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## ISRAELI ARMY USED FLECHETTES AGAINST GAZA CIVILIANS

27 January 2009

Apart from white phosphorus, the Israeli army used a variety of other weapons in densely populated civilian areas of Gaza in the three-week conflict that began on 27 December.

Flechettes are 4cm long metal darts that are sharply pointed at the front, with four fins at the rear. Between 5,000 and 8,000 are packed into 120mm shells which are generally fired from tanks. The shells explode in the air and scatter the flechettes in a conical pattern over an area about 300m wide and 100m long.



A flechette embedded in a wall in a Bedouin village in Gaza

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An anti-personnel weapon designed to penetrate dense vegetation, flechettes should never be used in built-up civilian areas. The Israeli army has used them in Gaza periodically for several years. In most cases their use has resulted in civilians being killed or injured.

Amnesty International's fact-finding team in Gaza first heard about the use of flechettes in the most recent conflict some ten days ago. The father of one of the victims showed the team a flechette which had been taken out of his son's body.

In its latest post on Amnesty International's [Livewire blog](#), the team described how on Monday it visited towns and villages around Gaza and found more hard evidence of the use of flechettes.

In 'Izbat Beit Hanoun, to the south-west of the town of Beit Hanoun, several flechette shells were fired into the main road, killing two people and injuring several others on the morning of 5 January.

Wafa' Nabil Abu Jarad, a 21-year-old pregnant mother of two, was one of those killed. Her husband and her mother-in-law told the team that the family had just had breakfast and were outside the house drinking tea in the sun.

Wafa' and her husband were standing by the corner of the house when they heard a noise, followed by screams. They turned to go back into their house but at that moment Wafa' and several other members of the family were hit by flechettes. Wafa' was killed outright.

That same day, at the other end of the street, 16-year-old Islam Jaber Abd-al-Dayem was struck in the neck by a flechette. He was taken to the hospital's intensive care unit but died three days later. Mizar, his brother, was injured in the same attack and still has a flechette lodged in his back.

In the village of al-Mughraqa on the morning of 7 January, a shell struck the room where Atta Hassan Aref Azzam was sitting with two of his children, Mohammed, aged 13 and Hassan, aged two and a half. All three were killed. The six other members of the family who were in the house fled to the nearest school for shelter. The team examined the bloodstained wall by which the three were killed. It was full of flechettes.

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