The term refers to means of warfare generally employed in armed conflicts. The term distinguishes this class of weapons 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 effects and to spare combatants from suffering superfluous injuries that serve no military purpose. As a consequence, specific weapons are forbidden in all circumstances because of their characteristics (e.g. laser weapons), others are governed by restrictions in use (e.g. incendiary weapons) and others can be both prohibited and restricted in use, according to their type and the treaty obligations applicable (e.g. mines).

See Weapons; Mines; Incendiary weapons; Laser weapons; Remnants of war; Cluster munitions; Ammunition; Dum-dum bullets; Non-detectable fragments.
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]

CCW Protocol III [24]

Non-detectable fragments

CIHL, 79 [25]
CCW Protocol I [26]

Blinding weapons

CIHL, 86 [27]

CCW Protocol IV [28]

Explosive remnants

CCW Protocol V [29]

DOCUMENTS


Amendment to Article 1 of the 1980 Convention, in Order to Extend it to Non-International Armed Conflicts [31]


Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction [33]

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)

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


CASES

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

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

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

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

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

Syria, the Battle for Aleppo

United Kingdom, Arms Trade With Saudi Arabia
Suggested readings:


Further readings:


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

Links
[37] https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/610
[38] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/united-states-memorandum-law-use-lasers-anti-personnel-weapons