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**Bhopal: Dow Chemical must take responsibility for clean-up**

"Two and a half years ago I stopped menstruating entirely"  
*Shehesta Kureishi, 35, who moved to the area 12 years ago, also has pain from her lower back to her groin. Her seven-year-old son Ateeb complains of pain in his joints. Both have been drinking contaminated water.*

Twenty years on the Bhopal plant continues to ruin the lives of the surrounding communities. The effects of the leak and the contaminated environment continue seriously to affect people's basic human rights. UCC -- and Dow who merged with UCC in 2001 -- have still not cleaned up the site or stopped pollution that started when the plant opened in the 1970s, meaning local residents are continuing to fall ill from drinking contaminated water.

People from Bhopal need your support. Take action and demand that Dow clean up the Bhopal factory site!

Write to Mr Andrew Liveris, CEO of Dow Chemical. You can base your letters on the sample below.

Dear Mr Liveris,

I am very concerned about the devastating consequences to the health of the communities of Bhopal, India, posed by Union Carbide's disused pesticide factory.

For more than 30 years the Bhopal plant has been a source of environmental pollution. After the disaster in 1984, which killed thousands of people, Union Carbide abandoned the factory without decontaminating the site and left behind large amounts of toxic waste. Stockpiles of contaminants continue to pollute the water and soil, on which entire communities rely, affecting the health of those living in the area.

According to numerous reports, contaminants have been found in vegetables grown near the plant and in breast milk samples taken from women in Bhopal. Water has been found to be unfit for consumption but, in the absence of any other source, most local people continue to drink it.

The company has never done anything meaningful to clean up the site. I therefore urge you:

- to ensure that the Bhopal factory site and its surroundings are promptly and effectively decontaminated, that the groundwater is cleaned up, and that the stockpiles of toxic and hazardous substances left by the company when they abandoned the site are removed;
- to co-operate fully with those assessing the nature and extent of the damage to health and the environment caused by improper waste disposal and contaminants at the abandoned factory site;

- to ensure that Dow Chemicals promptly provide full reparations, restitution, compensation and rehabilitation for the continuing damage done to people's health and the environment by the ongoing contamination of the site.

Yours sincerely,

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A young protestor demands that the Union Carbide plant site in Bhopal be cleaned up. Mumbai, India, December 2002.

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Protesters outside the Dow headquarters in Mumbai, during a demonstration in December 2002 to mark the anniversary of the disaster, demand the clean-up of Bhopal.

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### **Clouds of Injustice: Bhopal disaster 20 Years on**

"There were thousands of bodies. There were bodies everywhere. And people were dying all round"

*Mohammad Owais, a volunteer at Hamidia Hospital, Bhopal, India*

"We have to travel at least two kilometres to get clean water... My health is so bad that it prevents me from carrying the water I need from there."  
*Hasina Bi of Atal Ayub Nagar, a neighbourhood in Bhopal near the plant, has been drinking the water from the hand-pump near her house for 18 years.*

More than 7,000 people died within a matter of days when toxic gases leaked from a chemical plant in Bhopal, India on the night of 2/3 December 1984. Over the last 20 years exposure to the toxins has resulted in the deaths of a further 15,000 people as well as chronic and debilitating illnesses for thousands of others for which treatment is largely ineffective.

The disaster shocked the world and raised fundamental questions about government and corporate responsibility for industrial accidents that devastate human life and local environments. Yet 20 years later, the survivors still await just compensation, adequate medical assistance and treatment, and comprehensive economic and social rehabilitation. The plant site, has still not been cleaned up. As a result, toxic wastes continue to pollute the environment and contaminate water that surrounding communities rely on.

Despite determined efforts by survivors to secure justice, they have been denied adequate compensation and appropriate and timely medical assistance and rehabilitation. Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), then owner of the pesticide factory in Bhopal, and Dow Chemicals, which merged with UCC in 2001, have publicly denied all responsibility for the leak and the resulting damage. Astonishingly, no one has been held responsible.

The Bhopal case illustrates how companies evade their human rights responsibilities and underlines the need to establish a universal human rights framework that can be applied to companies directly. Governments have the primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of communities endangered by the activities of corporations, such as those employing hazardous technology. However, as the influence and reach of companies have grown, there has been a developing consensus that they must be brought within the framework of international human rights standards

In its report, *Clouds of injustice: Bhopal disaster 20 years on*, Amnesty International is:

- urging people around the world to put pressure on Dow and the Indian Government demanding that the site is cleaned up and affected communities are compensated.
- calling on the Indian Government to promptly assess the damage to health and the environment caused by the leak and the contamination
- recommending the implementation of a global human rights framework for business, based on the UN Norms for Business. To hold companies accountable and guarantee redress for the victims it is imperative that such standards are implemented and mechanism to enforce them are put in place.

### **Further Information**

Read the report *Clouds Of Injustice: Bhopal 20 years on* (ASA 20/015/2004)

Watch the video, "Twenty Years without Justice: The Bhopal Chemical Disaster" by Sanford Lewis (English only)

This video was produced for the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal and does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Amnesty International.

External websites:

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BBC website on Bhopal (English only)

International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (English only)