

WMA RESOLUTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Adopted by the 64th General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

And reaffirmed with minor revisions by the 215th Council session (online), Cordoba, Spain, October 2020

PREAMBLE

It has been recognised for centuries that certain chemical agents can affect consciousness, or other factors influencing the ability of an individual to take part in fighting, predominantly during warfare. More recently some agents have been used to temporarily disable participants in civil unrest, protests or riots. In warfare such agents have, historically, had a significant morbidity and mortality and included nerve gases and related agents. Despite widespread condemnation such weapons were extensively used in the early 20th century. A global movement to outlaw the use of such weapons led to the development of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997 having been opened to signature in 1993. As of October 2020, only three countries have not ratified or acceded to the CWC.

The production, stockpiling and use of CW is prohibited. Despite this, such weapons have been used by state forces and by non-state actors in a number of countries. By their nature such weapons are indiscriminate. This use has led to deaths, injuries and human suffering in those countries.

Chemical agents used in policing actions, including by the military acting in a policing role, are allowed under the CWC. There is a significant international dialogue underway on the definition of such agents and the situations in which they can be used. It should be noted that the CWC appears to assume such agents will not be lethal, but the use of any agent might have fatal consequences. Those using them, or authorising their use, must seek to ensure that they are not used in a manner which risks death or serious injury to targeted persons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The WMA notes that the development, production, stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons is banned under the CWC, and that use of such weapons is regarded by some to be a crime against humanity, regardless of whether the target populations are civilian or military.
2. The WMA urges all relevant parties to make active efforts to abide by the CWC ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons.
3. The WMA urges support from all states party to the CWC for the safe destruction of all stockpiles of Chemical weapons.
4. The WMA calls for efficient independent accountability measures bringing to justice those responsible for the use of Chemical Weapons.
5. The WMA urges states using chemical agents in riot control and related situations to carefully consider and minimise the risks and to, wherever possible, refrain from such use. Any use must follow the establishment of the necessary procedures to reduce the risk of death or serious injury. They should not be used in a manner, which deliberately increases the risk of injury, harm or death to their targets.
6. Reaffirming its [Statement on the Protection and Integrity of Medical Personnel in Situations of Violence](#) and its [Declaration on the Protection of Health Care Workers in Situation of Violence](#), the WMA emphasizes the serious risk of exposing health professionals to chemical agents while performing their medical duties to provide first-aid to injured people in unrest contexts.