Spent shells prove Israeli use of white phosphorus, Gaza doctors say

Sheera Frenkel in Jerusalem

Remnants of an Israeli white phosphorus shell, identified by the marking on the outer casing — M825A1 — have been found in the village of Sheikh Ajilin in western Gaza.

Witnesses in Gaza said that the shell was fired on January 9 and was taken indoors as evidence. They recalled seeing thick smoke and smelling a strong odour in keeping with the garlic-like smell associated with white phosphorus.

Hebrew writing on the shell casing reads “exploding smoke” — the term the Israeli army uses for white phosphorus. Doctors who examined the shell said that it appeared to include phosphorus residue.

Residents said that they suffered burns on their feet when they walked where the shelling had taken place.

A suspected phosphorus victim was taken from Gaza across the border into Egypt yesterday. Abdul Rahman Shaer, 16, was transferred to an Egyptian hospital from Rafah. He was suffering from severe chemical burns to his face and body.

Paramedics from Gaza said that doctors at the hospital were sure the chemical agent was phosphorus.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) reiterated that they would not comment on specific weaponry being used in Gaza but added that any ammunition used by the IDF was “within the scope of international law”.

The Geneva Treaty of 1980 stipulates that white phosphorus should not be used as a weapon of war in civilian areas but there is no blanket ban under international law on its use as a smokescreen or for illumination.

Human Rights organisations have criticised the use of it in Gaza, saying that it was impossible to avoid exposing civilians to the chemical because Gaza is densely populated.

Israeli security officials said that Palestinians were using phosphorus weapons of their own and that a phosphorus bomb exploded in the western Negev region of Israel yesterday. It was among 14 rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. No one was injured in the attacks.

Human Rights Watch renewed its appeal to Israel to refrain from using white phosphorus shells. “This is a chemical compound that burns structures and burns people,” Kenneth Roth, the executive director of the Washington-based organisation, said.

“It should not be used in populated areas.”

Mr Roth said that Human Rights Watch had experts in the region who had witnessed the use of phosphorus shells.

“Even if Israel might have some minor chemical variation of white phosphorus so that the thing they’re using has a new...
2 years ago a UNRA head man said in a Canadian interview that he sees no problem with UNRA employing Hamas members, if you check the records you will see that many Hamas members work at UNRA schools, one of them was headmaster of UNRA school for 3 years

Barry, Tel Aviv, Israel

This really is a "non-story" and another cheap attempt to demonise Israel. British forces use white phosphorous as a smokescreen too. It is a standard military tactic used throughout the world. There is not a shred of evidence that all "conceivable precautions" aren't being taken when using it.

Matt, Gloucester,

Look it up in janes. It's a smoke bomb that uses WP in felt pads to create the smoke.

Stephen, La Habra, USA