

Statement on UK Arms Exports to Israel

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Israel is using UK arms exports in a genocide against the Palestinian people. The UK government is complicit in these crimes not just by supplying these weapons for decades, but by repeatedly inciting Israel to commit war crimes against Palestinian civilians with impunity, in retaliation for Hamas' horrific killings and abductions of Israelis including civilians.

The UK has consistently sold arms to Israel, in spite of its illegal occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem since 1967. Since Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip in 2007 there have been five major military assaults on Gaza in 2008-09, 2012, 2014, and 2021 which killed almost 4,000 Palestinians. In the past 11 days alone at least 2,850 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli bombardments supported by UK arms exports, including 100 children.

UK industry provides 15% of the components in the F35 stealth combat aircraft that are currently being used in the bombardment of Gaza. The contract for the components is estimated by Campaign Against Arms Trade to be worth £336m since 2016.

Since 2014, the United Kingdom has exported **over £490m** worth of arms to Israel.

The British government must stop funding Israeli war crimes by cancelling its arms export licenses to Israel.



#StopArmingIsrael

FOA

Source: Friends of Al Aqsa

Between 2018 and 2022, the UK exported £146m in arms sales via Single Issue Export Licences. However, a large proportion of military equipment exported is via Open General Export Licences. These open licences, which include the F35 components, lack transparency and allow for unlimited quantities and value of exports of the specified equipment without further monitoring.

According to the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, Israel has ordered a total of 50 F-35s from the US, of which 36 have so far been delivered, up to the end of 2022. According to the detailed delivery database,¹¹⁴ a total of 6 were delivered in 2022. While the value of UK companies' F-35 contracts with the prime contractor, Lockheed Martin, are not known, based on the 15% workshare and the estimated \$80m a plane unit cost of the F-35, this would suggest that each aircraft involves around \$12 million to UK industry. This would imply a value of \$72 million (£58m) for total UK deliveries of F-35s to Israel in 2022, far higher than the value of Single Issue Export Licences, and around \$432 million (approx. £336m.) since deliveries began in 2016.

Initial statements from the Israeli government committed to perpetrating war crimes. On 7th October in a televised address Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised 'vengeance' and 'revenge'.

"We will turn Gaza into a deserted island."

On October 8th, the Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Galant declared

"I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed". "We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly," Galant said. In another video he said "Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything."

On 13th October the Israeli Government ordered 1.1 million people living in the north of

Gaza within 24 hours to leave ahead of an imminent ground offensive. The United Nations said that it impossible for such a movement to take place without devastating humanitarian consequences and appealed for the order to be rescinded.

Building on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s “unequivocal” support for Israel, Labour leader Keir Starmer refused to condemn the cutting off of water and electricity to an entire population of over 2 million people saying

“I think that Israel does have that right.”

Grant Shapps, secretary of State for Defence, then gave every indication that he supported this obscene order to displace a million people in 24 hours in the midst of active bombardments.

Despite Israel’s advance notice of intent to violate international law, UK leaders from both parties gave unqualified support for UK arms exports and components to be used in attacks against Palestinian civilians. The reaction from the international community has undoubtedly emboldened the Israeli authorities to commit these crimes with impunity. The United Nations human rights office said on Tuesday that Israel’s siege of Gaza and its evacuation order could amount to the international crime of the forcible transfer of civilians.

We call on the government to immediately revoke all licences for arms exports to Israel. It is not credible that the UK government or the Leader of the Opposition believe that the siege, bombardments and forcible transfer of civilians of Gaza are compliant with international law. That it includes a significant percentage of components for jets now dropping bombs on Palestinian civilians is unconscionable. To fail to take any meaningful action to mitigate harm to civilians when it was promised by the Israeli government, to support these crimes, is all the more shameful given that the UK has exported millions worth of arms to Israel.

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