

KURDISH GENOCIDE



JUSTICE FOR HALABJA

Seminar

Marking the 26th anniversary of the chemical bombing of Halabja

6pm, Monday 10 March

UK Parliament, Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House, House of Commons

Please allow at least 20 minutes to pass the security at Portcullis House entrance to Parliament.

This event is open to all.

The use of chemical weapons by the Baathist regime on the town of Halabja in the final days of the Iran-Iraq war in March 1988 remains to this day the largest chemical weapons attack directed against a civilian-populated area in history. Around 5,000 people were killed and more than 7,000 others were injured with many suffering health repercussions to this day.

This event will commemorate the 26th anniversary of the attack to reflect on what happened in Halabja and the lessons that have and can further be learnt from the attack. The speakers will discuss the long term consequences of the use of such weapons including the risks posed to health, and present day threats of chemical warfare.

This event is also part of the wider campaign to raise awareness of the Kurdish genocide events which took place against the Kurdish people since 1963 through to the late 1980s. The aim is to seek formal political, moral and legal recognition of the crimes committed against the Kurdish people in Iraq as acts of genocide according to the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention.



Programme

18.00 Welcome Address:

Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman

Kurdistan Regional Government High Representative to the UK

Welcome and update on the awareness-raising and recognition campaign in the UK and internationally

18.05 – 18.10 Welcome and panel introductions:

Panel Chair:

Nadhim Zahawi MP

Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq

PART 1: Remembering Halabja: eye-witness testimonies

❖ 18.10 Tom Hardie-Forsyth

Former Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Kurdistan Regional Government, and former NATO Senior Committee Chairman

Qaladiza, a Soldier's Tale

❖ 18.20 Gwynne Roberts

Director, RW Films and Kurdistan Memory Programme

Showing of a short film clip 'Halabja 10 years after' which explores the devastating legacy of the chemical attack. With Gwynne Robert's commentary

In 1998, Saddam Hussein attacked the city of Halabja with poison gas. Ten years after, in 1999, award winning filmmaker, Gwynne Roberts travelled to Halabja to find out how the people of the city were still affected. Survivors of the attack talk about their continuing health problems and grief for the many family members they lost. Doctors tell of high incidences of birth abnormalities, increases in children's cancers and ongoing psychological and physical problems.

(RWF World, Kurdistan Memory Programme, www.kurdmemory.com)



PART 2: The campaign for justice

❖ **18.35 Gavi Mairone**

Founder and managing partner of MM LAW LLC, a law firm dedicated exclusively to fighting for the human rights of victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and terrorism.

Filing claims in courts on behalf of Kurdish victims of chemical weapons attacks - update on the case filed in Paris, its progress, and plans for a second case to be filed in Germany

❖ **18.45 Professor Michael Bohlander**

Chair in Comparative and International Criminal Law, Durham University

Legal recognition of the Kurdish Genocide

PART 3: The impact of Halabja on the world – then and now

❖ **18.55 Hamish De Bretton-Gordon OBE**

Chemical Biological Radiological & Nuclear (CBRN) Counter Terrorist Expert

❖ **19.05 Professor Alistair Hay**

Professor of Environmental Toxicology, Molecular Epidemiology Unit, University of Leeds

Chemical weapons use: evidence and the public health response

PART 4: A tribute to Richard Beeston

"Richard Beeston was one of the finest and most courageous foreign correspondents of his generation."

The Times obituary: Richard Beeston, May 20, 2013

Chaired by:

Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman

Speakers:

❖ **19.15 Deborah Haynes and Suzy Jagger**

Defence Editor and the Foreign Desk Editor of The Times newspaper

Paying tribute to Richard, Deborah and Suzy were both close colleagues and friends

❖ **19.30 Kamaran Haider**

Halabja Chemical Victims Society UK Representative and a survivor of the Halabja chemical bombing - Kamaran lost all of his family in the bombing aged only eleven.

Paying tribute and presenting a gift to the family of Richard on behalf of all Halabja victims





Richard Beeston

Richard wrote for *The Times* for 26 years before he passed away in May 2013. During this time, his honest and brave reporting of the genocide in our country highlighted our suffering to the world and helped make sure that it couldn't be ignored. We will always be thankful to Richard and we will never forget him.

Richard joined *The Times* during the Iran-Iraq war and covered the conflict from both sides. In 1988 he was invited by the Iranians to visit the northern front and was taken by Revolutionary Guards to the Iraqi-Kurdish town of Halabja, where he was with the first group of foreign journalists to witness the aftermath of the chemical weapons attack against the Kurdish inhabitants. He went on to cover the first Gulf War from Baghdad and was then made Middle East correspondent. He spent seven years as Diplomatic Editor, much of it reporting from Iraq during the American occupation.

In May 2012, Richard said: "The Iran-Iraq war may have ended 25 years ago, but for those of us who covered it, the memories remain fresh. Missiles rained down on Tehran. Iranian teenagers, often armed with a single grenade, were sent to their deaths in waves of attacks across the marshes of southern Iraq. But it is the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds of northern Iraq in the closing months of the war that became the most notorious.

The Kurds are right to demand that the campaign to exterminate them should be recognised as genocide. They rightly fear that unless the horrors of the past are recognised they could happen again."

PART 5: Q&A

19.25 – 19.55 chaired by Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman

This session will provide an opportunity for guests to ask the speakers questions and make brief comments and statements



Speaker biographies



Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman

Kurdistan Regional Government Representative to the UK, Member of the Leadership Council of the Kurdistan Democratic Party

Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman was appointed Representative in 2005 and reappointed in 2006 after the reunification of the government. Under her leadership, the UK office has helped create and support a task force on the Kurdish genocide that includes MPs, academics, lawyers, survivors and communications experts. During Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman's tenure at the UK Representation, there has been a marked increase in trade, and exchanges in education, capacity building, culture, sport, humanitarian and social affairs. She was voted into the KDP's leadership in 2010. Ms Abdul Rahman was an active member of the UK's Kurdish community from her teens and continues to support the community today. Before her appointment, she worked as a journalist for 17 years, including at the Financial Times. Her late father, Sami Abdul Rahman, a veteran leader of the Kurdish movement, was killed alongside his elder son Salah and 96 others in a twin suicide bombing in 2004.



Nadhim Zahawi MP

Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, first Kurdish-born British Member of Parliament

Nadhim Zahawi was born June 2nd 1967 to Kurdish parents in Iraq. During Saddam Hussein's rise to power and his persecution of the Kurdish people his parents fled Iraq to the UK for safety. He was educated at King's College School in West London followed by University College London where he received a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering. He co-founded and later became chief executive of YouGov, one of the world's leading political and business information gathering companies. Nadhim was elected to the Westminster Parliament in May 2010 and is a member of the Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee. He regularly visits Iraqi Kurdistan and in March 2012 launched an online petition calling for a debate in the British parliament on the recognition of the Kurdish genocide. The e-petition campaign succeeded in securing the debate which took place a year later, 28 February 2013, resulting in a formal recognition of the mass murder of Kurdish people as an act of genocide.



Gwynne Roberts

Film Maker, Director of RW Films and Kurdistan Memory Programme

Gwynne Roberts has specialised over the past 30 years in producing films on international and human rights issues. He and producer Sadie Wykeham have won many awards including an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for Saddam's Road to Hell which dealt with the abduction of 8,000 Barzani Kurds in 1983 by Iraq's secret police. It was shown on PBS, Channel 4, ZDF, and BBC World. They received the Edward R Murrow Award for Best TV Documentary on Foreign Affairs



for Iraq's Killing Fields (PBS/BBC), the first film to investigate the Kurdish genocide. Gwynne was the first television journalist to interview Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan whilst making The Saudi Tapes for Dispatches Channel 4. Current projects include the Kurdistan Memory Programme which seeks to inform the world about Kurdish history and its role in shaping the political contours of the Middle East.



Tom Hardie-Forsyth

Former Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office, Kurdistan Regional Government, and former NATO Senior Committee Chairman

Tom Hardie-Forsyth is former Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office, Kurdistan Regional Government, and a former Senior Official of the UK Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat's Policy Directorate. He is also a former Chairman of the NATO Critical Infrastructure Protection Committee, and is a Fellow of the Atlantic Council. Commissioned as an officer in the Royal Signals, he was deployed to Northern Iraq on Operation Provide Comfort with 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marine Commandos in March 1991.

Subsequently, he helped manage reconstitution and rebuilding work in Kurdistan for five years (1991-1995), helping to rebuild utilities, hospitals, mosques, and churches. He became an adviser to Masoud Barzani and Nechirvan Barzani, the President and Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government respectively. He is an Associate Fellow at Northampton University, looking at post-conflict intervention and management.



Gavriel Mairone

Founder and Managing Partner of MM~LAW LLC, an international human rights law firm

Gavriel Mairone is the founder of MM~LAW LLC, a law firm dedicated exclusively to advancing private human rights law by representation of victims of terrorism, crimes against humanity genocide, torture and human trafficking in private lawsuits to force accountability upon the financiers, profiteers and aiders and abettors of the perpetrators of such crimes. MM~LAW particularly focuses on confronting the international financial and support infrastructure aiding and abetting the various terrorist organizations connected with global jihad. Gavriel

has over 30 years legal experience specializing in international taxation and business planning and specializing over the last decade in international human rights and humanitarian law, counterterrorism and transitional law. He was a commander in Special Forces and Airborne Brigade, 1972-1977. Gavi and MM~LAW currently represent over 12,000 victims of terrorism from 26 countries major lawsuits in the United States and soon to commence in Europe.





Professor Michael Bohlander
Chair in Comparative and International Criminal Law, Durham University

Professor Bohlander has trained judges, prosecutors and government officials in international and comparative criminal law, including the Iraqi High Tribunal which tried Saddam Hussein. From 1999 to 2001 he was the Senior Legal Officer of a Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague, when he involved in the confirmation of the 1999 Kosovo indictment against Slobodan Milosevic, one of the Lasva Valley/Ahmicci massacre cases against Kupreskic et al and the so-called "Foca Rape Camp Trial" against Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic. His publications have been widely cited by courts of domestic and international jurisdictions, including the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Supreme Court of Kosovo, the District Court at Prizren in Kosovo and in several cases before the ICC, ICTY, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.



Professor Alistair Hay
Professor of Environmental Toxicology, Institute of Genetics, Health and Therapeutics at the University of Leeds

Alistair is a Professor of Environmental Toxicology at the University of Leeds. He has worked on issues relation to chemical and biological warfare (CBW) for some 30 years. The majority of his work has dealt with the need for workable, international treaties which outlaw the use of CBW. Professor Hay has been involved in field expeditions in Iraq and Bosnia to investigate the use of chemical warfare agents. He has written extensively on the subject and helped prepare the World Health Organisation 2004 manual – Public health response to biological and chemical agents. Currently Professor Hay chairs a small international working group which is preparing educational material for chemists on multiple uses of chemical, chemical warfare agents and codes of conduct.



Hamish de Bretton-Gordon OBE
Chemical Biological Radiological & Nuclear (CBRN) Counter Terrorist Expert

Hamish de Bretton-Gordon is Chief Operating Officer of SecureBio Ltd, a commercial company offering Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) resilience, consultancy and deployable capabilities. Hamish is helping and advising civilians in Syria on chemical weapons matters on behalf of a number of NGOs and has deployed to the Region a number of times since the current conflict began. Previously Commanding Officer of the UK CBRN Regiment and NATO's Rapid Reaction CBRN Battalion, Hamish is one of the most operationally experienced CBRN practitioners in the world and is regarded as one of the leading experts in Chemical and Biological Counter Terrorism



and warfare. His operational deployments have included the first Gulf War, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan and he was awarded an OBE in 2005 for exceptional performance.

Hamish has worked with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq to investigate the continued contamination of Halabja, following the chemical weapons attack by Saddam Hussein in 1988. He has travelled to Kurdistan often and has worked with the BBC to raise awareness of the chemical attacks. He has also worked with US networks and British newspapers to smuggle chemical samples out of Syria for verification in UK and France.



Kamaran Haider

Survivor of the Halabja chemical bombing, and the Representative of the Halabja Chemical Victims Society in the UK

Kamaran Haider was 11 years old during the chemical bombardment of Halabja in 1988. His mother, father, brothers and sisters all died in the attack. Kamaran survived by hiding in a makeshift bomb shelter in the garden of his home while others around him died from their wounds. He went to Iran for treatment and was reunited with his grandmother, one of the few survivors from his family. He now lives in Portsmouth with his wife and two children, and represents the Halabja Chemical Victims Society in the UK.



**Deborah Haynes,
Defence Editor, The Times**

Deborah worked with Richard Beeston for many years and will deliver the tribute to him at the event this evening. Deborah herself has been with The Times since 2007, and has reported extensively on Iraq having been their Iraq Correspondent for two years until 2009. She then went on to be Defence correspondent and is now the Defence Editor for The Times. Deborah has been shortlisted and won several awards for her work including the Amnesty International National Newspaper Award and the Tony Bevan Prize for Outstanding Investigative Journalism.

Suzy Jagger

Foreign News Editor, The Times

Suzy worked with Richard Beeston for ten years and will join Deborah in delivering the tribute to him. Suzy joined The Times from the Daily Mirror in 2003 where she spent three years as City Editor. At the Times, she started as Joint Deputy News Editor, and subsequently spent time as Business Editor, US Business Correspondent, and Political & Business Correspondent. In 2010, Suzy became Foreign News Editor, where she worked closely with Richard.

