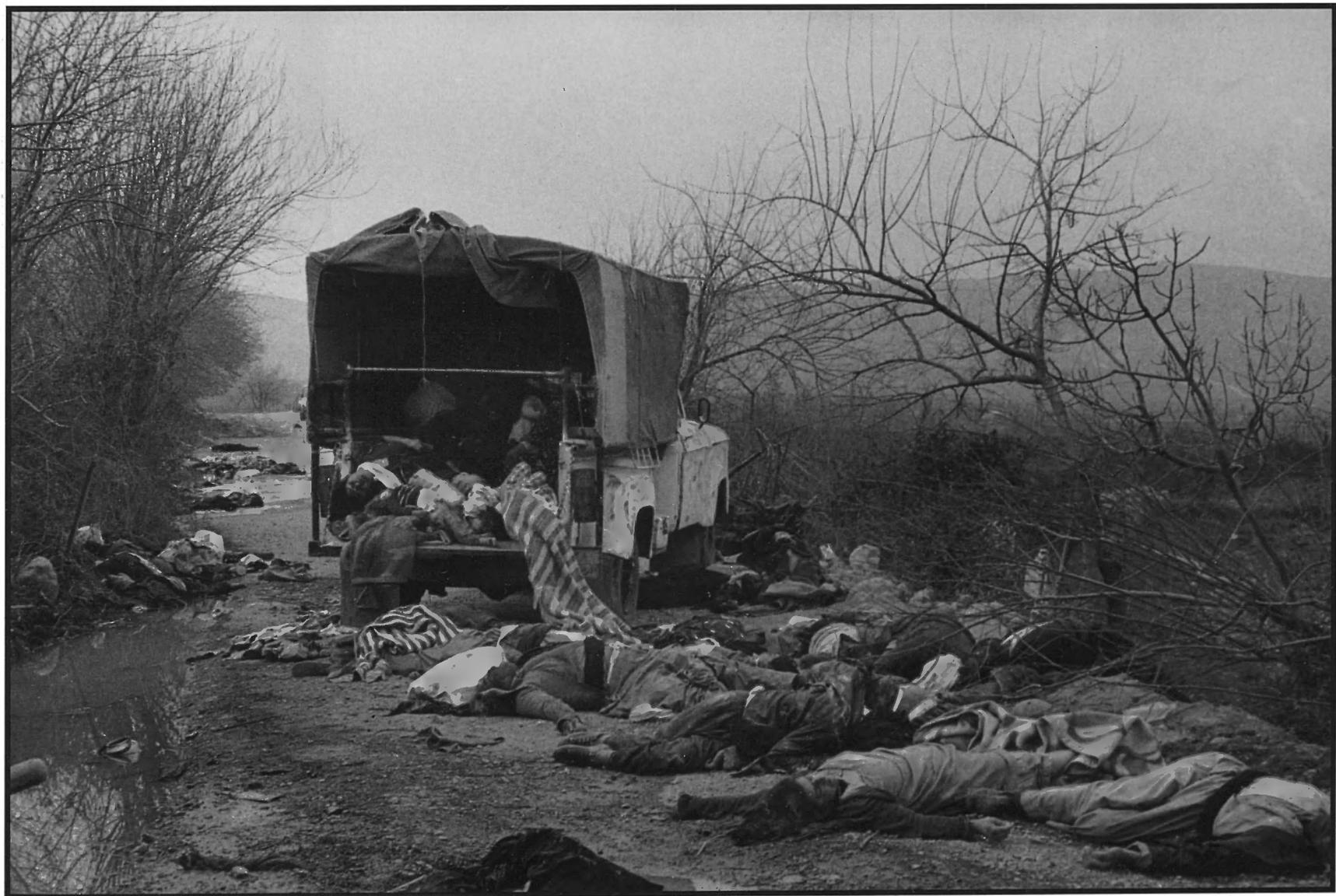


















ASSOCIATION OF 'PHYSICIANS WITHOUT FRONTIERS' (MARCH 30, 1988):

The town of Halabja... was bombed like villages near Sulaimaniya ... most of the victims immediately lost their lives while busy in their routine daily works or trying to escape the region. The traces on their bodies are similar to the effects caused by some types of toxic gases, especially cyanide.

BELGIAN TOXICOLOGIST AND DIRECTOR OF UNIDO PROJECTS PROF. HEYNDRIKX

(MARCH 27, 1988):

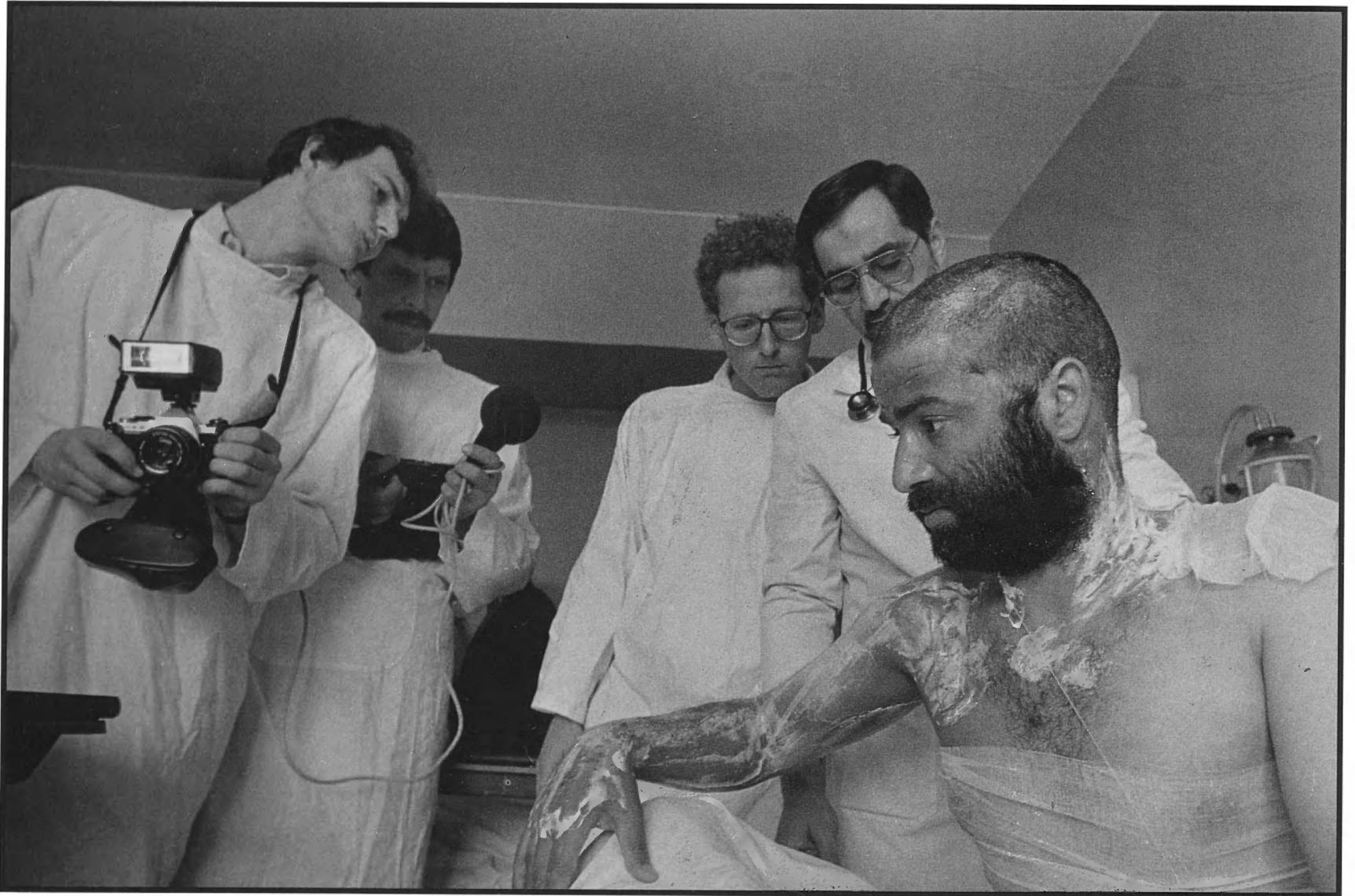
Now that the catastrophe has occurred, every one is hectic and busy, whereas we had warned four years ago that they (the Iraqis) were busy combining 'mustard' and 'yellow rain' poison gases and were engaged in producing a combination of these two with cyanide over the past three years. The devil must have complete control over the soul of a man who uses such satanic weapons.

I explicitly state that I personally witnessed an Iraqi Mig dropping chemical bombs. The (bomb) shells had clear markings of 'made in Spain' but filled with lethal substances by the Iraqis.

DR. DEMILLIANO OF THE ASSOCIATION OF 'PHYSICIANS WITHOUT FRONTIERS'

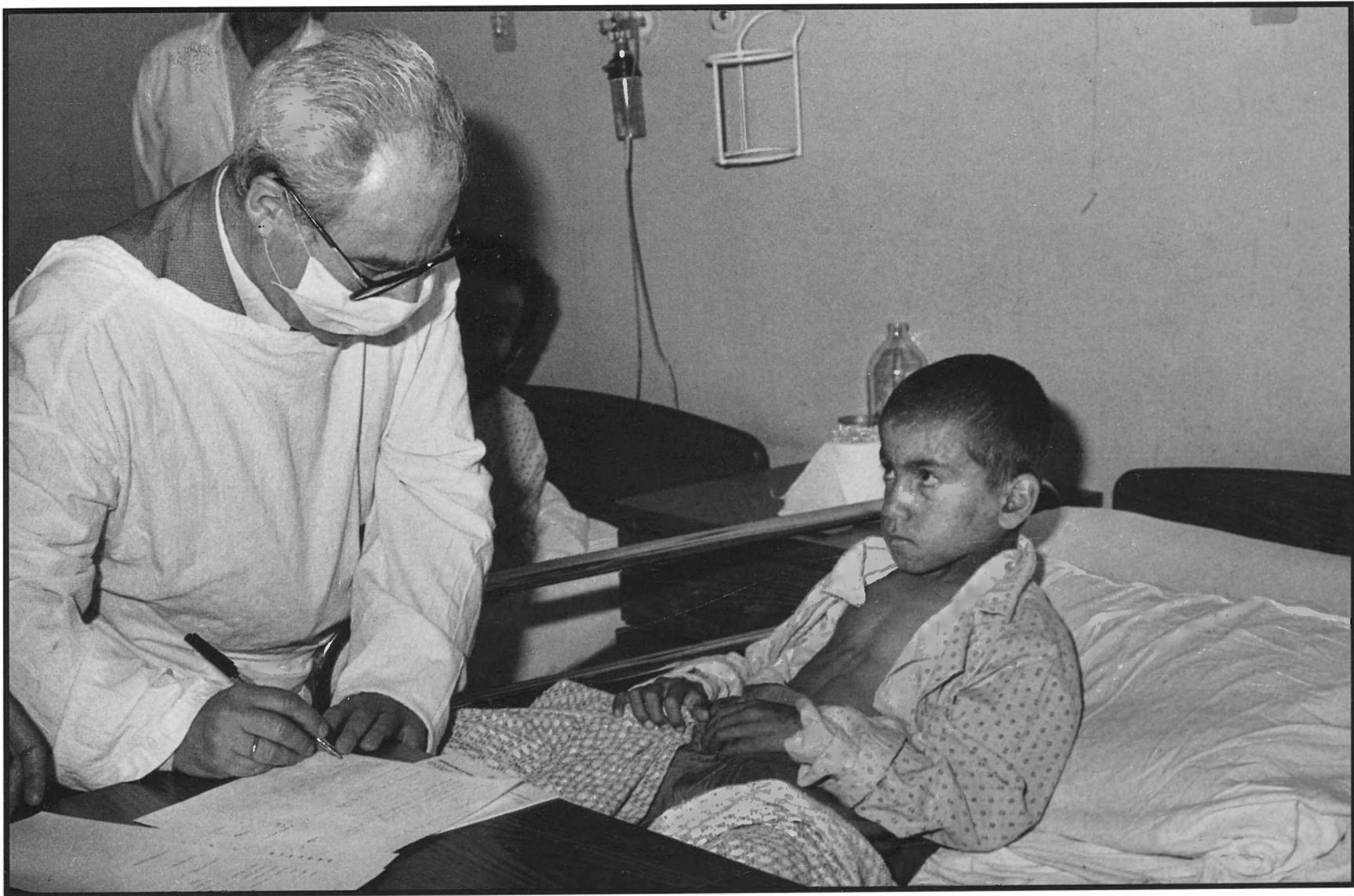
(MARCH 27, 1988):

Iraqi use of chemical weapons which violates all international laws in this regard, once again drew the world's attention to this point that efforts should be intensified to effectively prevent the use of such lethal weapons.

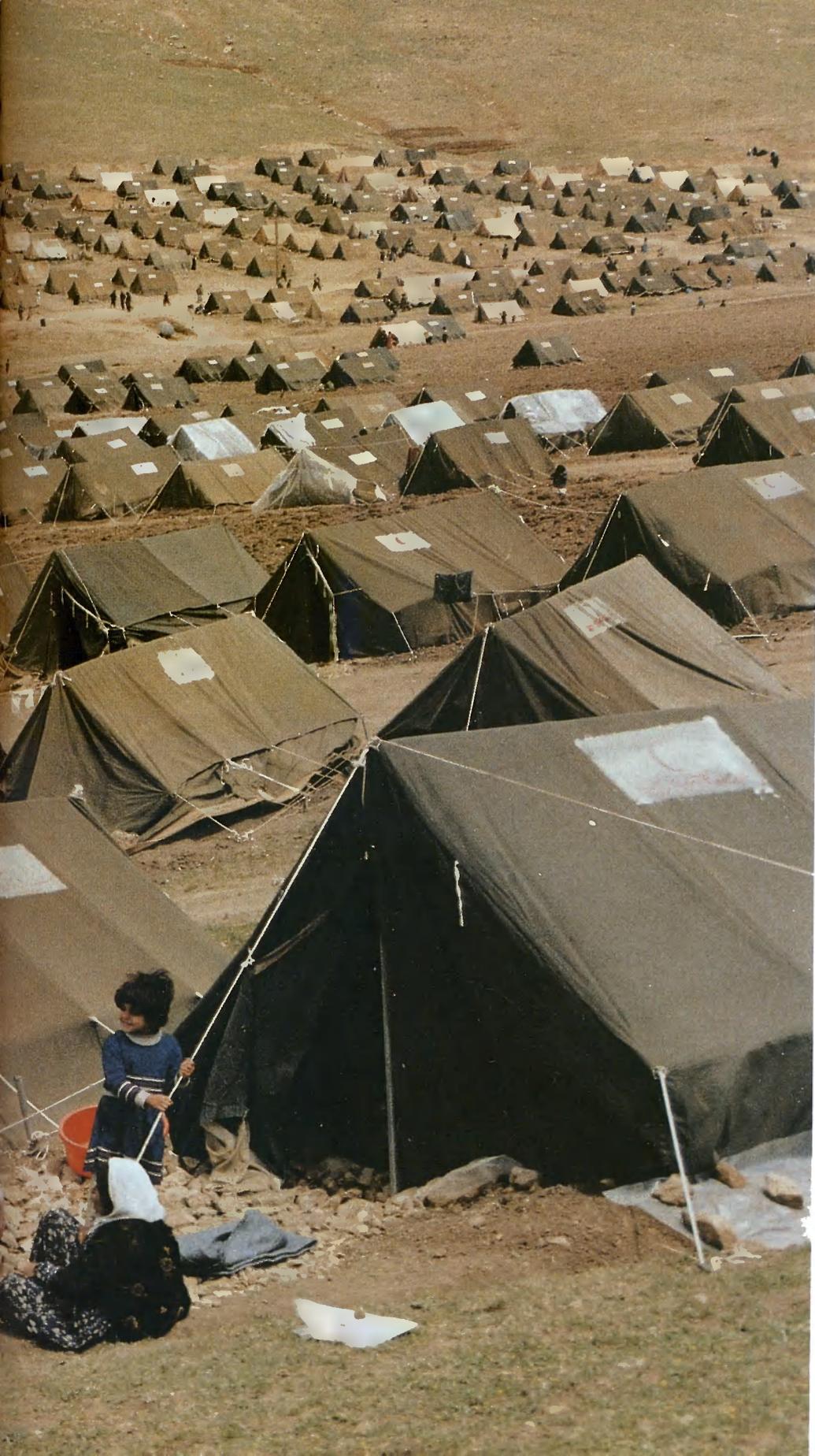






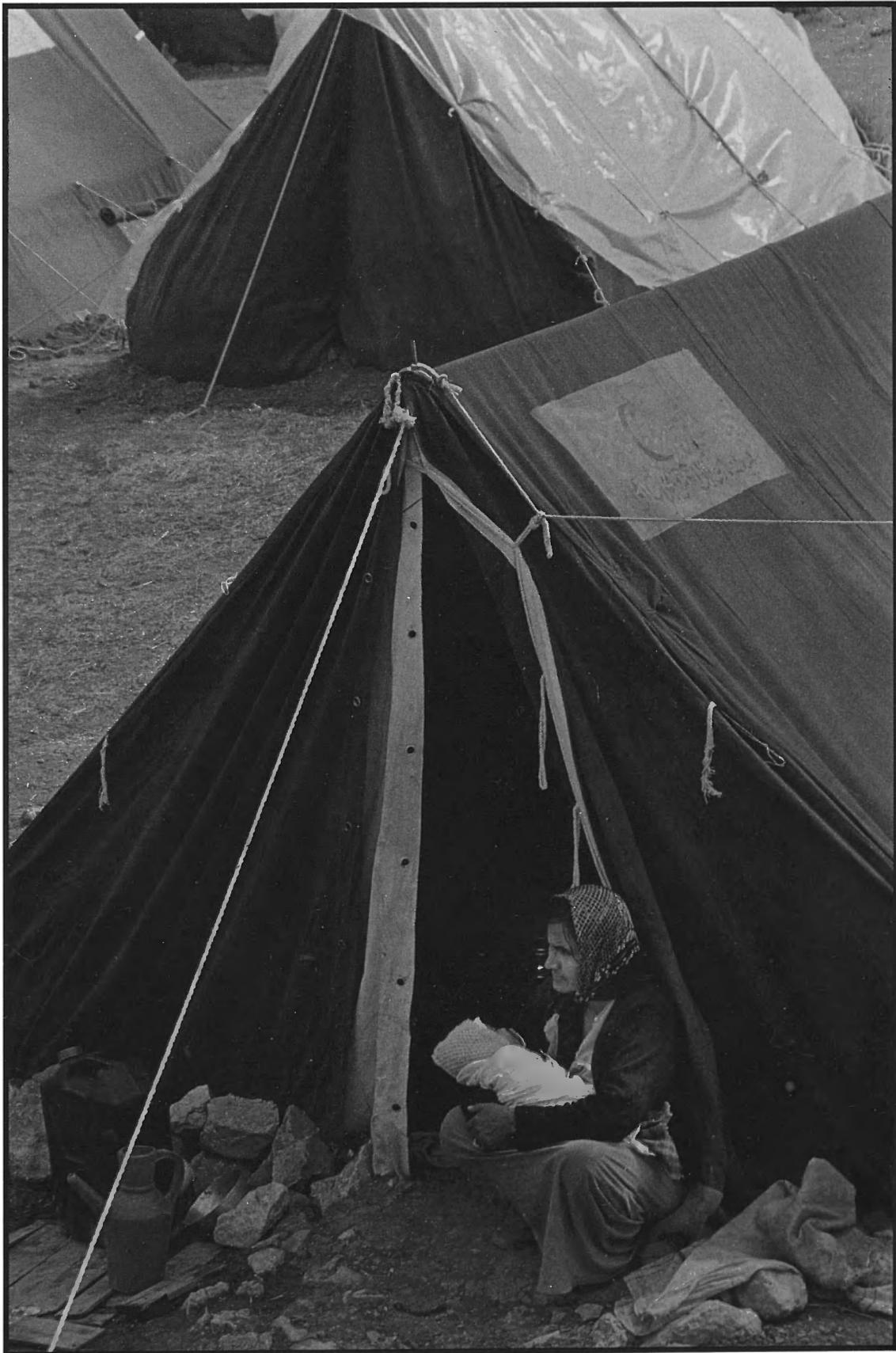


















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ITALIAN HISTOLOGIST, PROF. BUSINCO:

I propose March 18, 1988, that is the day Iraq launched its chemical attack on Halabja, be named the 'International day of campaign against chemical arms.'

