

Arms trade with Israel: embargo all military deals now



The UK Government allows arms trading with Israel in spite of Israel's ongoing defiance of UN resolutions and evidence of war crimes and human rights violations against Palestinians and citizens of neighbouring states.

We are calling for a comprehensive embargo on arms trading and military collaboration with Israel. The embargo must include direct arms trading and manufacturing partnerships between UK and Israel. Pressure should be exerted on the EU to review the EU Israel Association Agreement which includes funding for military research and development.

We demand that the Government:

1. Stops supplying Israel with arms and related material of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, including dual-use equipment, and related spare parts, and cease the provision of all types of equipment and supplies and grants of export licences for the manufacture and maintenance of such items;
2. Includes in its embargo components sold by the UK for incorporation in (mostly US) equipment going to Israel;
3. Stops all military and dual-use imports (equipment, assistance and munitions) from Israel;
4. Stops cooperation with the Israeli army, military companies, and military-related research and development projects, including joint ventures (whether bilateral or

multilateral);

5. Halts all military-related training and consultancies involving the Israeli army, military companies and academic research institutions;
6. Refrains from any cooperation with Israel in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons and calls for Israel's nuclear disarmament as part of a nuclear-free Middle East.

For over 60 years Israeli wars, policies of occupation, apartheid, internal repression and ethnic cleansing have depended on international military relations. Israel uses military force to maintain an unlawful regime of occupation, colonialism and apartheid, which is put in place in order to control Palestinians in the occupied territories, and to prevent the Palestinian people from exercising its inalienable right to self-determination. Israel has repeatedly violated international law, provoking or initiating armed conflicts aimed at territorial expansion through the annexation of occupied territory.

At the same time, those cooperating militarily with Israel are also profiting from these policies and weapons, which are developed as a result of Israel's unlawful use of military force. Israel is the fifth largest military exporter globally; its military exports constitute 7.3 percent of its GDP and, with 6.5 million citizens, Israeli military spending ranks sixth in the world.¹

For further information please read the attached briefing.

Israel's military industry profits from the illegal occupation of Palestine. In terms of marketing, every military operation acts as an endorsement for the weapons and techniques used. Israel maintains a constant 'battlefield' in Palestine and in neighbouring Arab states providing a significant testing ground for research and the development of its weaponry which it then sells to the rest of the world.

Israel's military sector is made up of over 200 public and private companies, dominated by three which are state-owned: Israel Aircraft Industries (Israel's biggest employer outside government), Israel Military Industries and Rafael. The UK spends millions of pounds each year on 'battle-tested' arms from Israeli companies. One growing link is in the area of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones. According to Israeli Aircraft Industries, Israel is the world's leading exporter of drones, with more than 1,000 sold to different countries netting Israel around \$350m a year.² The perpetual war economy and combat history, combined with Israel's early entry into the drone field, have provided Israel with a competitive edge in exporting drones. The 'combat proven' aspect of Israeli technology is advertised by the Israel Defence Force itself. The IDF posted the use and success of its drones in the 'Operation Cast Lead' assault on Gaza on its website.³

As early as 1982 a United Nations General Assembly Resolution recognized that "Israel's record and actions confirm that it is not a peace-loving Member State" and called upon all UN member states to refrain from weapons trading with Israel along with other economic, diplomatic and cultural sanctions. Twenty-nine years later this resolution has yet to be enforced by the UN.

The objective of this call for an embargo is to disrupt UK's complicity with bilateral arms deals with Israel, and through its membership of the European Union (EU) the funding and support of joint military/security-related research. A total embargo on arms dealing and collaboration will send a powerful message to Israel that defiance of UN resolutions, international law and human rights abuses will have consequences and must end.

History of UK governments' arms embargos on Israel

After Israel unilaterally declared statehood in 1948 Britain delayed recognising it for eight months and would not supply arms. But during the 1950s and '60s Britain and France were Israel's main weapons providers, including materials for nuclear weapons.⁴

Conservative governments imposed arms embargos on Israel on two occasions since then: during the 1973 war, and again in 1982 in protest at Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The second embargo was joined by European partners but was lifted by the UK in 1994.⁵

Following Israel's attack on Gaza in the winter of 2008/09 the then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary David Miliband admitted in a Ministerial Statement on 21 April 2009, that some Israeli equipment used in Gaza "almost certainly" contained UK-supplied components.⁶ There followed a piecemeal revocation of export licences but not an outright embargo.

Government policy on arms exports to Israel from the UK

The Government's policy is that UK arms exports to Israel should not be used in the Occupied Territories. In addition, the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, which the UK government adopted in October 2000, say that the impact on human rights, armed

conflict or tensions and the preservation of regional peace, stability and security must be considered before an export licence is issued.⁷ These criteria sound good on paper, but in practice do little to stop the granting of export licences.⁸ Although it did not call for an outright embargo, in March 2010 the Commons Committees on Arms Export controls of the last Parliament said:

"It is regrettable that arms exports to Israel were almost certainly used in Operation Cast Lead [Israel's attack on Gaza in 2008]. This is in direct contravention to the UK Government's policy that UK arms exports to Israel should not be used in the Occupied Territories. We further conclude that the revoking of five UK arms exports licences to Israel since Cast Lead is welcome, but that broader lessons must be learned from the post conflict review to ensure that UK arms exports to Israel are not used in the Occupied Territories in future.

*We recommend that the Government, in its response to this Report, set out clearly the longer term lessons learnt post Operation Cast Lead and how they will impact in practice on the issuing of future licences for arms exports to Israel."*⁹

More recently, on 10 February 2011 the current Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt wrote "I can confirm that UK policy on the export of controlled goods and equipment to Israel has not changed since the Coalition Government took office. All export licence applications to Israel are considered on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Export Licensing Criteria." However, the real issue is how the criteria are interpreted. Despite the UN stating that Israel "violates humanitarian law", and even though the criteria are supposed to assess the impact on regional peace, security and stability and the human rights record of the recipient, the

sales continue.¹⁰ In fact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's own report, *Human Rights and Democracy- Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, published in March 2011 expresses clear concerns about Israel's human rights record.¹¹ And yet, export licences for military components to Israel have been steadily rising. In 2010, 280 export licences worth £23.7m were granted for military equipment to Israel in spite of its internationally condemned 2008 attack on Gaza and the Freedom Flotilla in 2010. And this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the value of UK Israeli arms dealing.

The intricate web of UK- Israeli arms dealing

Government policy is restricted to military exports to Israel. We are demanding a comprehensive embargo to include military imports from Israel and collaboration with Israeli arms companies for the research and development of military equipment, manufacture and testing, and training of British army personnel in Israel. There is a complex network of cooperation and collaboration between the Ministry of Defence as end purchasers, British and Israeli arms companies and funding through the EU Israel Association Agreement.

The case of the joint UK- Israeli Watchkeeper drone project

The Watchkeeper drone project illustrates how complex the ties between the government and Israel and joint working between private arms companies from both countries are.

'Watchkeeper', as it is known in its UK specification, is based on the Israeli Hermes 450 UAV or drone. The Ministry of Defence has been leasing Hermes 450 drones from Israel in an innovative 'pay by the hour' contract for use in Afghanistan since 2007. Watchkeeper is being developed by U-TacS, a jointly owned

Israeli/UK company in Leicester. The UK is purchasing 54 Watchkeepers from Israel at a cost of £860m.¹² The first ten were built in Israel and then production transferred to a specially built facility in Leicester.¹³

Watchkeeper is being tested at ParcAberporth, Wales while Israel's military has been training the British army to fly the drones, similar to those used in alleged war crimes against Palestinians. The revelation that Royal Artillery soldiers undertake drone training in Israel raises serious concerns over Watchkeeper's purchase - particularly given that their Israeli trainers may have been involved in the attack on Gaza.¹⁴

Human Rights Watch investigated the use of Hermes and other drones by Israel during the 2008/09 Gaza attack. It concluded that by using drones and weapons such as high explosive artillery and artillery-fired white phosphorous, Israeli forces either failed to take all feasible precautions to verify that the targets were combatants, or they failed to distinguish between combatants and civilians and to target only the former. As a result, the attacks violated international humanitarian law (the laws of war).¹⁵

From this example it is clear that the government cannot make clean distinctions between arms collaboration with Israel which complies with its policy and that which does not.

Another area of concern is the links between UK (through the EU) and Israel over researching and developing 'security equipment'.¹⁶

EU 'R&D' funding for 'dual use' technologies used for internal repression

The EU-Israel Association Agreement means that Israeli military/security companies can benefit from the EU Security Research Programme (ESRP), which also includes partnerships between

British universities and Israeli military companies. This is paid for by European tax payers. Israel is the biggest non-EU recipient of research funding in the 'security' section of the research funding framework. Many of the projects which Israeli companies are participating in are working on the development of the very same technology that they are deploying against Palestinians. For example, among the Israeli companies that feature in ESRP projects are: *Israel Aerospace Industries* (a state-owned manufacturer of drones), *Aeronautics Defense Systems* (another 'drone' manufacturer specialising in "networked warfare"), *Motorola Israel* (producer of 'virtual fences' around Israeli settlements), *Elbit Systems* (one of Israel's largest private military technology firms, responsible for segments of the Wall around Jerusalem), *Verint Systems* (one of Israel's biggest Homeland Security exporters, specialising in surveillance, CCTV and wire-tapping facilities).¹⁷ Again, we urge that EU funding for 'dual use' technology – developed by Israeli business and state interests for internal repression and tested on Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and in Israel - should stop.

Although Ministers will often tell you that the Government's policy is not to sell arms for use in the occupied Palestinian territories, the many-faceted collaborations between the UK and Israeli arms industries help enable the occupation and human rights abuses to continue. Our money is being spent (by the government or through the EU) to fund weapons development and to prop up the economy of a regime which persistently ignores United Nations resolutions and violates international law. The government must impose a comprehensive embargo on all arms deals with Israel and use its position as a member of the Council of Ministers to end the EU

Israel Association Agreement research money where Israel is using it to enforce the occupation.

End notes

1 SIPRI Yearbook 2011 <http://www.sipri.org/>
2 Charly Wegman 'Spy in sky rakes in millions for Israel' DAWN.COM, 02.07.10 <http://dawnnews.tv/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/international/spy-in-the-sky-rakes-in-millions-for-israel-270> accessed 23.08.10
3 <http://www.negedneshek.org/exports/uavs/israel-and-the-rise-of-drone-warfare/>
4 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8521499.stm
5 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/britain-lifts-arms-embargo-against-israel-1438791.html>
6 <http://www.caat.org.uk/issues/israel.php>
7 <http://www.stoparmingisrael.org/info/>
8 HC Deb, 15 April 2002, col 720W, Departments of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, International Development and Trade and Industry, Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2000, Licensing Policy and Prior Parliamentary Scrutiny Response of the Secretaries of State for Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, International Development and Trade and Industry, Cm 5629, October 2002, p4, and First Joint Report from the Defence, Foreign Affairs, International Development and Trade and Industry Committee of Session 2005–06, Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2004, Quarterly Reports for 2005, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny, HC 873, Qq 269–280 cited in <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmquad/202/202.pdf>
9 Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls (2010) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmquad/202/202.pdf>
10 <http://www.caat.org.uk/issues/israel.php> [accessed 1 November 2011]
11 United Kingdom: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 31 March 2011, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d99aa825.html> [accessed 1 November 2011]
12 The Register, 26th November, 2008, 'UK's Watchkeeper drone in first autonomous flight

over Israel'

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2008/11/26/watchkeeper_autonomous_flight/

13 Craig Hoyle 'UK cheers the Reaper UAV' Flight International 16.06.08 <http://www.flightglobal.com/articles/2008/06/16/224622/uk-cheers-the-reaper-uav.html>

14 <http://news.sky.com/home/uk-news/article/1589447>

15 http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ipt0609webwcover_0.pdf

16 <http://www.caat.org.uk/issues/israel.php>

17 <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2010/nov/rusself-tribunal-on-palestine-ben-hayes.pdf>