

Statement on the Israeli strikes on Nabatieh and Mhaibib

The IHL Centre is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence in Lebanon, particularly the targeted attack on the Nabatieh municipal headquarters, which resulted in the death of the Mayor and 16 others, as well as 52 wounded. Additionally, the detonation of a large amount of explosives in the village of Mhaibib leaving the area in ruins, causing widespread devastation.

Under IHL, for an attack on a military objective to be lawful, the principles of proportionality and precaution must be strictly adhered to. The principle of proportionality requires that any incidental harm to civilians or civilian objects must not be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage gained. This obligation mandates that all feasible precautions be taken to avoid, or at the very least minimize, civilian harm. Precautionary measures include considerations such as the timing of attacks, avoiding military operations in densely populated areas, selecting appropriate means of warfare relative to the target, and anticipating potential secondary explosions when targeting weapon storage sites.

Effective advance warnings must be issued before any attack that may affect civilians, providing them with adequate time and means to safely evacuate the area. Civilians who remain in place after a warning do not lose their protection under IHL.

IHL explicitly prohibits attacks that strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction. These include operations that do not target a specific military objective or utilize methods that cannot be directed at a specific target, such as area bombardments or "carpet bombing", in which entire areas containing both military objectives and civilians and civilian objects were treated as a single military objective and attacked without distinction.

The IHL Center highlights that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is likely to violate the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks and risks leading to excessive civilian harm and damage to civilian objects.

The widespread harm to civilian lives and property in the attacks under consideration reinforces the urgent need for all parties in the conflict to fulfill their obligations under international law.

In conclusion, the IHL Centre reiterates that all parties to the conflict must act in strict adherence to international humanitarian law to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure can be protected to the greatest extent possible. The IHL Center also urges all parties to allow and support independent investigations into all such attacks where there has been such a high level of casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure