



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>

הוועד המנהל  
Executive Board

אינג' מלאכי אלפר  
Eng. Malachi Alper

ד"ר גיל גובס

Dr. Gil Goobes

פרופ' אבי דומב  
Prof. Avi Domb

אינג' דני חן  
Eng. Dani Chen

ד"ר דורית טייטלבוים  
Dr. Dorit Taitelbaum

ד"ר אורן טל  
Dr. Oren Tal

פרופ' גבריאל למקוף  
Prof. Gabriel Lemcoff

פרופ' חיים כהן  
Prof. Haim Cohen

ד"ר מיכל סורני-הררי  
Dr. Michal Soreni-Harari

פרופ' אסף פרידלר  
Prof. Assaf Friedler

פרופ' דורון שבת  
Prof. Doron Shabat

גבר  
Treasurer

צ'רלס דייזנדרוק  
Charles Diesendruck

ועדת ביקורת  
Inspection Committee

פרופ' אמנון אלבק  
Prof. Amnon Albeck

פרופ' טימור באזוב  
Prof. Timor Baasov