

Querido editor:

Te agradeceré publiques la carta que hemos recibido los miembros de *EuCheMS* referente al uso de cloro como arma química en Siria.

Un cordial saludo,

PILAR GOYA LAZA

Dear Colleagues,

I was asked earlier this year to join the (UK) Chemical Weapons Advisory Group (CWAC), the UK committee that reports into the UK Government and into OPCW. That group is understandably very concerned about the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria. As you will have read, such illegal usage was confirmed recently in the report of the UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. You will also have seen further unconfirmed press reports this week of civilian casualties from the use of chlorine barrel bombs in Aleppo.

Professor Alastair Hay (Leeds University), incoming Chair of the CWAC, wrote to the Times and the Guardian in the last couple of weeks along the following lines:

We are extremely concerned about the continuing use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria and the suffering it causes for an already traumatised people (see Assad used gas weapons UN confirms, Times 26 August). Any use of chemical weapons, whatever the toxic chemical used, is illegal under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and international customary law. Some 192 countries have signed up to this Convention including Syria.

As with many chemical weapons attacks identifying the user is problematic because the perpetrator has invariably fled the scene. Collecting evidence in the middle of an active theatre of war is even more complicated. We therefore welcome the recent report of the UN investigation and the call by the United States that President Assad be held accountable by the Security Council.

It must be emphasised by all signatories to the CWC that those using chlorine to injure and kill are committing a crime and will be held to account.

So, we call on the UK Government, the UN and the international community to be resolute in their commitment to investigating both the use, and users, of chemical weapons in Syria and to prosecuting the perpetrators.

We also call on all practitioners of chemistry, be they in academe, industry, or trading of materials, to point out that chemicals should be used to help mankind. Chlorine has many legitimate and valuable roles but absolutely not as a poison for human lungs.

These awful attacks seem likely to continue unless there is an international outcry. I would like to request that this issue is highlighted in the EuCheMS Newsletter and would be very grateful if you would consider asking your national societies' membership newsletters or magazines to highlight the issue also.

Very best wishes to all,

Robert

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Las cartas al editor no requieren invitación y deben enviarse directamente a Miguel Á. Sierra: sierraor@ucm.es