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## Press Release

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### **Amnesty International Says Dow Chemical Can't "White-Wash" Its Responsibility on the Bhopal Disaster by Sponsoring U.S. and Global "Run for Water" Events**

#### ***Human Rights Organization Demands Accountability for Contaminated Water in Bhopal***

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(New York) -- Dow Chemical Company must not be allowed to run from its responsibility for the impact of the 1984 Bhopal gas leak disaster by sponsoring this weekend's Live Earth 'Run for Water' events in the United States and worldwide, Amnesty International said today.

Thousands of people died and more than 100,000 continue to suffer from serious health problems as a consequence of 1984's deadly leak of toxic chemicals from a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. Dow became 100 percent owner of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) in 2001.

Dozens of cities throughout the United States will participate in the 'Run for Water' events.

Since then, survivors and human rights groups have been campaigning for Dow to address the ongoing impacts of the disaster, including contamination of water by chemical waste, but the company has consistently ignored these calls, denying any responsibility for UCC's liabilities in Bhopal.

On Sunday, April 18, Dow is sponsoring a series of running events across the globe, organized by environmental organization Live Earth to raise awareness about water scarcity. Dozens of cities throughout the United States will participate in the 'Run for Water' events.

"Sponsoring an event that highlights water scarcity while ignoring ongoing problems with access to clean water and medical care, among other issues, in Bhopal is at best hypocrisy, at worst, a flagrant attempt by Dow to try to white-wash its image," said Audrey Gaughran, Director of Global Issues at Amnesty International .

"Dow may be trying to run away from the legacy of Bhopal, but it can't be allowed to hide behind sponsorship of 'Run for Water' events."

For more than 25 years both the government of India and the companies involved have failed to address the human rights abuses that have been the lasting legacy of the Bhopal gas leak.

Sameer Dossani, director of Amnesty International USA's Demand Dignity campaign, said: "The people of Bhopal are struggling today to obtain the most basic of human rights -- access to clean water and health care -- while Dow Chemical shirks its responsibility to address the aftermath of the Bhopal disaster."

Amnesty International has called on Live Earth to reconsider the sponsorship unless Dow publicly commits to the forthcoming government clean-up process in Bhopal. Dow has not done this.

Amnesty International shares Live Earth's concerns about the impact of climate change and the urgent need to take action to protect human rights, including the right to water. But the organization fears that Dow's sponsorship poses a serious risk to the credibility of the Live Earth "Run for Water" events.

"Companies must understand that they cannot escape responsibility for human rights abuses in one area by engaging in positive action

elsewhere. Human rights abuses cannot be 'offset' by corporate good works," said Gaughran.

## **Background**

Shortly before midnight on December 2, 1984, thousands of pounds of deadly chemicals leaked from Union Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal, central India. Around half a million people were exposed. Between 7,000 and 10,000 people died in the immediate aftermath and another 15,000 died over the next 20 years. More than 25 years later, the site has not been cleaned up, the leak and its impact have not been properly investigated, and more than 100,000 people continue to suffer from health problems without the medical care they need. Survivors are still awaiting fair compensation and full redress for their suffering. Leaking waste material has polluted groundwater on which thousands of people depend for drinking water and other domestic uses.

Dow has consistently denied any responsibility for the liabilities of UCC in Bhopal, but in stark contrast, Dow accepted asbestos-related liabilities of UCC in the United States that were incurred as early as 1972.

Amnesty International's work on the Bhopal disaster is part of its Demand Dignity campaign, calling for an end to the human rights violations that drive and deepen poverty. The campaign mobilizes people all over the world to demand that governments, corporations and others who have power listen to the voices of those living in poverty and recognize and protect their rights.

Last month, Amnesty International wrote to Live Earth to express concern about Dow's involvement in the "Run for Water" events. Amnesty International has not received a response to that letter.

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"People everywhere need to be continually reminded that violations of human rights, whether arbitrary arrest and detention, unjust imprisonment, torture, or political assassination, are threats to world peace."

Mumtaz Soysal  
Nobel Peace Prize lecture  
1977  
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