

# Israelis Accused of Using Illegal Weapons

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BEIRUT, Jul 28 (IPS) - The Israeli military is using illegal weapons against civilians in southern Lebanon, according to several reports.\*

U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said this week that Israel had used cluster bombs in civilian areas of Lebanon, in clear violation of international law.

The group said cluster bombs killed a civilian and injured 12 others in Blida village in the south of Lebanon last week. Cluster bombs disperse hundreds of tiny shrapnel-filled 'bomblets' that are "unacceptably inaccurate and unreliable", and should not be used in civilian areas, HRW said.

Lebanese doctors, aid workers and refugees are reporting that the Israeli military has used the incendiary weapon white phosphorous in civilian areas, also in violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Dr. Bachir el-Sham at the Complex Hospital in Sidon in the south of Lebanon told IPS in a telephone interview that he has received civilian patients injured by incendiary weapons.

"We are seeing people that are all blackened, with charred flesh that is not burned by normal bombs and flames," he said. "I am sure this is a special bomb. They are using incendiary weapons on civilians in the south. We are seeing these patients."

The doctor also told IPS that the Israelis are again using suction bombs, which they used heavily during the Lebanese civil war.

"They are using suction bombs that implode our buildings," he added, "With implosive bombs...instead of the glass blasted out, it is inside the building. These kill everyone inside the building. There are rarely survivors when they use these bombs."

Bilal Masri, assistant director of the Beirut Government University Hospital (BGUH) had told IPS earlier that "many of the injured in the south are suffering from the impact of incendiary white phosphorous."

Wafaa el-Yassir, Beirut representative of the non-governmental organisation Norwegian People's Aid, told IPS that several of her relief workers in the south had reported assisting people hit by incendiary weapons.

"The most important thing is that we have an investigation for the Israelis' use of banned weapons," she said. "They have used phosphorous in Nabatiyeh and cluster bombs in Dahaya district of Beirut."

She also told IPS that a doctor at the Bint Jbail hospital, in the small city near the southern border of Lebanon where much of the fierce fighting has taken place, had told her agency that he was certain that white phosphorous had been used against civilians there.

Zacharia al-Amedin, an 18-year-old refugee being treated for lacerations from bomb shrapnel told IPS, "I was in a village near Tyre, and the Israelis were dropping incendiary bombs all around us, even though there weren't fighters near us. So many civilians were hit by these weapons."

The Lebanese ministry of interior has officially said that the Israeli military has used this weapon.

President Emile Lahoud said recently on French radio: "According to the Geneva Conventions, when they use phosphorous bombs and laser bombs, is that allowed against civilians and children?"

An Israeli military spokesman told Reuters news agency, "Everything the Israeli defence forces are using is legitimate." International law requires that the military distinguish between combatants and civilians. Incendiary weapons and cluster bombs when used in areas where there may be civilians contravene international humanitarian law.

"We are a country of humans, not animals," Sham told IPS. "Real people are dying here. You must ask this of the world, to please help."

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