

# Made in the U.S.: White phosphorus weapons

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Gaza. Israel used white phosphorus weapons in its genocidal attack reports Gaza Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International.

“Any time that we provide items like white phosphorus to another military, it is with a full expectation that it’ll be used in keeping with ... legitimate purposes and in keeping with the law of armed conflict,” said U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby.

White phosphorus weapons are a part of the billions of dollars in U.S. munitions that flow to Israel every year. Biden administration officials say: “The United States is not conducting real-time assessments of Israel’s adherence to the laws of war,”

Credible evidence that Israel used white phosphorus weapons in its genocidal attack was reported by Gaza [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) and [Amnesty International](#). They say that [Israel has used white phosphorus](#) in Lebanon and Gaza beginning in early October. On Jan. 12, it was reported that more than 50 patients in [Nasser Hospital](#) were being treated for phosphorus burns.

According to data collected by [ACLED](#), a group that monitors war zones, Israel has used the munition more than 60 times in Lebanon’s border areas in the past two months. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Dec. 2 that Israel’s use of white phosphorus has “killed civilians and produced irreversible damage to more than 5 million square meters of forests and farmland, in addition to damaging thousands of olive trees.”

White phosphorus munitions ignite when exposed to oxygen. They cause [burn](#) injuries. Inhalation of the vapor inhalation can lead to asphyxiation. Fragments of their casings cause other injuries. Phosphorus burns carry an increased risk of mortality due to the absorption of toxic phosphorus into the body through the burned area, causing multiple organ failure.

Burning white phosphorus produces a hot, dense, white smoke consisting mainly of [phosphorus pentoxide](#) in aerosol form. The smoke is more dangerous in enclosed spaces. It sticks to various surfaces, including skin and clothes; the burning

substance is difficult to extinguish. White phosphorus can cause deep burns down to the bones, and remnants of the substance in the tissues can ignite again after the initial treatment.

It is difficult for military doctors, who are usually limited by medical resources, to provide timely and full assistance to the victims. In addition, fires caused by incendiary projectiles can destroy civilian buildings and property and damage crops and livestock.

International protocols and conventions on warfare, such as the Geneva Convention, ban [incendiary weapons](#) as “any weapon or munition which is primarily designed to set fire to objects or to cause burn injury to persons through the action of flame, heat, produced by a chemical reaction of a substance delivered on the target.” Other bans prohibit the deliberate use of incendiary weapons against civilian targets and the use of air-delivered incendiary weapons against military targets in civilian areas. Incendiary phosphorus bombs may also not be used near civilians in a way that can lead to indiscriminate civilian casualties.

The majority of U.S. white phosphorus munitions are produced at the Pine Bluff Arsenal in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The [Pine Bluff Arsenal](#) munitions production plant was originally built as part of the U.S. Army’s Chemical Warfare Service during World War II. The plant then went on to produce biological weapons, such as weaponized anthrax, until 1969, when that biological weapon was internationally banned.

