

March 9, 2026 12:01AM EDT | News Release

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# Lebanon: Israel Unlawfully Using White Phosphorus

## Human Rights Watch Verifies Use of Incendiary Weapon over Residential Areas in Southern Lebanon



*Update, March 9, 2026: Since the press release was published, the reported death toll from Israeli attacks has risen to **394**, as of March 8.*

(Beirut) – The [Israeli](#) military unlawfully used artillery-fired white phosphorus munitions over homes on March 3, 2026, in the southern [Lebanese](#) town of Yohmor, Human Rights Watch said today.

Human Rights Watch verified and geolocated eight images showing airburst white phosphorus munitions being deployed over a residential part of the town and civil defense workers responding to fires in at least two homes and one car in that area.

“The Israeli military’s unlawful use of white phosphorus over residential areas is extremely alarming and will have dire consequences for civilians,” said [Ramzi Kaiss](#), Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The [incendiary effects](#) of white phosphorous can cause death or cruel injuries that result in lifelong suffering.”

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charges of the M825-series 155mm artillery projectile that contains white phosphorus.

Earlier that day, at 5:27 a.m., Avichay Adraee, Israel's Arabic military spokesperson, issued an [order](#) stating that residents of Yohmor and 50 other villages and towns "should immediately evacuate [their homes] and move away from the villages to a distance of at least 1,000 meters outside the village to open land." Adraee repeated the statement at 12:12 p.m. that day. Human Rights Watch has not verified whether people were in the area or injured as a result of white phosphorus use.

Human Rights Watch has previously documented the Israeli military's [widespread use of white phosphorus](#) between October 2023 and May 2024 across border villages in southern Lebanon, which put civilians at grave risk and contributed to civilian displacement.

White phosphorus can be used for multiple purposes, including to obscure, mark, signal, or directly attack military personnel and materiel. Concerns over its use in populated areas are amplified by the technique shown in videos of air-bursting white phosphorus projectiles, which spread 116 burning felt wedges impregnated with the substance over an area between 125 and 250 meters in diameter, depending on the altitude and angle of the burst, indiscriminately exposing more civilians and civilian structures to potential harm than a localized ground burst.



At least two artillery-delivered white phosphorus munitions being airburst over a residential neighborhood in the town of Yohmor, in southern Lebanon, March 3, 2026. © Source Unknown/Rights Holder Please Contact

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Since the recent escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah on March 2, at least 217 people have been [killed](#) in Lebanon as of March 6, according to the health ministry, and [hundreds of thousands](#) have been displaced.

The Israeli military has issued [displacement orders](#) for the entire population of Lebanon south of the Litani River and all residents of Beirut's [southern suburbs](#), which include hundreds of thousands of people. The sweeping nature of the Israeli military's displacement orders raises concerns that their primary purpose is not to protect civilians but to instead spread terror and panic, especially in the context of recent large-scale displacement of civilians in Lebanon, raising serious risks of the war crime of forced displacement, Human Rights Watch said.

Israel should prohibit all use of airburst artillery-delivered white phosphorus munitions in populated areas because it puts civilians at risk of indiscriminate attacks. There are available alternatives to white phosphorus in smoke shells, including some produced by Israeli companies such as the M150 smoke projectile, which the Israeli army has used in the [past](#) as an obscurant, a means of hindering the visibility of its forces. These alternatives can have the same effect and dramatically reduce the harm to civilians.

Human Rights Watch has urged [Israel's](#) key allies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, to [suspend military assistance](#) and arms sales to Israel and impose [targeted sanctions](#) on officials credibly implicated in grave crimes. Lebanon's judicial authorities should initiate domestic investigations of serious international crimes, and the government should accede to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Rome Statute and submit a declaration accepting the court's jurisdiction prior to the date of accession, including since at least October 7, 2023.

Israel's widespread use of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon highlights the need for stronger international law on incendiary weapons, Human Rights Watch said. [Protocol III](#) of the Convention on

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caused by incendiary weapons.

“Israel should immediately halt this practice and states providing Israel with weapons, including white phosphorus munitions, should immediately suspend military assistance and arms sales and push Israel to stop firing such munitions in residential areas,” Kaiss said.

### CORRECTION

**March 9, 2026:** This version of the news release was updated to accurately reflect the number of images verified and geolocated by Human Rights Watch.

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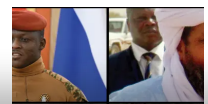
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