

EuCheMS Press Release

Brussels, 7 July 2016

President of the Israeli Chemical Society publishes open letter to State Prime Minister urging the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention

Israel, Egypt, Southern Sudan (who plan to sign) and North Korea are the only countries of the 196 recognised countries that have not signed and ratified the *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)* which provides for the supervised elimination and monitoring of all chemical weapons under the auspices of the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)*.

The State of Israel, which has signed but not ratified the CWC, is a member of the *European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS)* so the EuCheMS President has been supporting Professor Ehud Keinan, President of the Israeli Chemical Society in his attempts to remove these dreadful weapons from Israel. These attempts have culminated in the publication of an open letter from Prof Keinan to The Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu urging him to sign the CWC. The [letter](#) was first published in Hebrew, but is produced here for the first time in English.

Prof Keinan ends his letter with the passionate plea: “The Israeli chemists and chemical engineers, together with the large community of chemists around the world, are working together to remove the curse of chemical weapons from the face of the Earth. We prefer to use these materials to fight cancer and pathogens, to purify drinking water, to produce energy-saving insulation materials and many other useful materials for the sake of humankind. We request that the government of Israel would independently ratify the CWC. We have no doubt that Egypt will quickly follow this move and join the CWC as well, because nobody would like to defy a global consensus and remain on the wrong side of the fence together with North Korea. Not only the chemists, but also all Israeli citizens would rejoice at the ratification and applaud the Israeli government for keeping Israel in the sane part of the world.”

EuCheMS President David Cole-Hamilton says: “I applaud Prof. Ehud Keinan’s brave action. Chemical weapons have no place in a civilised society. They do not act as a deterrent and their effects are appalling. We have a unique opportunity to rid the world of this scourge and we are so close to doing it. EuCheMS calls upon Prime Minister Netanyahu to ratify the CWC as soon as possible and for Egypt, Southern Sudan and North Korea to follow this inspiring lead”.

About EuCheMS

Representing more than 160,000 chemists from more than 40 Learned Societies and other chemistry related organisations, [EuCheMS](#), the Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences, relies on a unique network of active researchers involved in all the fields of chemistry. Through this network, EuCheMS organises several specialised academic conferences as well as the biannual EuCheMS Chemistry Congress, the European congress of chemical sciences. EuCheMS also promotes the role and image of the chemical sciences among the general public and policy-makers through social media, newsletters and through the organisation of conferences and workshops open to the society. Through the promotion of chemistry and by providing expert and scientific advice, EuCheMS aims to take part of the solution to today’s major societal challenges.

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May 22, 2016

To: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Mr. Netanyahu,

Last year, the world marked 100 years since the first use of chemical weapons during World War I. It was April 22, 1915, when the German army used chlorine gas as a tactical weapon near the town of Ypres, Belgium. The services held worldwide to mark these atrocities, brought back the issue of chemical warfare to the global public agenda. In 1993 most countries around the world signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which prohibits the production, storage, distribution and use of chemical weapons. The worldwide unanimity on this issue is not surprising, because chemical warfare, although scary and cruel, is actually meaningless in military terms, having no tactical or strategic value in comparison with all other warfare categories.

By definition, any weapon is chemical. One cannot develop any type of warfare without chemists, including the tungsten alloys needed for armor-piercing shells, specific fuels, explosives, flares, night vision goggles, personal gear, everything, even the electronic components in all smart systems. Since every tangible item in our life is based on chemistry, the artificial classification of weapons as chemical, metallurgical, energetic, electrical or biological, is meaningless. It would be more useful to classify weapons as either smart or silly.

And the so-called chemical weapons are obviously silly, and therefore the world should get rid of them as quickly as possible. Over 190 countries, representing more than 98% of the world population, have already admitted that this kind of warfare is silly. Therefore, they have already signed the treaty and ratified it. Only four countries had not yet joined the CWC: Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan. South Sudan had already announced its intention to join the CWC soon whereas the other three claimed that they have "regional reasons" not to join. While North Korea has its own logic, Israel's attitude is rather bizarre.

The Israeli government has announced that it would ratify the CWC only if Egypt did so. Egypt, on the other hand, promised to join the CWC only if Israel would approve the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Some argue that the known Israeli policy of ambiguity with respect to nuclear weapons might be applicable also to the chemical weapons in order to deter potential threats. Did any Israeli cabinet member ever asked the simple question of who is actually affected by our silly weapons? On the contrary, I would bet that the use of chemical weapons by the IDF would be the ultimate dream of our dear neighbors, including Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Khaled Mashaal, Ismail Haniyeh, Bashar al-Assad and many other friendly characters. I would bet that the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Qatar would be ready to award the State of Israel with generous amounts of their oil money if we agreed to use chemical weapons, just once, anywhere. They all know very well that only one episode would be sufficient for changing the course of Israel's history and the history of the Jewish people.

We fail to understand the irrational policy of the Israeli government on such an emotionally loaded issue. Israel's consistent refusal to ratify the CWC has been allowing Egypt to drag Israel into an embarrassing scenario, which stands in absolute contradiction to the country's basic interests. Israel's refusal actually endorses Egypt's groundless claim that nuclear weapons and chemical warfare are in the same category.

The Israeli chemists and chemical engineers, together with the large community of chemists around the world, are working together to remove the curse of chemical weapons from the face of the Earth. We prefer to use these materials to fight cancer and pathogens, to purify drinking water, to produce energy-saving insulation materials and many other useful materials for the sake of humankind. We request that the government of Israel would independently ratify the CWC. We have no doubt that Egypt will quickly follow this move and join the CWC as well, because nobody would like to defy a global consensus and remain on the wrong side of the fence together with North Korea. Not only the chemists, but also all Israeli citizens would rejoice at the ratification and applaud the Israeli government for keeping Israel in the sane part of the world.

Sincerely yours,

* For the original Hebrew version, see: <http://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3688668,00.html>

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