

Beat: Vips

## MOHAMED AJROUDI ACTIVE MEMBER OF R20 SPEAK OUT ABOUT GABES ENVIRONMENT DISASTER

ALONG WITH SCWHARZENEGGER MICHELE SABBAN

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**USPA NEWS** - Mohamed Ajroudi, active member of R20 was guest with Arnold Schwarzenegger's decoration with the "Legion of Honour"<sup>[?]</sup>, French most prestigious medal by President François Hollande at Elysee Palace. He speaks out about the dramatic situation of pollution of Gabes in Tunisia

MOHAMED AJROUDI CHAIRMAN OF CNIM UNVEILS HIS APPROACH TO WARN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ABOUT GABES

Mohamed Ajroudi, was already active and involved at the COP21, with his stands as President of the CNIM. He naturally continued his momentum by joining the R20 as an active member with Arnold Schwarzenegger the founder and Michele Sabban, the president of this NGO, who is fighting against global warming and preserving biodiversity, on the sidelines of the SDG's goals of UNFCCC. Mohamed Ajroudi explains his opinion, but also his anger towards this deplorable situation in Gabes, and how he sees the next steps in a bottom-up approach, to be successful and quick. The aim is to send a global alert to the international community, and lead the sub-national projects and actions to depollute the site of Gabes to be scaled-up to national and international levels, in order to achieve a broader, global impact. Mohamed Ayachi Ajroudi, is a businessman, engineer, and climate activist, who got engaged for decades in this struggle to clean the city of Gabes, and highlights the assets of the Palmeraie destroyed by the chemical defying all the laws and norms by the chemical plant, GCT. Chairman of CNIM he is dedicated to this cause operating from his diverse offices in Paris, Saudi Arabia and Los Angeles (Newport).

CHEMICAL POLLUTION TO THE NASTY AND DESTROYING EFFECTS IN GABES

The Tunisian Chemical Group (GCT) is a Tunisian public company whose aim is to produce and transform the phosphate extracted in Tunisia into chemicals such as phosphoric acid or fertilizers.-----

It is the result of the absorption or merger of companies operating in the fields of phosphate extraction (Gafsa phosphates company) and processing - Industrial phosphoric acid and fertilizer company in Sfax, Chemical industries Maghreb in Gabès, Arab Society of phosphate and nitrogen fertilizers in Gabes, Fertilizers of Gabes and Chemical industry of Gafsa - between 1992 and 1994. Tunisia is the fifth largest producer in the world (eight million tons in 2004). 85% are processed in four industrial clusters in the south of the country.-----

Gabes is home to several plants transforming phosphate into commercial phosphoric acid called MGA, DAP (Di-ammonium phosphate) and DCP (Di-calcium phosphate). Both export and import capacities (sulfur and ammonia) are important with four docks. Phosphates, which accounted for up to 15% of exports and contributed up to 4% of GDP in the past, remained sluggish in 2016. In addition, phosphate production was handicapped by social unrest. Other sectors have been marked by demonstrations. In 2016, inflation has decreased somewhat (3.7%), but is expected to increase in 2017, notably with the modest recovery in oil prices and the drop in the dinar, which has fallen by about 10% Euro in 2016. -----

Mr Mohamed Ajroudi wants to denounce the dramatic situation of excessive chemical pollution which is similar to an environmental catastrophe in Gabes, a city of which he is a native. According to the Tunisian Constitution it is specifically mentioned in Article 45 that "The State guarantees the right to a healthy and balanced environment and participation in the protection of the climate. The State must provide the means necessary for the elimination of environmental pollution".

Chemical waste from phosphate production and extraction from the GCT, which flows into the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, destroy plant and animal biodiversity underwater. The influences of the waste water and waste which in the water table by a capillarity, on the one hand, the water provided for watering the palm has dramatic consequences. Because, on the one hand, the palm grove is deprived of its nourishing water, while the water table is in addition is devastated by chemical waste.

-----THE FLORA AND FAUNA ARE DESTROYED BY THE CHEMICAL DAMAGES-----The flora and fauna are thus destroyed by these chemical emanations, in this area, which the "Palmeraie"<sup>[?]</sup> (Protected by UNESCO) considered forty years ago, one of the most beautiful oases in the world, by the extent of more than 300,000 Palm trees extending over 6km in length ... at the seaside is now threatened by these pollution attacks. The inhabitants and visitors of Gabes described, in the past, as an area with beautiful sunny beaches suitable for swimming with waters rich in fish of different species. But for several years swimming is prohibited, the sea is too polluted to allow it.

## THE GCT GROUP IS USING OBSOLETE METHODS THAT SHOULD BE STOPPED FROM NOW ON AND THE FUTURE

The CGT group, which began in the 1970s, consists of transforming and recovering crude phosphate; it now has 4 industrial centers in Sfax, M'dhilla, Gabes and Shkira. "Beyond the damages to biodiversity, it is the human beings that touch me most, and sadden me, because the polluting effects directly affect the lives of the inhabitants of Gabes. Malformations that infect newborn babies, as well as affected adults, have increased the number of sufferings and degradation of their health. So much so that the population of life has risen to 370,000 inhabitants today, a great drop in the population of the seventies." Mohamed Ajroudi explains

"The Gabes governorate has been suffering from degradation of water quality, air and soil for many years. The population, fauna and flora are affected by the pollution of the Tunisian Chemical Group (GCT) and The inhabitants and civil society are mobilizing to find a solution to this ecological disaster. My wish is to implement concrete actions through international institutions such as UNFCCC but more recently since I joined the R20. In my hometown, which is dear to me. Its degradation encourages me to continue and in particular with the founder of R20, because I am convinced that 'Through the network of great megacities, such as Paris, London, Mexico City, and California, among others will help by leverage towards Gabes, in the name of life. The inhabitants of Gabes have been abandoned to their fate for too long and they count on the international community, which I allow myself to alert solemnly to defend their rights to life in a pollution-free environment and also in accordance with Article 45 Of the Constitution.'" Continues Mohamed Ajroudi-----

At the beginning of the year, several representatives of associations working in the field of the environment in Gabès had expressed the hope of seeing the new Constitution, put an end to the environmental situation in constant degradation since the installation, there are About forty years, of the chemical industries.-----

"I plan to take Arnold Schwarzenegger to Gabes and show him the blatant spectacle of this excess of chemical pollution that destroys men, women and children, and the surrounding flora and fauna. To the urgency of this dramatic situation, which augurs for the migrations of climate refugees, not to mention the pollution of the air that has become unbearable in Gabes and which is spreading to other places, the matters is becoming an emergency. The chemical waste, once dumped in seawater, has no boundaries and will eventually spread to the rest of the landscapes.

## I WILL CONTINUE MY FIGHT AND STRUGGLE TO DEPOLUTE GABES AND PRESERVE ITS PEOPLE AND BIODIVERSITY FROM THE CHEMICALS-----

This is one of Mohamed Ajroudi's statement about the dramatic situation in Gabes and his engagement to this cause, "I have been doing this personal struggle for over 30 years, bringing my contribution in situ by financing hospitals and caring for the victims of this pollution. But this is only curative and it is not enough to stem the violence of these chemical destructions. We must now prevent this and prevent it at the root." Mr Ajroudi adds. The impact studies are multiplying but do not seem to alert the shareholders and managers of the CGT group seriously, in spite of damage that the operation of their obscure factory causes on a site once natural and pleasant to live. That is why I am more determined than ever to push calls to the international community to alert it in the name of respect for human rights because thousands of lives are in danger. Pursuant to Article 45 of the Constitution and the current rules and norms in force and imposed by the International Institutions, it is urgent to act before the situation gets to neighboring areas ... That's why I will fight Again and again, force of proposal in the R20 (which has just signed an agreement with the C40, during the visit of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paris).-----

I will not hesitate to appeal to the legislation to stop this shameful chemical pollution of another time and whose methods of extraction are at the same time obscure and with disastrous effects. Justice will one day, necessarily light on the methods of the chemical group CGT, whose shareholders are deaf to our alerts for too long to the detriment of human lives postponed by the reports of environmental associations of Gabes and myself. The life of the Gabesians is better than their phosphates, they have the right to Live, as much as the Tunisian biodiversity "Source: Les Echos, The World, The Moci, HuffingtonPost, UNFCCC, Office Tourisme Tunisie, Mohamed Ayachi Ajroudi

### Article online:

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