

# Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

19 November 2024

English only

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Geneva, 13-15 November 2024

Agenda item 7

General exchange of views

## Implementation of Obligations Under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in Light of Violations by the Occupying Power in the Palestinian Territory and Lebanon\*

### Submitted by Iraq on behalf of the Arab States

1. The meeting of the High Contracting Parties is being held amid major challenges and a complex international situation that poses existential threats. It is also accompanied by the increasing use of destructive conventional weapons in the conflicts we are witnessing today, which threatens to undermine the foundations of humanitarian principles, inflict serious damage on disarmament efforts, and our multilateral international system and its ability to safeguard international peace and security, in addition to its severe humanitarian, political, economic, and social impacts that have crossed borders.
2. In this context, the Group is keen to recall the importance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its five Protocols, which is a major instrument of international humanitarian law that contributes to preventing and alleviating the suffering of civilians and combatants.
3. The Convention enshrined in its preamble the general principle of protecting the civilian population from the effects of hostilities, as well as the principle of international law that the right of the parties to an armed conflict to choose methods and means of warfare is not unlimited. In addition, it prohibits the use of weapons, projectiles, equipment, and methods of warfare that are inherently likely to cause excessive damage or unnecessary suffering.
4. The Group also emphasizes that, according to the outcomes of the Final Document of the 2021 Sixth Review Conference of the Convention, High Contracting Parties reaffirmed their commitment to fully respect and comply with the Convention and its annexed Protocols. They also acknowledged that all parties to any armed conflict must comply with international humanitarian law and announced their intention to address the use of conventional weapons during armed conflict in populated areas. They also condemned, according to paragraph 89 of the Final Document of the Sixth Review Conference of the Convention, "any use of incendiary weapons against civilians or civilian objects and any other use that is contrary to the relevant rules of international humanitarian law, including Protocol III."
5. Since the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is closely linked to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, we also recall in this regard the Declaration issued by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was organized by Switzerland as the Depository State on December 17, 2014. It reaffirmed the basic principles of international humanitarian

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



law and acknowledged its applicability to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, considering the violations committed against civilians by the illegal occupying power.

6. The Arab States reaffirm their full support for the United Nations General Assembly resolution adopted in September 2024, which calls for the swift convening of a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to address the issue of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

7. The Arab States recall the diplomatic efforts that led to the 2022 Political Declaration in Dublin, which stressed the need to strengthen the protection of civilians from the consequences of explosive weapons in populated areas.

8. The tragic situation we are witnessing today starkly demonstrates the severe violation of both legal obligations and political commitments. This is evidenced by the illegal occupying power's relentless aggression and horrific massacres in the besieged Gaza Strip for years, targeting densely populated areas and civilian structures, including hospitals, places of worship, refugee camps, and schools where civilians seek shelter, as well as United Nations facilities, including those of UNRWA. These actions occur amidst a troubling double standard in the international community, which provides advanced weaponry to the occupying power while ignoring the suffering of a people subjected to brutal colonial occupation for over 76 years.

9. The Arab Group condemns the occupying power's disregard for the objectives and principles of the Convention and its use of prohibited methods to launch attacks targeting civilian populations and infrastructure in an indiscriminate manner in violation of international law, causing serious and long-term damage to peaceful civilian populations and the environment, and hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the region.

10. The Arab Group strongly condemns the actions of the illegal occupying power, which have carried out relentless and indiscriminate attacks on Gaza over the past year, including the deployment of explosive ordnance equivalent to three nuclear bombs and thousands of airstrikes on densely populated civilian areas. These actions have led to the deaths of approximately 45,000 civilians and injuries to more than 85,000 others, the majority of whom are women and children. The bombardment has resulted in about 39 million tons of rubble over a 41-kilometer area, raising serious concerns about significant amounts of unexploded ordnance buried under the debris. In this regard, the Arab Group expresses deep concern over the continued violations committed by the occupying forces against the State of Palestine, holding them fully responsible for the tremendous loss of life, human suffering, and destruction of property and infrastructure.

11. The Arab States strongly denounce the ongoing series of attacks on Lebanon involving the use of conventional weapons, which have resulted in thousands of civilian casualties—including children, women, the elderly, and medical personnel—and displaced over a million people due to the destruction of thousands of residential units. These attacks have turned entire towns and villages into rubble under which countless unexploded ordnance remain.

12. The Arab States stress the need for an immediate cessation of aggression and warn against launching a wide-scale attack on Lebanon, given the recent developments that could ignite a regional war threatening the security and stability of the entire region.

13. The Arab States strongly condemn the treacherous attacks by the illegal occupying power, which have employed explosive devices disguised as communication equipment and detonated them remotely within Lebanon. Such actions set a dangerous precedent in the history of warfare, are prohibited under Article 7 of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and are not merely acts of random violence but constitute clear violations of international law that threaten human security and the future stability of the region.

14. The Arab Group also condemns the use of white phosphorus by the occupying power in its attacks against Gaza and Lebanon, resulting in civilian casualties, destruction of civilian objects, and widespread fires in agricultural lands and forests, causing long-term environmental damage. This has been documented by numerous international governmental and non-governmental organizations. This constitutes a flagrant violation of Protocol III of

the Convention on Conventional Weapons, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law

15. The continued aggression, international crimes, non-compliance with international agreements, and violation of international humanitarian law, in defiance of United Nations resolutions, lie at the heart of the crisis affecting human values and the global legal and institutional system. This tragic reality, coupled with the silence of various actors compared to other conflicts, places the credibility of the international community at stake, deepening humanity's failure and threatening global values, as well as escalating threats to international peace and security and our multilateral international system. In this context, the Arab Group emphasizes the demand for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Lebanon and the cessation of military cooperation with the illegal occupying power, along with the de-escalation of hostilities against the two peoples, a responsibility that the entire international community must bear to protect regional and international peace and security.

16. Regarding the challenges posed by emerging technologies in the field of lethal autonomous weapon systems, the international reports reveal the illegal occupying power use of autonomous weapons systems enhanced with artificial intelligence tools during its ongoing aggression against Palestine. This has caused unprecedented civilian casualties and widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure, exploiting the absence of a legal framework prohibiting the use of such weapons.

17. The Arab Group affirms that autonomous weapons systems pose profound ethical, legal, moral, and technical challenges, as well as concerns related to international peace and security. These issues must be thoroughly discussed and examined in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

18. The Arab States underscore the urgent need for a binding international legal instrument within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to regulate autonomous weapons systems and ensure human control. The Arab Group emphasize that this instrument should be established before the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts concludes, recognizing the Convention as the most appropriate framework for prohibiting these weapons.

19. The Group continues to express its condemnation of the use of landmines, cluster munitions, booby traps, and bombs in conflict situations aimed at maiming, killing, and terrorizing innocent civilians. The issue of landmines, munitions, and war remnants poses a significant threat to the lives of civilians, in addition to the long-term social, economic, and environmental repercussions that must be addressed decisively.

20. The Group urges the High Contracting Parties to bear the responsibility of ensuring respect for the Convention and the principles of international humanitarian law. The Arab States, as parties and signatories, affirm their commitment to achieving the humanitarian goals of the Convention and contributing to the success of the meetings. They look forward to the implementation by all High Contracting Parties of their obligations and commitments arising from the Convention and its meetings in a manner that contributes to upholding human values, legal principles, and enhancing international peace, security, and the multilateral international system.

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