

GALMUN 2017



DISARMAMENT

Research Report

February 5th, 2017

Background:

There is no authoritative definition of a barrel bomb under international law. In common parlance, the term refers to an improvised container dropped from an aircraft and filled with explosive, incendiary or other substances and often additional materials to increase fragment projection. Some countries define it as an improvised unguided bomb, sometimes described as a flying IED. Barrel bombs are usually cheap to produce and easy to make, and their use is very broad in that many countries use them every day for several purposes. Barrel bombs are mostly used in the Syrian conflict, harming the lives of many civilians there.

One of the main problems with barrel bombs is its inconclusive definition. Because of its lack of a specific definition, it is not clearly banned and prohibited by the Geneva conventions (international law)

Using barrel bombs results in many dangers and harms many civilians. It is estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 barrel bombs have been used and that more than 20,000 people have been killed by them since the conflict in Syria began in March 2011. Moreover, according to statistics from the Violations Documentation Center, aerial bomb attacks killed 1,655 civilians in the Aleppo governorate between Feb. 22, and July 22. Area bombing or carpet bombing, where conventional shells are used to bombard a large area from the air, a practice used widely during World War II, was banned by the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention (1949), which is still considered the cornerstone of contemporary humanitarian law. The Bashar al Assad regime has denied their use of barrel bombs even with the existence of video evidence.

It is estimated that if countries continue using barrel bombs, a quarter of the world's area will be destroyed within 50 years. In addition, using them constantly will result in harming the environment and increase the cases of death in the areas that barrel bombs are used. One barrel bomb can easily cause death for hundreds of people and harm the lives and houses of many civilians.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria has condemned the continuing use of barrel bombs in the Middle Eastern country's ongoing conflict and called on all parties to respect the sanctity of civilian life. Moreover, the Special Envoy reportedly stressed that the protection of civilians during armed conflicts remains a

cornerstone of international humanitarian law and is applicable in all circumstances without distinction. The UN calls upon all countries to stop using these harmful weapons.

In February 2014, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2139 which demanded that parties to the Syrian conflict cease all barrel bomb attacks. Even with this resolution, barrel bombs are still being used in Syria. Efforts made by the international community to push for the end of barrel bomb use is considered too little compared to the size of the issue and how many lives it has affected and ended.

- WWI : World War One
- WWII : World War Two
- ICC : International Criminal Court
- DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo
- UN : United Nations
- ICTR : International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
- IED: improvised explosive device

Questions to Consider:

1. What are barrel bombs?
2. Are there any international treaties dealing with their use?
3. Has your country ever used them? Does your country have any official stance on them? What is your country's position on Syria?
4. Where in the world have barrel bombs been used?
5. How prevalent are barrel bombs in Syria?
6. How can we ensure the prevention of the use of barrel bombs in Syria?
7. Which steps do we need to take in order to prohibit the use of Barrel Bombs, or at least minimize their use in future conflicts?
8. What role should international organizations play in the prevention of their use?

Useful links:

<http://unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/model-un-preparation>

<https://www.offiziere.ch/?p=25477>

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/28/at-un-panel-speakers-call-for-end-to-syria-barrel-bombs.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11858319/How-to-slow-the-refugee-crisis-in-Europe-stop-barrel-bombs-in-Syria.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrel_bomb

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/11/war-crimes-barrel-bombs-in-syria-and-iraq>