

Outcry over weapons used in Gaza

By [Global Research](#)

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Medics working in the Gaza Strip have condemned Israel's use of suspected "new weapons" that inflict horrific injuries they say most surgeons will not have seen before.

Dr Jan Brommundt, a German doctor working for Medecins du Monde in the south Gazan city of Khan Younis, described the injuries he had seen as "absolutely gruesome".

Speaking to Al Jazeera on Tuesday, Brommundt said surgeons had reported many cases where casualties had lost both legs rather than one, prompting suspicions that the Israelis were using some form of Dense Inert Metal Explosives (Dime).

When detonated, a Dime device expels a blade of charged tungsten dust that burns and destroys everything within a four-metre radius.

Brommundt also described widespread but previously unseen abdominal injuries that appear minor at first but degenerate within hours causing multi-organ failure.

"Initially everything seems in order... but they will present within one to five hours with an acute abdomen which looks like appendicitis but it turns out on operation that dozens of miniature particles can be found in all of their organs," he said.

"It seems to be some sort of explosive or shell that disperses tiny particles at around 1x1 or 2x1 millimetres that penetrate all organs, these miniature injuries, you are not able to attack them surgically."

The doctors said many patients succumb to septicaemia and die within 24 hours.

Dr Erik Fosse, a Norwegian surgeon who worked at the Al-Shifa hospital in northern Gaza during the Israeli offensive in Gaza, also told Al Jazeera there was a significant increase in double amputations.

"We suspect they [Israel] used Dime weapons because we saw cases of huge amputations or flesh torn off the lower parts of the body," he said.

"The pressure wave [from a Dime device] moves from the ground upwards and that's why the majority of patients have huge injuries to the lower part of the body and abdomen."

Cancer fears

Fosse described the injuries as "extreme" and "much more dramatic" than those inflicted by landmines as "legs are blown off to the groin, it's like they have been cut to pieces".

He described them as “new injuries” that most doctors will not have come across, although he noted similar wounds were reported in the 2006 Lebanon war.

Noting that Dime explosives are precision weapons that are supposed to minimise civilian casualties, Fosse said: “The problem is that most of the patients I saw were children. If they [the Israelis] are trying to be accurate, it seems obvious these weapons were aimed at children.”

Fosse called on the UN to establish a body in Gaza to monitor survivors to see if they developed cancer, following claims Dime devices contain radioactive material.

Medics and observers have also accused the Israelis of using white phosphorus – banned from use near civilians under international law – in the densely populated Gaza Strip.

Human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI) said on Monday that delegates it sent to Gaza had found “indisputable evidence of widespread use of white phosphorus in densely populated residential areas in Gaza City and in the north”.

“We saw streets and alleyways littered with evidence of the use of white phosphorus, including still burning wedges and the remnants of the shells and canisters fired by the Israeli army,” Christopher Cobb-Smith, a weapons expert touring Gaza as part of AI’s four-person delegation, said.

White phosphorus is a toxic chemical that causes severe burns and sparks fires that are difficult to extinguish.

It is dispersed in artillery shells, bombs and rockets and burns on contact with oxygen and is used to create a smokescreen to hide the movement of troops.

War crimes?

Israel fiercely denies using weapons in such a way as to contravene international law.

Major Avital Leibovich, a spokeswoman for the Israeli military, reiterated Israel was using “munitions that other militaries in the world are using” and that weapons were deployed “according to international law” .

Pressed on the number of civilian and child casualties in Gaza, she accused Hamas, the Palestinian faction that controls the territory, of hiding fighters within civilian areas and using ordinary Gazans as “human shields”.

Leibovich also said the international community needed to ask itself whether Hamas and other Palestinian factions had committed war crimes by firing rockets at Israeli citizens for eight years.

More than 1,300 Palestinians have been killed in the 22-day offensive, many of them woman and children, and 5,340 injured. Thirteen Israelis, including 10 soldiers and three civilians, have been killed in the same period.

The number of civilian deaths has provoked an international outcry, with senior UN officials demanding an independent investigation into whether Israel has committed war crimes.

The likelihood of either side being subject to a war-crimes action seems remote as the International Criminal Court (ICC) has no jurisdiction to investigate because the Gaza Strip is not a state.

In addition, Israel has not signed the Rome Statute that enshrined the ICC so any investigation would require a UN Security mandate - likely to be vetoed by Israel's ally, the US.

However, Mark Taylor, an international law expert, told Al Jazeera that individual commanders and politicians on both sides could be subject to legal actions lodged abroad.

"I think that Israelis in responsible positions, as well as Palestinians in responsible positions, are going to be looking over their shoulders in the days and weeks to come," he said.

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