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**LETTER DATED 6 JUNE 1990 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL**

With reference to the letter dated 23 May 1990 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations (S/21329), enclosing The Washington Post article of 3 May 1990, on the crime of genocide at Halabja on 18 March 1988 when Iraqi Kurds were massacred by chemical weapons, I have the honour to state the following.

It is the oldest trick in the book to wait until the dust is settled and then try to share the blame for your crime with someone else. This is what the letter of Iraq's Permanent Representative and its enclosure, i.e., the fruit of their public relations campaign and patronage, is all about.

In May 1988, the Government of Iraq topped its dark record of war crimes by yet an ultimate crime; gassing its own population - killing more than 5,000 Iraqi Kurdish men, women and children under the absurd pretext of fighting Kurdish dissidence. The world was shocked, and as condemnation from various capitals poured into Baghdad, the Kurdish population poured into the Islamic Republic of Iran in dire need of emergency medical care. Security Council document S/19726 dated 4 April 1988 gives a token pictorial account of this gruesome Iraqi genocide about which the Secretary-General of the United Nations issued a public statement on 25 March 1988, which reads in part:

"Sadly, there is considerable and most serious evidence in the public domain that chemical weapons have again been used by Iraqi forces in the past few days, causing a high number of casualties, including civilians in both Iran and Iraq."

In this connection, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) expressed its readiness to the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide emergency assistance for the victims of use of chemical weapons which killed a great number of civilians in the province of Sulaymaniyah. (ICRC press release No. 1567, dated 23 March 1988.)

The manifestation of a sense of international outrage over Iraq's use of chemical weapons against its own people went beyond the public statements of the

international organizations. A large number of States from all five continents issued statements in condemnation of the use of chemical weapon by Iraq in and around Halabja.

The request by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to circulate this article as a document of the Security Council is another evidence of Iraq's acknowledgement of the use of massive chemical weapons in Halabja - for The Washington Post article of 3 March 1990, however unreliable, says in unambiguous terms that Iraq "began using gas against Iranian troops in 1983", that Iraq employed the "deadly chemical agents ... on a broad scale by the end of war" in 1988, and that the "Halabja massacre became the most horrifying symbol of Iraqi chemical warfare".

Relying on intelligence sources, which could be anything or nothing at all, the article levelled baseless allegations against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, denoting that the Islamic Republic of Iran also used chemical weapons. In this respect the article has two major flaws; it is undocumented and it is factually wrong. The article is based wholly on what the author has called a "Defense Department study". On 7 May 1990, in response to a question about this article, Captain Grizze, a spokesman for the Pentagon, denied the existence of such a study on the Iran-Iraq conflict. The second flaw is the article's reasoning that since the Islamic Republic of Iran announced on 20 March 1988 that many Halabja victims had died from cyanide poisoning, and since Iraq does not use cyanide gas, therefore the Islamic Republic of Iran must have used cyanide at Halabja.

This reasoning has a tortured logic to begin with and it is factually wrong. Iraq has cyanide and it has used cyanide not only at Halabja but also on other occasions. Iranian physicians and toxicologists gained a tremendous amount of experience in the clinical detection of chemical agents as well as the treatment of the victims of Iraq's chemical warfare during 1983-1988. Their initial conclusions as to the type of chemical agents Iraq has used have usually been confirmed by independent international groups of experts who have carried out on-site investigations of the area affected and conducted laboratory tests on their samples in Europe. The announcement on 20 March 1988 that Iraq used cyanide at Halabja was no exception.

On-site investigation by independent experts and/or clinical treatment of the victims of Iraq's use of chemical weapon who were treated outside the Islamic Republic of Iran have confirmed that Iraq has used cyanide. The following reports are but two examples:

(a) Report of Artesen Zonder Grenzen MSF, Holland, on the investigation of the following experts on Iraq's use of chemical weapon (p. 11):

Mr. J. de Milliano, MD- Director MSF- Amsterdam,

Mr. R. Moreels, MD- Chairman MSF- Belgium,

Mr. H. D. Dons- Pharmacist Laboratory of Toxicology, University of Ghent;

(b) Report of the Department of Toxicology at the State University of Ghent on the samples from the victims of Iraq's use of chemical weapon (No. 88/NY/PJ 881) which concludes that cyanide or its derivatives like cyanogen chloride was used (p. 6).

The allegation in the article as to the Islamic Republic of Iran's use of chemical weapons is absurd. It is nothing but a distortion of history for short-sighted political gains through an outrageous misuse of a respectable medium by the Iraqi public relations campaign. While categorically denying such a baseless and unfounded allegation, which is pure fabrication in a desperate attempt to shape Iraq's image in the eight years of the imposed war, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is of the opinion that this type of deceptive public relations manoeuvres will not, under any circumstances, diminish the burden of the responsibility of the Iraqi culprits.

It would be highly appreciated if this letter were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kamal KHARRAZI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

