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Israel “Violating Every International Law” with Use of Lethal Weapons against Palestinian Civilians

By Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi
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The Israeli army is using very dangerous weapons, which can be lethal, to disperse demonstrators who are just demonstrating. The rules of engagement that the Israeli army is using against Palestinian demonstrators simply violate every international law.

First of all, Israeli forces use high velocity bullets, which have already caused at least 300 injuries and taken the lives of many people.

Second, they use what they call “rubber bullets,” but these are not rubber bullets at all; it’s a misconception or misrepresentation to call them “rubber.”

There are two types of rubber bullets. One is a cylinder, but inside it you have a very heavy metal. Usually when it is shot from a close distance it penetrates the body and frequently it penetrates the brain and becomes fatal. It is also very dangerous when it hits the eye. Many Palestinians have lost eyes because of these kinds of bullets.

The other type of bullet they call “rubber” is not rubber at all but a very heavy shard, and this shard is covered with a very thin piece of plastic. Again, this is very dangerous and responsible

for very serious injuries and it is misleading to keep saying that it is “rubber.”

Third, recently, Israeli forces started using this kind of bullet in a big quantity, they are heavy metallic bullets which are usually used against animals, but now they are using them against Palestinians.

You have what they call 0.22 bullets. The 0.22 bullet is a very small bullet, but it's very dangerous because when it hits a vital organ or a major vein it can cause bleeding to death. The so-called 0.22 bullet is used by snipers and it has been responsible for the death and injury of many people. Even B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organisation, issued a statement saying that their use is illegal.

Then you have the sponge, and the sponge is dangerous because it has taken away already 13 eyes, including 7 children who lost their eyes. They also use tear gas bombs, and they throw them in very big quantities, creating what we call “closed room effect”, which could kill people because of suffocation. We have already lost three women in previous years because of tear gas, they suffocated from tear gas. Sometimes Israeli forces fire up to 50 tear gas bombs at once and that can also have long term effects.

When you throw tear gas to disperse the crowd you throw one, two, three tear gas bombs, not fifty. Tear gas is also very dangerous because it is a chemical and we don't know the long term effects of using such chemicals. Many people including myself have had serious bronchitis and laryngitis because of this. We think that long term and repeated exposure could be risky to people's health.

Some neighbourhoods like Al-Aida camp in Bethlehem are very close to confrontation areas and are routinely exposed to tear gas, so children, families, everyone breathes in tear gas around the clock. The furniture is full of it, the walls, the beds, everything.

Then they use stun grenades, and stun grenades are dangerous especially when they are thrown directly at people. Many people have had severe injuries because they have had stun grenades thrown at them directly, and when they explode they can cause serious injuries. Some people have lost their hearing because of stun grenades. Tear gas bombs also, the metallic ones are especially dangerous because sometimes the army uses them as bullets in the sense that they direct them at someone. One of the guys who died from this, his heart stopped beating when the tear gas bomb hit him.

You should not shoot people when they are very far from you and when they present no risk to you. They start shooting when they see people in the distance.