

## RESPONSE TO SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPON WARNING

Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, High Representative to the UK Kurdistan Regional Government said:

Yesterday, President Obama's warning that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would cross a red line sent a clear message that such barbaric attacks will not be tolerated. The Kurdish people in Iraq know what it is like to be subjected to chemical weapons; in one such attack in Halabja, March 1988, 5,000 people were gassed to death and many more were injured. Saddam Hussein was the last person to use chemical weapons against his own people as part of the genocide against the Kurds of Iraq.

We are seeking international recognition of this and have launched a petition to gather support: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>. We said never again after chemical weapons were inflicted on the Kurdish people, but two decades later, we are discussing such weapons being used once more. This shows more than ever why the genocide against the Kurds must be recognised internationally to prevent such atrocities happening again elsewhere and to reinforce the commitment to the 'Responsibility to Protect'.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

For further information or photos, please contact Amy Bourke or Helen Ayres at [KRG@luther.co.uk](mailto:KRG@luther.co.uk) or call [0207 618 9193](tel:02076189193).

The Kurdistan Regional Government estimates that over 180,000 Kurdish people were killed between 1987 and 1988 alone during Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign called the Anfal. The true scale of the killing from the 1960s to 1990 is not yet known.

In the 1980s, the Kurdish population was also attacked with chemical weapons. Hundreds of small scale chemical attacks took place against the Kurds. During the most vicious assault, Saddam Hussein dropped bombs containing chemical weapons on the Kurdish city of Halabja gassing as many as 5,000 men, women and children to death indiscriminately and leaving tens of thousands of people injured. They died slowly, in unimaginable pain from chemical burns. Of those who survived, many still live with painful injuries and many children are born with birth defects.