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The world has witnessed a change in government in Syria, a country long scrutinized by the international community and organizations such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations. During this period, both the former Syrian government and rebel groups accused each other of using chemical weapons. However, the inquiry committees of the OPCW were unable to reach a conclusive determination. The status of any concealed weapons, if they exist, continues to pose security uncertainties.

Similarly, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia is marked by accusations and counter-accusations regarding the use of chemical and biological weapons, as well as the existence of manufacturing facilities in both countries. The West has also accused Russia of assassinating some of its opposition leaders in exile. In December 2024, Igor Kirillov, Russia's chief of chemical weapons, was killed in a bomb blast allegedly orchestrated by Russia's enemies. Kirillov had faced allegations of using chemical weapons in Ukraine, although these claims have not been independently verified.

The U.S. State Department has alerted the international community to China's military research on marine toxins, raising concerns about their potential use in future biological warfare. According to the report, such activities could violate Article 1 of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), to which China has been a signatory since 1984. The report also notes that while China submits annual compliance reports under the Convention, these reports do not disclose the development of biological agents with military applications.

This issue of CBW Magazine addresses several pressing concerns related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Malcolm Dando and Simon Whitby, in their paper, argue that while a near-term strengthening of the BWC seems unlikely, any future opportunity will require adopting mechanisms such as declarations, visits, and inspections-similar to those under the CWC-to ensure its effectiveness. Vivek Chaddha's article provides an overview of efforts by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to strengthen measures against proliferation financing.

Nachiket Kondhalkar's paper examines the erosion of trust in international arms control frameworks and the challenges of preventing chemical weapons proliferation in conflict zones. Aayushi Sharma explores how greater civil society participation within the OPCW can help reinforce the principles of the CWC, particularly in addressing non-proliferation and prevention challenges.

Abhishek Verma discusses the U.S. Department's imposition of sanctions on over 280 individuals and entities affiliated with the Russian Federation for allegedly using chloropicrin against Ukrainian forces during the Russia-Ukraine War. Interestingly, the OPCW issued a press release stating that the allegations were "insufficiently substantiated" based on the information available to its Secretariat.

Saman Ayesha Kidwai reviews Mrinmayee Bhushan's book *Silent Weapons Deadly Weapons: Unveiling the Bioweapons Arms Race* (Pathak Publishers and Distributors, 2024). She highlights the book's timely exploration of the evolving threat landscape posed by chemical and biological weapons (CBW) and toxins.

This issue of CBW Magazine also features sections like "Chemical-Biological News." With feedback from our readers, we aim to publish future editions focusing on topics of particular concern.