

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2312/09
by Catherine Stihler (PSE)
to the Council

Subject: Ban on the use of white phosphorous in conflicts

The Israeli Army is currently investigating claims that it used white phosphorous illegally during its three-week offensive in Gaza. The move follows numerous allegations by rights groups and in media reports that the army fired phosphorous shells where they could harm civilians. The UN said that its headquarters were hit by three such shells, causing a fire destroying much of its aid supplies. White phosphorous is legal for making smokescreens on a battlefield, but it sticks to human skin and will burn right through to the bone, causing death or leaving survivors with painful wounds which are slow to heal. Its ingestion or inhalation can also be fatal.

Given the impact of the use of white phosphorous in conflicts, will the Council take action with a view to an immediate ban?