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SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-second year

Letter dated 21 May 1987 from the Permanent Representative of the
Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the letter addressed to you by His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see annex).

While expressing the gratitude of my Government for the dispatch of the team of specialists and for the efforts of the members of the team, I would highly appreciate it if this letter were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 62 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Said RAJAIE-KHORASSANI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/42/50.

ANNEX

Letter dated 21 May 1987 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Secretary-General

Your note, dated 8 May 1987 (S/18852 and Corr.1), to the Security Council regarding the latest report of the team of specialists on the use of chemical weapons, aside from confirming for the fourth time during three consecutive years the use of such weapons by the Iraqi régime against Iranian forces, contained important points. This report reaffirmed the issue of the use of chemical weapons against civilians as brought to your attention in my previous correspondence. Moreover, the use of nerve gas - a complicated weapon the production of which is beyond the technological ability of the Iraqi régime - was raised for the second time as an issue in this report. The report echoed a serious warning that the continued use of chemical weapons weakens the Geneva Protocol of 1925 for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous and Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, and confronts the world with the threat of biological weapons.

More significantly, the team has concluded that it has already accomplished everything possible on the technical side and that now only through "concerted efforts at the political level" may the violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol come to a halt. This point also received special emphasis in your note to the Security Council in which you drew the attention of the Council to the fact that repeated appeals by the Security Council and the Secretary-General have so far been ineffective.

Regrettably enough, despite your clear emphasis and that of the team, the Security Council in its statement of 14 May 1987 (S/18863), simply deemed it sufficient to repeat, except for a few minor changes in wording, the statement of 21 March 1986 (S/17932). Taking such a weak position would mean that, either the Security Council has not considered the report of the team and your note or, under the influence of a few permanent or non-permanent members of the Council, it is incapable of discharging its duties and continues to avoid the adoption of any measures which would be opposed by the Iraqi régime.

Repetition of a statement which in your own words not only lacked any effectiveness but also caused the Iraqi régime to continue its chemical attacks and even to extend them against civilians cannot but mean that the Security Council does not value the effects of its own decision and is resigned to witnessing the continued use of chemical weapons and the threat of biological warfare. It should be clear to the Security Council that the Iraqi régime, notwithstanding another condemnation by the Security Council, will continue to resort to the use of chemical weapons. Moreover, it is obvious that the Council's reference to other aspects of the conflict in spite of the unconditionality of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the fact that this Protocol has been exclusively formulated for war conditions would in all probability be manipulated by Iraq.

Preparation of this report, as a step in contributing to the consolidation of international humanitarian law and the prevention of savage crimes against humanity, is indeed an effective measure on the part of you and your colleagues, as well as that of the members of the team, and is appreciated by the international community and the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, none of these measures has yet been able to change the criminal behaviour of the Iraqi régime.

Prior to the departure of the team, the Islamic Republic of Iran, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, questioned the advisability of dispatching the team to Iraq simply on the basis of a propagandist claim and before a formal request was lodged. In the light of the past record of the Iraqi régime and its sheer indifference to the repeated and emphatic appeals of the United Nations, it would have been a logical expectation that the Honourable Secretary-General call upon the Iraqi régime to commit itself to the conclusions of the report of the team and to the positions subsequently adopted by the United Nations.

As confirmed by the team, the Iraqi claim had been made merely in order to divert public attention from its crimes and it is no wonder that the Iraqi régime, aware of the nature of its claim and apprehensive of the Iraqi people's reaction, did not allow any reports on the mission in the local press.

In any case, what is now of the utmost importance is that the efforts by you and the members of the team not be rendered ineffective due to the weakness of the Security Council. It is necessary that the "concerted efforts at the political level" be undertaken in order to consolidate the Geneva Protocol of 1925.

It is imperative that, before Iraq again resorts to chemical weapons, this critical matter be brought to the attention of the Security Council and that the Secretary-General, with the Council's endorsement, renew his appeal of 29 June 1984 which is yet to be answered by Iraq. He might as well call on all States and concerned international organizations to make concerted efforts in order to persuade the Iraqi régime to undertake not to use chemical weapons. Moreover, all States should be called upon to refrain from exporting various chemicals which can be converted to chemical weapons. Iraq's access to chemical agents, in particular, nerve gas, is in need of close attention and it is appropriate that the team continue its research in this regard.

Your efforts and initiatives in this field are, as in the past, supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the mean time, I do reiterate that, in the absence of effective measures by the United Nations, continued tolerance of extensive and tragic human loss as a result of Iraqi chemical crimes and non-resort to the legitimate right of retaliation cannot be considered as a permanent and unchangeable policy on the part of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ali Akbar VELAYATI
Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Islamic Republic of Iran