The term refers to **means of warfare** [1] generally employed in armed conflicts. The term distinguishes this class of **weapons** [2] from weapons of mass destruction (i.e., nuclear, chemical and biological/bacteriological weapons). International humanitarian law bans or restricts certain conventional weapons to protect civilians from their **indiscriminate** [3] effects and to spare combatants from suffering **superfluous injuries** [4] that serve no military purpose. As a consequence, specific weapons are forbidden in all circumstances because of their characteristics (e.g. **laser weapons** [5]), others are governed by restrictions in use (e.g. **incendiary weapons** [6]) and others can be both prohibited and restricted in use, according to their type and the treaty obligations applicable (e.g. **mines** [7]).

See **Weapons** [2]; **Mines** [7]; **Incendiary weapons** [6]; **Laser weapons** [5]; **Remnants of war** [8]; **Cluster munitions** [9]; **Ammunition** [10]; **Dum-dum bullets** [11]; **Non-detectable fragments** [12];
CCW [14]

Mines

CIHL, 80 [15]

CIHL, 81 [16]

CIHL, 82 [17]

CIHL, 83 [18]

CCW Protocol II [19]

CCW Protocol II (amended, 1996) [20]

Ottawa Convention [21]

Incendiary weapons

CIHL, 84 [22]-85 [23]

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Non-detectable fragments

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**DOCUMENTS**

- Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons
- Amendment to Article 1 of the 1980 Convention, in Order to Extend it to Non-International Armed Conflicts
- Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction
- Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons (Protocol III to the 1980 Convention)
Protocol on Non-Detectable Fragments (Protocol I to the 1980 Convention) [35]

Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV to the 1980 Convention) [36]

Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V to the 1980 Convention) [37]

CASES

United States, Memorandum of Law: The Use of Lasers as Anti-Personnel Weapons [38]

Case Study, Armed Conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (para 28) [39]

Iran/Iraq, UN Security Council Assessing Violations of International Humanitarian Law [40]

Geneva Call, Puntland State of Somalia adhering to a total ban on anti-personnel mines [41]

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Tablada (Para. 186) [42]

Syria, the Battle for Aleppo [43]

United Kingdom, Arms Trade With Saudi Arabia [44]
Suggested readings:


Further readings:


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

Links