DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ALL VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WARFARE

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Tehran Peace Museum
Tehran, Iran

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Remembrance: Introductory Remarks – a time for reflection

- Today we are marking an anniversary tinged with sadness and pain.
- It is a day when we remember the victims and survivors of chemical warfare throughout the world.
- It is a day when we remember them here in Iran, a country which, during a devastating part of its history, bore the brunt of a chemical weapons onslaught.
- Exactly 100 years ago this month – during World War One – is when the first gas attack took place at Ypres in Belgium.
- And although much has been done by organizations such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations, chemical weapons are still being used today.
- Stockpiles of these weapons of mass destruction still exist.
- Now – today – in a country not far from here – we again hear disturbing reports that chlorine gas continues to be used against civilians.
- This needs to end.
- We need to increase our efforts to eliminate chemical weapons from the world.

How Do We Do This?

- Policymakers, governments and members of organizations such as the OPCW are working hard to achieve the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.
- But we – you and I here today – can all play our part in educating ourselves and raising awareness.

- And it is here that I would like to turn specifically to the survivors – in Iran – of chemical weapons used during the Imposed War.
- I would like to recognize their role in helping to remind us – every day – of the consequences of chemical weapons.
- Many of these brave women and men are sitting here among us today.
- We not only have soldiers who were scarred by chemical weapons.
- We also have women and ordinary civilians who were also exposed to the attacks.
- We need to listen to them.
- And in so doing, “feel” differently – and think differently – when the drums of war begin to roll.

A Living Museum

- Today we sit in a special part of Park-e Shahr. A special part of Tehran. A special part of the world.
And, as you spend a little time here in the Tehran Peace Museum, I urge you to look around.
Consider the powerful rich displays.
Be moved by the frightful history on its walls.
The photographs and charts tell you everything you need to know about the chemistry behind the weapons.
But that is only part of what you will find.
The real treasure lies in the testimonies of the survivors who still have wisdom – and learning – and experience – to impart.
Spend time talking with them. Men like these whom I know personally…
  o Hassan Hassanisadi
  o AliReza Yazdan Panah
  o Hassan Hassani Tabar
But there are at least 20 survivors present today. I would like to ask them to stand while we express our solidarity with them and their story.
After the ceremony, please introduce yourself, and make a new friend.

Unique Opportunities to Hear History for Yourself
  Let these brave and bold survivors be your guides to this special place.
  Listen to them – as I once did.
  You will hear for yourself what is different when a chemical bomb explodes.
  You will hear how the victims felt – their fear, their pain, their terror.
  You will hear about their healing.
  And how – for them – the gas attack never ended.
  You will hear about how they cope with life now – over 30 years later –with wounds still unhealed.

Moving beyond history to build a Culture of Peace
  But our purpose should not just be to learn about history.
  We need to learn about peace.
  And how we can work together.
  How we are all responsible – each and every one of us – to build a culture of peace.
  In our homes. In our communities. In our nations.
  Among our nations.
  For these same survivors who teach us history through their own eyes, will challenge us to use our new knowledge to consider alternatives to conflict and war.
  You will probably be surprised – as I once was – to learn that these survivors hold no hate in their hearts.
  No desire for vengeance.
  Nor retribution.
• They have seen what hate produces. They live with its consequences every day.
• Their message is that such weapons – such hate – have no place in civilized living.
• Through their actions and words the survivors say this.
• Look at me.
• This is what happens when you unleash the demons inside of you.
• When you unleash chemical weapons.
• This is wrong.
• There is no place in this world for such barbarity.

Concluding Remarks

• Please allow me to recognize, in concluding, the contribution of two brothers who are no longer with us.
• Mr. Ahmad Zangiabadi – and Mr. Jahanshah Sadeghi.
• Let us follow their example – and that of the colleagues who are still with us.
  o And find peace in our hearts.
  o And share it with others.
• I reflect on the inspiring words of the late Mr. Sadeghi:
  o “I believe it is our responsibility to make friends with each other, to smile to each other.
  o Then, I believe that the tension between countries and nations will just disappear.”
• And I recall something I once heard:
• “An enemy is someone whose story you have not yet heard.”

• Thank you!