

New weapons: civil society and scientists

Research team on new weapons,
<http://www.newweapons.org>

By Paola Manduca, Geneticist, University of Genoa. Prepared for the meeting of the Federazione Scienze della Vita, Riva del Garda, Italy, October 1, 2006.

In the first days of Israeli's attack on Gaza and Lebanon, have been published in Arabic newspapers appeals and denounces originating from local doctors who asked to international scientists to help them to understand the causes of the unusual features they were observing in the civilians and militants hurt or killed in these attacks. They were witnessing modalities of wounds and deaths that they never saw before and not compatible with use of conventional weapons. The doctors asked to be helped to identify which type of weapons could cause death without evident wounds, corpses blackened and swollen, (Dr. Ibrhaim Faraj, surgeon Hiram Hospital, Tyre, and Dr. Kamel Mohanna, Pediatric and president of the association Amel, Beirut, interviews M. Sordo, video takes by F. Grimaldi),



shrunk and fragile bodies (Dr. Hussein M. El Chel, Head physician at First Aid department, Rar El Amal Hospital, Balbeek interview M. Sordo), of the very small multiple wounds to the limbs,



that went in progressive gangrene even after amputation of the limb, of wound where X ray did not show fragments of weapons, of people dead without external wounds, but with fragmented tissue in the liver and bone marrow (Dr. Saqqa, Medical speaker of the Gaza Hospital (Rainews24 interview), of corpses burned to the bones by inextinguishable fires; altogether of various characteristics in hurt and dead people not compatible with those seen in traditional attacks.



In many cases the characteristics of the corpses and the descriptions of the attacks suggested strongly a likeness with those reported in the attack by the USA Army on Falluja, in Iraq, a circumstance where it was confirmed that the Americans used white Phosphorus a photo taken in Beirut and appeared on the newspaper Al Safir.



All the denounces regarded events which had happened in the first week of the war to Lebanon and the correspondent week of attacks to Gaza. Many of the places where these episodes happened have been then bombed again with traditional bombs over and again (see also the declarations by UNIFIL).

When these news arrived to us we they were accompanied by images. These images have not been seen by most of the people and the western press and television have ignored their existence. The Guardian almost caused a scandal by publishing the photo below, a dead died in the arms of a dead woman, in the massacre at Qunah.



Feeling that the request for aid was also directed to the scientific community and aware of the possibility (mentioned also in public or declassified of the USA Senate and the American Air force) that similar attack might continue, some scientist wrote to the journal Il Manifesto on August 8 an appeal to raise the attention of the scientific community, in which among other considerations we asked for the active

and monitoring attention of the Italian scientific community. From this appeal, which appeared later on in various web sites, an international working group was born, composed of scientists hard and soft, professionals of the information and medical staff. A web site will be active and dedicated to the information, archives and elaboration as interactive instrument for working (<http://www.newweapons.org>).

After our appeal we began the interaction with Doctors in the Hospitals, with organizations for the development, Lawyers for human rights and the Lebanese civil society. One of us has made a first trip to Lebanon to verify the denunciations and interact with the organizations working to the collection of the circumstantial evidences. We are now defining a working hypothesis to make scientific tests on the bioptic samples from unusual deaths caused by the Israeli attacks in Lebanon. With the collaboration also of groups of Israeli Doctors for human rights, we are attempting to reach Doctors in Gaza, even if it is more difficulty due the blocks set at the borders and to the lack of electricity and communications.

Why in a war where there have been so many "normal" deaths (1,200 in Lebanese of which 80% civilians and 30% children under 12 years (c)), the documented use, denounced already in July from Human Right Watch (d) of cluster bombs, where the targeting of the civil population by Israel and Herzbollah was denounced from Amnesty International (e), the use of DU from Israel is suspected and are documented photographically DU bombs travelling on Israeli trucks in Lebanese territory, and where Dr. M.Qobeissi, of the Natl.Council for Scientific Research and the Dr. I. Rashidi, Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lebanon, have denounced the radioactivity found in a crater of a bomb in Khiam, why are we interested to assess what "else" was used in this war?

Because in these attacks is emerging the future use of the weapons, the use of indiscriminate force against populations, the mechanic of the wars. Because we are dealing with the weapons that will continue to be used in the future wars, and because future wars have been promised repeatedly from the most powerful leaders and will be preventive wars, diffused and permanent and will be conducted with new technologies and bypassing the international "rules in war" and directed to the civil populations and infrastructures.

The "New" weapons

In the last years have been develop new types of weapons that are based on the use of the directed energy, in shape of Laser, electromagnetic waves, generation of plasma, or that create negative air waves. The largest investment in money and research for these developments are funds, approved from the Government USA (FY 2004-2007); leaders of these R&D to the delivery of the product are private industries (like the Raytheon, Lockheed Martin to cite a couple) and the Airforce Research labs (AFRL) or other structures of the US Dept. of Defense or of the Pentagon.

The common characteristics that reflect the philosophy of the present and next wars is that these optimize and upgrade their lethal effect on people over the impact on the structures, that they are adequate for multiple possibilities of deployment, air, navy, ground, drones, they have the possibility to modulate their intensity (dual use technology) so that can be used as deterrent for the control of the crowds and for killing, they exist therefore in various models, some of which are propose dfor police

implementation in the western countries. They have different models “custom made” towards the targeting of individuals, like in the case of the small bombs, with various span of reach and various degree of lethal potential, directed to implement the practice of “reducing the collateral damages and enforce that of targeted homicides (f).

In the majority of the cases the so called new weapons are prototypes already in production, and ready for the use, but requiring testing on the field. Many of these weapons represent an improvement of technology of war, either having the additional advantage of not requiring ammunitions, such as "sources" or "generators” of rays which can be reutilized, or demand lesser space and comparatively have littler weight, or can be manned in new ways. Or have improved efficacy and more accuracy in “targeting”, or differentiated carrier systems for better “delivery”.

There are indications that in Gaza and in Lebanon some of these new weapons have been used. And in both cases the civil population has been the victim. These weapons are not included in any specific international agreement, therefore their indiscriminate use is only regulated by the Geneva convention, which imposes that the use of the force should be proportional and not against civilians. But even this offers ground for disputes at each and any time. Even if one succeeded to enforce the application of the relevant articles of the Geneva convention, we would be left with the question of what indeed has been used in the war to Lebanon and in Gaza and what could still be used. In absence of an inquiry aimed to establish this and of a regulation on the production, sale and utilization of the weapons tested, there will not be even official record of their use.

The aims of the working group is to help to document the use of these “new” weapons in the war by Israel to the Lebanese and in the attack on Gaza, starting in July 2006.

We will act by:

- Continuing to ask that independent scientific assessments and on the field are made, including international UN commissions.
- Supplying the methods, scientific and for the collection of evidences from the field, including the delivery of protocols to preserve and analyze material and not-material evidences.
- Developing a network of "concerned" doctors and scientists that will research on the effects on the living of the weapons and on the prevention, where possible, of their effects by supplying suggestions on treatment of the wounded, and by listing the individuals and organizations that work in a similar direction.
- Collecting information on the “new” weapons, on their short and long term effects and diffusing the information that is available on this topic, so to increase the knowledge of facts.
- Carrying out surveys in the places of the wars in collaboration with local and international doctors and ONG for the protection of the health and environment and for human rights that operate in these places, in order to draw up a dossier of cases, a collection of testimonies and evidences, to make them available to public.
- Collaborating with international networks of lawyers that intend to give follow to the acquisition of "facts and documentation".

People that are interested in our project can therefore collaborate in various ways, according to their specific competence. to the time and effort that they can dedicate and to their inclinations.

The working group newweapons is a self-financed initiative, that has chosen of being and remaining such.

People can support to us by contacting at info@newweapons.org for information on how to make available to us their support and for knowing what are the projects to which it will be dedicated. A report of funding will be made available to the people that contribute to our work.

Our website is under construction at <http://www.newweapons.org>

We need support to travel, to do research, to have doctors and scientists from the countries attacked to travel abroad for research, collaborations and conferences.

References

- (a) http://www.rainews24.it/ran24/speciali/medio_oriente_2005/default.htm
- (b) http://www.rainews24.it/ran24/inchieste/guerre_stellari_iraq.asp
- (c) <http://www.annd.org/sidecontent/anmviewer.asp?a=89&z=27>
- (d) http://hrw.org/reports/2006/lebanon0806/3.htm#_Toc142299221
- (e) <http://www.amnesty.org/>
- (f) <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/dime.htm>