Weapons or munitions primarily designed to set fire to objects or to cause burn injury to persons through the action of flames, heat, or a combination thereof, produced by the chemical reaction of a substance delivered on the target. Incendiary weapons can take the form of flamethrowers, fougasses, shells, rockets, grenades, mines bombs and other containers of incendiary substances (e.g., napalm, phosphorous).

It is prohibited in all circumstances to use incendiary weapons against the civilian population\footnote{1}, civilian objects\footnote{2}, forests or other kinds of plant cover.

The following are \textbf{not} incendiary weapons:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a.] munitions which may have incidental incendiary effects, such as illuminants, tracer, smoke or signalling systems;
  \item[b.] munitions designed to combine penetration, blast or fragmentation effects with an additional incendiary effect, such as armour-piercing projectiles, fragmentation shells, explosive bombs and similar combined-effects munitions in which the incendiary effect is not specifically designed to cause burn injury to persons but to be used against military objectives such as armoured vehicles, aircraft and installations or facilities (e.g., anti-tank missiles).
\end{itemize}

See also Weapons\footnote{3}; Napalm\footnote{4}
OUTLINE

Chapter 9, III. 2. c) bb) incendiary weapons [5]

LEGAL SOURCE

CIHL, 84 [6]-85 [7]

DOCUMENT

Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons (Protocol III to the 1980 Convention) [8]

CASES

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Tablada [Para. 186] [9]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES


Source URL: https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/incendiary-weapons

Links