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Depleted Uranium in Gaza: the UN must investigate.

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To His Excellency Mr Ban Ki Moon
[-] Secretary-General
[-] United Nations Organisation

Purpose: Request for the UN to conduct an investigation into the presence of radioactive materials in the Gaza Strip region.

Mr Secretary-General,

With respect and with regret, we feel obliged to draw your attention to an aspect of the Gaza conflict which seems to us to be extremely grave and to have effects that will last long after peace returns: the use of Depleted Uranium weapons.

We have serious reasons for believing that the Israeli Army has made intensive use of GBU-39 bombs. According to our information, the explosive heads of these bombs seem to contain not only the new explosive DIME (Dense Inert Metal Explosive), whose effects on victims can be called inhumane, but also a coating composed of a metallic alloy based on Depleted Uranium, which serves as an anti-bunker and anti-tunnel penetrator - each bomb containing about thirty kilos of uranium.

It is known that from the first days of "Operation Cast Lead" dozens of bombs were used against the tunnels of the "Philadelphia Corridor" at Rafah, and that several hundreds more have certainly been used since then, and that in early December 2008 Israel received from the USA a consignment of a thousand GBU-39s. One can fear therefore that in the end about thirty tonnes of Depleted Uranium will have been dispersed into the environment of the Gaza Strip.

In addition to these quantities, we may include other even more powerful bombs and other types of uranium munitions (such as the US APFS-DS tank rounds which are commonly used by Abrams tanks). It is possible also that the longer-range rockets recently launched against Israel from the Gaza Strip might also contain Depleted Uranium.

In the view of many scientists, Depleted Uranium weapons are largely responsible for the "Gulf War Syndrome" which - according to an official report submitted to the US Senate in November 2008 - caused illness in at least a quarter of the veterans of the 1991 Gulf War, that is between 185 000 and 210 000 of these veterans. Thousands of them have died.

Since 1991, notably in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan, the populations living and breathing in areas where Depleted Uranium was dispersed as microparticles and nanoparticles have likewise been dramatically affected. Thus, the Director of the Oncology Centre in Bassora reports that cancer deaths rose from about 25 in 1988 to more than 600 in 1998. Births of babies with genetic anomalies have multiplied and taken monstrous forms.

The same misfortunes are now likely to occur in the Gaza Strip and in neighbouring areas such as Egypt, Jordan and Israel itself. Furthermore, the nanoparticles of uranium in the atmosphere can travel great distances, so that no part of the world is totally sheltered from their contamination.

When inhaled, ingested or entering the bloodstream, uranium attacks the DNA of the cells and causes increases in cancers and various other pathologies. It also attacks the victims' genes and genetic inheritance. And it contaminates the environment practically for ever, since U238 - its main component - has a radioactive half-life of 4.5 billion years.

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Depleted uranium weapons thus have a genocidal character, and threaten humankind as a whole. Their use amounts to a crime against humanity.

We are aware that nothing short of on-the-spot sampling and scientific analyses of a thorough, multiple, objective and rigorous nature can truly verify our fears by showing the presence of radioactive materials - or can prove our fears to be groundless (for which we would be extremely glad). If radioactive materials are found, measures must be taken urgently to decontaminate the areas, and to inform and protect the local population, as far as possible.

For these reasons we request that you give orders as soon as possible for an investigation on the spot to search for traces of radioactivity. We presume that the UN Environment Program could do this, because one of our groups was told (concerning a previous matter which it had drawn to the attention of your secretariat and the IAEA) that such missions fell outside the scope of the IAEA.

With the highest respect to yourself and your high office.

Yours sincerely,

- *Jean-Marie Matagne,* President, **Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire** (Action of Citizens for Nuclear Disarmament)

mailto: ACDN

- *Paolo Scampa,* President, **Association Internationale pour la Protection contre les Radiations Ionisantes** (International Association for Protection against Ionising Radiation)

mailto: A.I.P.R.I.

- *Alain Acariès*

Father of a UN blue-helmet peacekeeper in the FORPRONU mission (Balkans) who died as a result of nanoparticles caused by the use of Depleted Uranium weapons.

PETITION

To sign the petition for the abandonment by France and other countries of DU weapons and for a universal ban on radioactive weapons

MORE INFORMATION:

[-] In Gaza, Genocide by Depleted Uranium has begun

[-] Genocide by Depleted Uranium in Gaza: the dossier

[-] Letter to President Chirac, 6 April 2003

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[-] Death Made In America

[-] D.U. Effects on People in the South of Irak

[-] 63 scientifiques dénoncent les dangers de l'uranium appauvri

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