



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERALA/42/842 ✓
S/19312
1 December 1987

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-second session
Agenda item 61
CHEMICAL AND BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL)
WEAPONSSECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-second year

Letter dated 1 December 1987 from the Permanent Representative of
the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to draw Your Excellency's attention to the enclosed horrifying revelation concerning a chemical-weapon-factory disaster reported by Reuter on 27 November 1987 (see annex). As is regrettably evident, the civilian victims of the Iraqi illegal use of chemical weapons have surpassed Iranians and now include civilian factory workers in Beirut, developing a new mechanism for the ruthless Iraqi dictators to continue their violations of the most basic principles of international law governing the conduct of hostilities.

In view of the magnitude of the disaster and the fact that the development, production and use of these illegal weapons by the Iraqis are becoming a rapidly growing threat to civilians, it is expected that the United Nations and particularly Your Excellency - in line with the recently adopted General Assembly resolution contained in document A/42/750 - take immediate measures to investigate the extent of the chemical-weapon factory disaster in Beirut in order to prevent the repetition of such incidents. We are confident that the Government of Lebanon will extend its most sincere co-operation to international efforts aimed at preventing further occurrence of such atrocities in its territory.

It would be highly appreciated if this letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Said RAJAI-E-KHORASSANI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Scarred chemical factory victims leave Beirut

by Samia Nakhoul

Beirut, 27 November, Reuter - Six hideously disfigured victims of a fire in a secret factory making chemical weapons left Beirut for treatment in West Germany this week, military and medical sources said on Friday.

The sources told of how an experiment had gone wrong and a chemical blaze "like burning wind" roared through a Beirut apartment factory, killing more than 20 people over a year ago. Lebanese media routinely reported it as a "paint plant fire". One doctor gave a graphic account of victims treated in secret isolation, so badly mutilated that medical staff treating them were sickened at the sight of their injuries.

"The people who survived the incident were horribly disfigured ... They lost their hair permanently ... Their flesh melted away to the bones ... They smelled terrible", said a doctor who treated the casualties.

"The sight was horrific", he said adding that the injured had to be bathed in special medicines several times a day to ease their suffering.

The sources said that the secret laboratory used the cover of a West German pharmaceutical company to process imported raw materials into chemical weapons for Baghdad.

"The materials were imported from West Germany and were being compounded in the underground laboratory into chemical weapons destined for Iraq", a military source said.

Each side in the seven-year-old Iran-Iraq war has accused the other of using chemical weapons and each has denied it. A previously secret United Nations report released in April 1985 cited experts saying about 8,500 Iranians had been affected by the cyanide based poisons and mustard gas.

Local media said at the time of the August 1986 fire in Beirut's Fur El-Shebbak district that it was the result of an electrical short circuit in a paint plant. Judicial sources said the blaze killed 19 people and wounded 35 but hospital sources said the toll was higher.

Bonn agreed this week to treat the surviving victims after a request from visiting Lebanese President Amin Gemayel. The independent An-Nahar daily said medical care would last six months and cost \$640,000.

A military source said Lebanese Christian politicians, Iraqi Embassy representatives and foreign scientists set up the operation in 1985.

/...

Lebanese experts worked at the plant and a Christian politician provided an official licence under the cover of a German pharmaceutical company, the source said.

"At the time of the incident, the laboratory had been producing and exporting chemical weapons to Iraq for about a year and was working on a new experiment when a chemical reaction triggered the fire", he said.

Iraqi Embassy officials were not available for comment. Some rescue workers were killed as firemen tried to douse the blaze, which kept flaring up repeatedly. The doctor said that firemen had told him the blaze "was like a burning wind". Victims were kept on one floor of a clinic sealed off to all but doctors and nurses, he said.

The doctor said one victim was an 18-year-old man who asked the physician: "why did you leave me alive ... Why didn't you kill me?"

"I am sure he will commit suicide one day ... He was a handsome, fit man but now he is just a piece of melted flesh and bones", the doctor said.

Some nurses refused to treat or wash the patients. "They used to vomit at the sight", he said, adding that a woman doctor had a nervous breakdown and was one of several of the medical workers to be sent on leave to recover.
