

Human Rights Activists Condemn Britain's 'Shameful' War Games with Israeli Air Force

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The RAF is facing a barrage of criticism after it invited Israel to send its war planes to take part in a training exercise in Britain.

Last night the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) slammed the offer as “shameful” and “deeply inappropriate.”

The air force invite marks a major escalation in British-Israeli military co-operation, despite mounting evidence of war crimes committed against Palestinians.

The joint exercise, named Cobra Warrior, will see Israeli F-15 fighter jets screech over the skies of Lincolnshire in September this year.

It will be run out of RAF Waddington, although the Israeli aircrew and jets could be based at another location in England.

Cobra Warrior is the final stage of the RAF's weapons instructor qualification, where budding top guns war game with allied air forces to hone their bombing skills.

The Israeli air force is planning to bring an unknown number of its notorious F-15 fighter jets and personnel to Britain for the exercise. The Israeli Air Force routinely pummels Palestinians living in Gaza.

A Palestine Solidarity Campaign spokesperson said:

“As Israel continues to flout international law and violate the human rights of Palestinians, there is a responsibility for governments across the world to hold Israel to account for its crimes.

“It is therefore deeply inappropriate for the RAF to host a delegation from the Israeli Air Force for a joint training exercise in Britain.”

They added:

“In 2011 Palestinian civil society called for an international military embargo of Israel until it adheres to international law, and this call has received growing support from campaigners, academics and politicians across Britain.

“The actions by the British government to strengthen military ties with Israel directly contravenes this call and amounts to nothing more than complicity in

the ongoing violent repression of the Palestinian people within a system of apartheid. It is shameful.”

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) also condemned the training plan. Its spokesperson Andrew Smith said:

“The Israeli military has an appalling human rights record and has committed terrible atrocities against Palestinian people. The repression has only increased with the recent murders on the border.

“If Downing Street wants to see change then it must use its influence to push for an end to the occupation of Gaza and a peaceful solution to the conflict. It should not continue to build ever closer political and military links with the Israeli government.”

The Israeli Defence Force told the Morning Star that it could not comment until after Cobra Warrior had finished.

The training will fuel concerns about foreign pilots training at RAF bases in Britain. There was outrage last year when it emerged that military pilots from Saudi Arabia were learning to fly at RAF Valley in Wales.

Britain’s training of Saudi war pilots has continued throughout the bombardment of Yemen, which has devastated food supplies and caused one of the world’s worst humanitarian catastrophes.

The Ministry of Defence told the Star it could not comment on foreign policy issues, and the Foreign Office was not available to comment at the time of going to print.

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