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# BRITISH MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH ISRAEL

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January 2025

# **CONTENTS**

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<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
The UK's legal obligations	3
British military collaboration with Israel	3
Recommendations	4
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE UK'S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>BRITISH MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH ISRAEL</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Maintaining the Israeli F-35: A Public Private Partnership	10
2. The Two-Way Deal: British Collaboration with the Israeli Military Industry	13
3. British Military Bases: A Foundational Asset for Genocide	14
4. Yemen: Direct Intervention	16
5. Protecting Israel's Military Infrastructure During Escalation	17
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>21</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report sets out the depth of British military collaboration with Israel, in the context of the UK's legal obligations with regard to Israel's egregious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The evidence below, compiled from publicly available information, highlights the fact that the UK is not simply failing in its third party responsibilities to uphold international law, but is actively complicit in genocidal acts perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

The thresholds of material contribution and knowledge have clearly been met. The British Palestinian Committee therefore issues a call for an immediate end to military collaboration, along with economic and diplomatic support, in order to apply pressure on Israel to abide by its international obligations and uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

## The UK's legal obligations

- The UK has the duty to suspend military cooperation and trade with Israel. This duty stems from a wide range of intersecting international obligations in the face of grave illegalities committed by the State of Israel.
- Israel is violating the peremptory norms of the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, the prohibition against racial discrimination and apartheid, and the prohibition against unlawful use of force. Its occupation of Palestine is illegal and must end as rapidly as possible.
- The UK is legally bound to act both to prevent genocide from occurring, and to prosecute individuals or entities responsible for committing such acts within its own jurisdiction and, where possible, internationally.
- States' obligation to prevent genocide is not a passive obligation, but implies the notion of "due diligence", which requires an assessment based on facts. Failure to take appropriate measures constitutes a breach of international law.

## British military collaboration with Israel

- While the British government has not been directly perpetrating violence in Gaza, it has played an influential role, not only through the validation of arms licences, but also through wider and deeper military collaboration with Israel.
- In addition to direct exports to Israel, British-made F-35 parts are sent to the US and other partner countries for assembly, and British companies contribute to the global pool of spare parts for F-35s that Israel can access. Through this combination of direct and indirect exports, companies producing F-35 parts in the UK have helped maintain Israeli F-35s for combat.

- While the British military has helped to supply Israel, it also procures weapons from the Israeli military industry. This two-way partnership supports Israeli companies in the development of technology that is used to kill Palestinians and deepens collaboration between the British and Israeli militaries.
- British military bases have been a foundational asset for Israel's assault on Gaza. In particular, a British base on Cyprus has been used by the UK, the US, and Germany to supply Israel with weapons, personnel, and intelligence since October 2023.
- Alongside its direct military intervention in Yemen, the UK has protected Israel's military infrastructure during its escalation against Iran. This military support has been extended even while Israel has been acting against stated British policy.
- The same concern shown for Israel's military facilities has not been extended to civilians in Gaza as the British military has continued to collaborate in Israel's genocidal assault.

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## Recommendations

British parliamentarians and wider civil society must now press the UK government to:

- **Bring its collaboration with Israel's military activities to an immediate end, by imposing a full two-way arms embargo, and ceasing its provision of all forms of military support as outlined in this report.**
- **Drop the 2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations, and impose economic and diplomatic sanctions in order to apply pressure on Israel to abide by its international obligations as set out, inter alia, in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's prolonged occupation.**
- **Support the South African submission at the ICJ in the genocide case against Israel, and push for the arrest and prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of Israeli officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity.**

If the UK fails to take such steps, then it should face the appropriate legal consequences, including condemnation by international bodies, sanctions, and the prosecution of individual politicians and officials.

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# INTRODUCTION

"Since the September 2024 review, the government has issued a further 34 arms export licences to Israel... Lammy has also claimed that a lack of information around events in Gaza has prevented the government from concluding whether Israel has abided by international law on proportionality in conflict."

The 26th of January 2025 marked one year since the International Court of Justice (ICJ) handed down its provisional measures in South Africa's genocide case against Israel over its assault on Gaza. The court concluded it was plausible that, before giving its final decision on the case, "a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused" to the "right of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to be protected from acts of genocide".<sup>1</sup>

In the 12 months since the ICJ judgment, Israel has directly contravened repeated orders of the court to prevent and put an end to genocidal acts against the Palestinian people. Throughout this period, as this report sets out, Israel has been provided with military assistance from the UK to perpetrate these war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In February 2024, the UK's then foreign secretary, David Cameron, wrote two letters to the House of Commons foreign affairs select committee.<sup>2</sup> The first related to arms exports to Israel; the second concerned Israel's prospective military offensive in Rafah. In the latter, Cameron explained his view that such an offensive could not go ahead without harming civilians and destroying homes; in the former, while stating he had decided thus far "not to suspend or revoke extant licences" to Israel since the beginning of its assault on Gaza, he nevertheless assured the committee that "all licences, including those granted to Israel, are kept under careful and continuous review".<sup>3</sup> Responding to this point, the committee noted that Cameron's letter "does not explain the processes for doing so".<sup>4</sup>

In May 2024, when Israel commenced its military offensive in Rafah – damaging or destroying around half of all buildings there, killing countless Palestinian children, women, and men, and forcibly displacing around 1 million people<sup>5</sup> – Cameron defended his decision to continue arms exports to Israel, by claiming that they represent "less than 1%" of Israel's arms imports.<sup>6</sup> Even in straightforward terms, this figure excludes the UK's extensive use

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1 [Order of 26 January 2024 | International Court of Justice](#)

2 [Foreign Secretary writes to FAC on the planned Israeli offensive in Rafah and UK arms exports to Israel | Foreign Affairs Committee](#)

3 <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43398/documents/215964/default/>

4 [Foreign Secretary writes to FAC on the planned Israeli offensive in Rafah and UK arms exports to Israel | UK Parliament](#)

5 [UNRWA Situation Report #111 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem | UNRWA](#)

6 [Israel and Gaza: Lords: 21 May 2024 | Hansard](#)

of open licences to export weapons to Israel, without counting the weapons or their value in government data. Such obfuscation exemplifies the attempt of ministers to downplay British military collaboration with Israel, which extends well beyond the licensing of arms exports.

Nonetheless, the actions of successive governments on arms exports alone are clear violations of UK official policy, as outlined in the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC). This, ministers claim, “is a robust and transparent export control regime for military, dual-use and other sensitive goods and technologies”, which sets out, among other things, that the UK will not grant a licence “if it determines there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.”<sup>7</sup>

While Rishi Sunak’s government hinted that such a risk was presented by Israel’s actions,<sup>8</sup> a full acknowledgement that this was the case only came from the new Labour administration in September 2024, following a review commissioned by Cameron’s successor David Lammy. Yet, on the back of that review, the Labour government implemented just a partial suspension of approximately 30 out of 350 arms export licences.

Since the September review, the government has issued a further 34 arms export licences to Israel, including three open licences which allow the export of an unlimited number and value of goods.<sup>9</sup> Lammy has also claimed that a lack of information around events in Gaza has prevented the government from concluding whether Israel has abided by international law on proportionality in conflict.<sup>10</sup> This inconsistent and inadequate approach confirms the continuation of the preceding administration’s failure to abide by the UK’s own official policy, and is part and parcel of a broad sway of actions contravening the state’s basic obligations under international law.

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7 [Strategic Export Licensing Criteria | UK Parliament](#)

8 [UK to consider suspending arms exports to Israel if Rafah offensive goes ahead | The Guardian](#)

9 [Israel export control licensing data: 6 December 2024 | GOV.UK](#)

10 [Correspondence with Foreign Secretary relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict | UK Parliament](#)

# THE UK'S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

“The obligation to refrain from being complicit through aid or assistance begins the moment the state becomes aware of the existence of a serious risk that genocide may be committed.”

The UK has the duty to suspend military cooperation and trade with Israel. This duty stems from a wide range of intersecting international obligations in the face of grave illegalities committed by the State of Israel. As affirmed by the ICJ in its Advisory Opinion on the “Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”, Israel is violating the peremptory norms of the Palestinian people’s right of self-determination, the prohibition against racial discrimination and apartheid, and the prohibition against unlawful use of force. Its occupation of Palestine is illegal and must end as rapidly as possible. In response to violations of peremptory norms of international law, third states have the duty to cooperate towards ending the illegality, not to render any recognition to the effects of the illegality, “not to render aid or assistance in maintaining” Israel’s illegal occupation, and “to take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance” of the illegal occupation.<sup>11</sup>

Following up on the ICJ Advisory Opinion, the UN General Assembly, with an overwhelming majority,<sup>12</sup> adopted a resolution on the “Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”.<sup>13</sup> The Assembly called on all States “to comply with their obligations under international law, inter alia, as reflected in the advisory opinion”, including the obligation “not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel’s illegal presence in the Territory.”

The British state has further obligations under international law concerning genocide.<sup>14</sup> The most prominent of these is the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which the UK ratified in 1951. This treaty, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, requires states to prevent and punish genocide, which is defined as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group”.<sup>15</sup>

The UK is legally bound to act both to prevent genocide from occurring, and to prosecute individuals or entities responsible for committing such acts within its own jurisdiction and, where possible, internationally. Furthermore, the UK has incorporated aspects of international human rights law into domestic law, making certain obligations enforceable

11 Para 278-279 at [Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 | International Court of Justice](#)

12 [General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Historic Text Demanding Israel End Its Unlawful Presence, Policies in Occupied Palestinian Territory within One Year | UN](#)

13 Resolution A/ES-10/L.31/Rev.1

14 [Obligations of Third States and Corporations to Prevent and Punish Genocide in Gaza | SOMO; Legal Consequences for third States of Israel’s potential breaches of the Genocide Convention in the light of the ICJ’s | Dr Ralph Wilde](#)

15 [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide | UN](#)

within the British legal system. For example, under the International Criminal Court Act 2001, British courts can prosecute individuals accused of genocide, even if the alleged crimes were committed outside of the UK.<sup>16</sup>

Following the ICJ's order of provisional measures on 26 January 2024 in the case of *South Africa v. Israel*, the UK has had a clear duty not to be complicit in genocide taking place in Gaza. The concept of "complicity" in genocide is defined as aiding, abetting, or otherwise contributing to genocide.

The ICJ clarified in the *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro* case that a state is responsible for complicity if "its organs were aware that genocide was about to be committed or was under way, and if the aid and assistance supplied, from the moment they became so aware onwards, to the perpetrators of the criminal acts [...] enabled or facilitated the commission of the acts."<sup>17</sup> As such, the obligation to refrain from being complicit through aid or assistance begins the moment the state becomes aware of the existence of a serious risk that genocide may be committed. The order issued by the ICJ on 26 January 2024, finding "a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights invoked by South Africa",<sup>18</sup> means that states are now aware of the risk of genocide being committed in Gaza. Military assistance, weapons, and intelligence make an essential contribution to violations of international humanitarian law and genocidal acts against the Palestinians in Gaza.

The obligation to prevent genocide starts, as the ICJ clarified in the *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro* case, "at the instant that the State learns of, or should normally have learned of, the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed".<sup>19</sup> In its ruling on *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*, the ICJ explained that the duty to prevent requires states "to employ all means reasonably available to them" to prevent genocide. This obligation is one of conduct and not of result, meaning that it is not about whether the state achieves the result of preventing genocide, but whether it took all measures which were within its power and which might have contributed to preventing the genocide.

States' obligation to prevent genocide is not a passive obligation, but implies the notion of "due diligence", which requires an assessment based on facts. Failure to take appropriate measures constitutes a breach of international law. Furthermore, as a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the UK is also obligated to cooperate with the ICC in investigations related to genocide, even if those crimes occur outside of its borders.

With regards to the British state's international obligations specifically concerning arms exports, the UK was one of the countries that did the most to advance the Arms Trade

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16 [International Criminal Court Act 2001 | legislation.gov.uk](#)

17 [Judgment of 26 February 2007 | International Court of Justice](#)

18 [Summary of the Order of 26 January 2024 | International Court of Justice](#)

19 [Judgment of 26 February 2007 | International Court of Justice](#)



Treaty (ATT), and was among the first states to become a party to the treaty upon its entry into force on 24 December 2014. Article 6 of the ATT prohibits authorising arms exports if the state has knowledge at the time of the authorisation that the arms will be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes as defined by international agreements to which it is a party.<sup>20</sup> In case an export does not fall within the prohibition of Article 6, Article 7(1) of the ATT stipulates that the exporting state must still assess prior to authorisation the “potential” that the arms:

- (a) would contribute to or undermine peace and security;
- (b) could be used to [inter alia]:
  - (i) commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law;
  - (ii) commit or facilitate a serious violation of international human rights law; [...]<sup>21</sup>

In sum, a clear premise has been established to halt arms trade with Israel, and end all military collaboration with it. This has come through the aforementioned ICJ judgements, extensive documentation and warning from the UN, along with world-leading human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International,<sup>22</sup> and Human Rights Watch.<sup>23</sup> These positions are further backed by the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber issuance of arrest warrants against two Israeli leaders for charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, while stating that “conduct similar to that addressed in the warrant of arrest appears to be ongoing”.<sup>24</sup> The obligatory nature of such measures was further asserted in Human Rights Council Resolution 55/28 of April 2024,<sup>25</sup> and statements by UN experts.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to note that obligations under the NATO agreement do not take precedence over state responsibility towards grave illegalities or the duty to prevent genocide.

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20 [Article 6 - Arms Trade Treaty, 2013 | International Humanitarian Law Databases](#)

21 [Article 7 - Arms Trade Treaty, 2013 | International Humanitarian Law Databases](#)

22 [Amnesty International investigation concludes Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza | Amnesty International](#)

23 [Israel’s Crime of Extermination, Acts of Genocide in Gaza | Human Rights Watch](#)

24 [Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel’s challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant | ICC](#)

25 [A/HRC/RES/55/28 General Assembly | UN](#)

26 [Arms exports to Israel must stop immediately: UN experts | OHCHR; States and companies must end arms transfers to Israel immediately or risk responsibility for human rights violations: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

# BRITISH MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH ISRAEL

In compliance with its international legal obligations, the UK must assess its material contribution to, and capacity to influence, Israel's military operations. Herein, it becomes clear that suspending military collaboration and the arms trade are the first counter-measures required to fulfil the UK's international obligations.

As mentioned above, under the Genocide Convention, the UK, as a state party, has an obligation not only to prevent and punish genocide, but also to avoid actions that might assist or enable genocidal acts.

While the British government has not been directly perpetrating violence in Gaza, it has played an influential role, not only through the validation of arms licences, but also through wider and deeper military collaboration with Israel across the following areas set out below.

In taking such actions, the UK is not simply failing to meet its third-party responsibilities to uphold international law, it is actively complicit in Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people.

## 1. Maintaining the Israeli F-35: A Public Private Partnership

"British exports for the F-35 programme are covered by an Open General Export Licence... In 2023, this licence was used fourteen times to export goods for the F-35 directly from the UK to Israel – nearly three times more than in any year since 2016."

Among other fighter aircraft, helicopters and drones, the Israeli air force has used its F-35s to bombard Gaza since October 2023. Although it is difficult to determine which fighter jets are used for discrete air strikes, there are several documented examples of the use of F-35s in massive attacks on civilians. On 13 July 2024, for instance, an Israeli F-35 dropped three 2,000-pound bombs on a camp for displaced people in Al Mawasi, killing at least 90.<sup>27</sup> This strike was made possible through British manufacturing and the supply of British-made spare parts that sustain Israel's F-35 fleet.

Despite its suspension of a small number of arms export licences in September 2024, the British government continues to permit the export of military goods to Israel and has issued 34 new licences since the partial suspension.<sup>28</sup> Among the most significant of these exports are spare parts for Israel's F-35 fighter jets.

27 [Major civilian casualties: Danish-equipped fighter jets behind bloody attack in Gaza | danwatch](#)

28 [Israel export control licensing data: 6 December 2024 | GOV.UK](#)

In a legal review of the UK's F-35 exports, forced by the challenge in the High Court brought by Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and Al-Haq, the government has acknowledged that there is a clear risk that Israel may commit serious violations of international law using the F-35.<sup>29</sup> However, the government has made clear it is unwilling to impose any restrictions on exports for the F-35 programme due to its role in "international peace and security" – a matter deemed so important it would even override "further evidence of serious breaches of [International Humanitarian Law]".<sup>30</sup>

As explained below, it is unlikely that Israel could use its F-35s without access to parts exported by the UK. Moreover, the British government's role in ensuring Israeli F-35s can be used in combat extends beyond issuing licences for private companies to export spare parts. As described below, the British military has taken on an active role in ensuring that the Israeli air force can access essential F-35 components during its genocidal assault on Gaza.

The F-35 programme is led by the US and supported by the UK as the most senior international partner, responsible for producing "significantly" more than 15% of every jet.<sup>31</sup> A 2023 Freedom of Information request demonstrated that 79 companies produce parts for the F-35 programme in the UK.<sup>32</sup> For instance, **BAE Systems** builds the rear fuselage of every jet in Samlesbury, **Martin Baker** produces the ejector seat in Denham, and **L3Harris** makes the bomb release cables in Brighton.

The F-35s used by the Israeli air force in its genocidal assault on Gaza were manufactured before October 2023. However, each F-35 requires a constant supply of spare parts to be used in combat. For every one hour of flight, the F-35 requires more than four hours of maintenance.<sup>33</sup> As Rob Wittman, the vice chairman of the US Congress Armed Forces Subcommittee, has emphasised "the F-35 Joint Program Office has moved at a breakneck speed" over the past year, "accelerating F-35 weapons capabilities and increasing spare parts supply rates".<sup>34</sup> This has been confirmed by the Pentagon's head of acquisition who describes "surging sustainment support".<sup>35</sup> Given that more than 15% of every F-35 is made in the UK, the US-led effort to keep Israeli F-35s airborne would not be possible without the supply of British parts.

British exports for the F-35 programme are not approved individually and their value is not recorded in government data. Instead, F-35 exports are covered by an Open General Export Licence that allows unlimited exports to all approved partners within the global

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29 [New review of F-35 exports reveals no red lines for UK government in context of atrocities in Gaza | Al Haq](#)

30 Ibid

31 The 15% figure was publicised by Lockheed Martin 2020. However, the Lockheed Martin UK CEO has recently suggested that the number is "significantly higher". [F-35 value to UK 'significantly higher' than before, Lockheed Martin | Janes](#)

32 For an annotated version of the FOI, see [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6531c17aabb6ae3b7ad1103/658095ae1cbaf87f6d8a98f7\\_F35UK.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6531c17aabb6ae3b7ad1103/658095ae1cbaf87f6d8a98f7_F35UK.pdf)

33 [F-35 Lightning II Fast Facts | Lockheed Martin](#)

34 [US rushed new F-35 capabilities to Israel after Hamas attack | Defense One](#)

35 Ibid.

programme.<sup>36</sup> In 2023, this licence was used fourteen times to export goods for the F-35 directly from the UK to Israel.<sup>37</sup> This was nearly three times more than in any year since 2016. In addition to direct exports to Israel, British-made F-35 parts are sent to the US and other partner countries for assembly, and British companies contribute to the global pool of spare parts for F-35s that Israel can access. Through this combination of direct and indirect exports, companies producing F-35 parts in the UK have helped maintain Israeli F-35s for combat. Since September 2024, the government has stated that it will only allow British parts to be exported to Israel through the global programme rather than directly. In material terms, this means there is no restriction on the Israeli military's access to F-35 parts made in Britain.

Export records reveal the role that British industry has played in facilitating the transfer of F-35 parts to Israel, but in some cases the military itself has been even more active.

**RAF Marham** in Norfolk has, for instance, been used to send spare F-35 parts directly to Israel at seven points since October 2023.<sup>38</sup> Marham is the maintenance station for the RAF's F-35 fleet, operating under a public-private partnership with **BAE Systems** which employs at least 130 maintenance workers at the base.<sup>39</sup> Since October 2023, the base has also been used for over 500 shipments of F-35 parts to the US, which can then be transferred onwards to Israel.<sup>40</sup> In each direct transfer to Israel, F-35 components collected at RAF Marham have been moved overland to Heathrow where they are sent on the air carrier El Al. While more investigation is needed, this raises the question of the role the British military has played in ensuring that F-35 parts are rapidly exported.

In March 2024, a newspaper report even suggested that Israeli F-35s had been repaired at **RAF Akrotiri** on Cyprus.<sup>41</sup> If confirmed, this is a further indication of the extensive role the British military played in maintaining Israeli fighter jets at minimum in the first few months of its assault on Gaza.

Finally, a recent report based on leaked cargo documents showed that Martin Baker, a British company which produces the ejection seats for all F-35s globally, received a shipment from Nevatim air base in Israel on 9 September 2024.<sup>42</sup> Nevatim is the home of Israel's F-35 fleet and the direct shipment could indicate that Martin Baker was repairing Israeli military equipment. Although further investigation is needed, Martin Baker employs an engineer at Nevatim which is an indication of its close role in maintaining Israel's F-35s.<sup>43</sup>

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36 [Arming genocide – UK arms sales to Israel, the partial export licence suspension, and the F-35 exemption | Campaign Against Arms Trade](#)

37 [The UK's partial suspension of arms export licences to Israel, and the F-35 exemption: a briefing | Campaign Against Arms Trade](#)

38 [F-35 components sent to Israel from Royal Air Force base | Declassified UK](#)

39 [£161 million contract for F-35 jet maintenance supports 140 UK jobs | Royal Air Force](#)

40 [Revealed: Hundreds of F-35 components sent from Britain to U.S. | Declassified UK](#)

41 [UK suspends Israeli F-35 help on UK soil until Gaza War ends | Daily Express](#)

42 [UK exported parts for Israeli air force after suspending arms sales | Declassified UK](#)

43 [How One British Business Could Stop Israeli Jets Bombing Gaza | Declassified UK](#)

## 2. The Two-Way Deal: British Collaboration with the Israeli Military Industry

“Britain’s procurement projects make a direct financial contribution to the Israeli military but also engender closer military collaboration.

A former British army officer identified the missile that was used to kill seven aid workers in Gaza in April 2024 because he studied military hardware in Israel for four years while working on a British army drone programme.”

Collaboration between the British and Israeli militaries flows both ways. While the British military has helped to supply Israel, it also procures weapons from the Israeli military industry. This two-way partnership supports Israeli companies in the development of technology that is used to kill Palestinians and deepens collaboration between the British and Israeli militaries.

In November 2023, Bezhalel Machlis, CEO of Israel’s largest military company **Elbit Systems**, confirmed that it had “ramped up its production” since the assault on Gaza started and announced higher quarterly profits.<sup>44</sup> By August 2024, Machlis boasted that “this war has been an accelerator for many developments”, explaining that the Israeli military “is using these technologies now and, in the future, we will bring them to the rest of the market”.<sup>45</sup> This is emblematic of the corporate strategy of Israeli arms companies, which advertise weapons to global customers as “battle tested” on Palestinians.<sup>46</sup> Awarding British military contracts to these companies provides revenue for the development of these weapons.

**Rafael** is a state-owned firm that was originally the research laboratory of the Israeli Ministry of Defence. As Guy Bitton, head of business development in Rafael’s land division recently explained, the company has a “very close connection with the Israel Defence Forces” and holds regular briefings with Israeli commanders to develop technology.<sup>47</sup> Between 2019 and 2023, the British military spent £125 million on contracts with Rafael.<sup>48</sup> On one level, this is a direct financial contribution to the development of technology for the Israeli military, but procurement projects also engender closer collaboration. For instance, a former British army officer was able to identify the Rafael Spike missile that was used to kill seven aid workers in Gaza in April 2024, because he studied military hardware in Israel for four years while working on the Watchkeeper drone programme for the British army.<sup>49</sup>

44 [Israeli defence firm Elbit ramps up output to meet demand for war | Reuters](#)

45 [Israel’s Elbit sees conflicts driving strong weapons demand | Reuters](#)

46 [Israel’s War on Gaza in a Global Frame | Antipode](#)

47 [How innovations in force protection are reshaping modern combat | Rafael](#)

48 [MOD trade, industry and contracts: index | GOV.UK](#)

49 [How Israel’s ‘super-accurate’ Spike missiles may have killed British aid workers in Gaza | The Times](#)

The Watchkeeper drone was made by Elbit Systems in partnership with **Thales**. The drone is directly based on the Hermes drone used by Israel in its strike on aid workers. Although the Watchkeeper drone was abandoned early in its service, it is another example of how British contracts provide financial support for the Israeli military industry while connecting British and Israeli military technology. In total, the British Ministry of Defence has spent at least £355 million on contracts with Elbit Systems since 2012.<sup>50</sup> Until 2022, Elbit Systems even held a training contract for Britain’s Dreadnought nuclear submarine programme – an indication of the depth of Britain’s technological collaboration with the Israeli military industry.<sup>51</sup>

While the French government has banned Israeli arms firms from showcasing their products at two major arms fairs this year, the British government allowed Elbit Systems to exhibit its wares at the International Armoured Vehicles conference at Twickenham in January 2024.<sup>52</sup> The UK’s refusal to limit the presence of Israeli firms at arms fairs is further indication of the close relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the Israeli military industry.

### 3. British Military Bases: A Foundational Asset for Genocide

“Between 3 December 2023 and 6 June 2024, the RAF flew 250 surveillance flights from Akrotiri to Gaza. In practice, this meant between one and two overlapping flights every day excluding Saturdays.”

Even more significant than the two-way partnership between the British and Israeli militaries and their contractor industries is the fact that British military bases have been a foundational asset for Israel’s assault on Gaza. In particular, a British base on Cyprus has been used by the UK, the US, and Germany to supply Israel with weapons, personnel, and intelligence since October 2023.

The UK’s two “Sovereign Base Areas” in Cyprus – **Akrotiri** and **Dhekelia** – are colonial territory. The base areas, which comprise 3% of the island, were retained by the UK as a condition of Cypriot independence in 1960 following encouragement from Washington.<sup>53</sup> Since their establishment, the US has held a strong interest in the Cyprus bases, using Akrotiri for surveillance flights to support Israeli reconnaissance missions as early as 1970.<sup>54</sup> In 1974, the British government explored the closure of its Cyprus bases for economic

50 [UK accused of being ‘complicit’ in Gaza deaths after giving Elbit new contract | Open Democracy](#)

51 [Navy: Training, Question for Ministry of Defence | UK Parliament](#)

52 [France bans Israeli companies from top naval warfare show | Politico](#)

53 [The Sovereign Base Areas: colonialism redivivus? | Cambridge Core](#)

54 [Britain, America and the Sovereign Base Areas from 1960-1978 | Cyprus Review](#)

and strategic reasons, but was prevented by the US which deemed its access to the bases too important. The then British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan confirmed to Henry Kissinger that “we shall not in present circumstances proceed with our preferred policy of withdrawing from the Sovereign Base Areas”, describing US opposition to withdrawal as the “determining consideration”.<sup>55</sup>

Akrotiri and Dhekelia retain their centrality to British and US strategy in the eastern Mediterranean. This has resulted in Akrotiri’s status for the past year as a crucial supply point for Israel’s assault against Palestinians. Although Akrotiri is used by US personnel and Dhekelia is a joint US-UK intelligence station, the British government has to authorise operations by allies in any of its Cyprus base areas.<sup>56</sup> This includes the airlift of military cargo from Akrotiri to Israel which has facilitated the ongoing genocide.

By 24 October 2023, the US had moved twenty heavy transport aircraft from weapons depots in Europe to Akrotiri.<sup>57</sup> The RAF undertook daily cargo flights from Akrotiri to Tel Aviv over the same period.<sup>58</sup> By 31 October, forty US transport aircraft, twenty British transport aircraft, and seven heavy transport helicopters had moved to Akrotiri.<sup>59</sup> Since this moment, Akrotiri has continued to be a central stopping point for US and UK military cargo on journeys to Israel.

Aircraft travelling regularly from Akrotiri to Israel over the past year include the RAF’s Atlas C1 and the US air force’s C130 “Hercules”, which are large enough to move military vehicles and helicopters.<sup>60</sup> In October 2024, an RAF Atlas C1 travelled to Tel Aviv three times from Akrotiri, and also made journeys to military bases in Bahrain, Qatar and Jordan.<sup>61</sup> Over the same period, US transport aircraft travelled from the Ramstein air force base in Germany to Akrotiri, before flying onwards to Israel. Since 5 July 2024, thirteen US special forces flights have travelled from Akrotiri to Tel Aviv, with no public record of what they are carrying.<sup>62</sup>

The movement of US, British, and German military cargo from Cyprus to Israel has been complemented by the role of Akrotiri in the surveillance of Gaza. Between 3 December 2023 and 6 June 2024, the RAF flew 250 surveillance flights from Akrotiri to Gaza.<sup>63</sup> In practice, this meant between one and two overlapping flights every day excluding Saturdays. This flight pattern continued until at least November 2024.<sup>64</sup> These surveillance flights using the RAF’s Shadow aircraft can capture vehicle convoys, streets and apartment blocks.<sup>65</sup> The Shadow R1 is deployed from RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, and usually stops for fuel in Italy or Croatia en route to Akrotiri.<sup>66</sup>

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55 Ibid.

56 [Cyprus: Military Bases, Question for Ministry of Defence | UK Parliament](#)

57 [OSINT Shows U.S. Deploying More Arms and Troops to Israel, Cyprus and Jordan | Haaretz](#)

58 [RAF admits to making 17 military flights to Israel since Gaza bombing began | Declassified UK](#)

59 [OSINT Shows Third U.S. Naval Group Arrives in Mideast, Countries Prep to Evacuate Thousands | Haaretz](#)

60 Analysis of Radar Box by Tom Seymour Evans.

61 Ibid.

62 [U.S. special ops flights to Israel from UK’s Cyprus base surge under Starmer | Declassified UK](#)

63 [RAF flies 250 surveillance flights near Gaza in six months | UK Defence Journal](#)

64 Analysis of Radar Box by Tom Seymour Evans.

65 [RAF’s Gaza photos could be used against Israel in war crimes court | The Times](#)

66 Analysis of Radar Box by Tom Seymour Evans.

The British government has officially acknowledged its role in the surveillance of Gaza, but repeatedly claimed that its operations are to support “hostage rescue”.<sup>67</sup> In practical terms, this could mean British involvement in an operation in Nuseirat in June 2024, in which Israeli forces killed 276 Palestinians to rescue four captives. However, the claim that British intelligence operations have only been directed towards hostage rescue is dubious: an Al Jazeera investigation has suggested that 47% of reconnaissance flights over Gaza in the past year have been British aircraft whereas only 20% have been Israeli aircraft.<sup>68</sup> Although the investigation could only account for aircraft visible on flight tracking software, this indicates the extent of intelligence support provided by the British military to Israel and the essential role of Akrotiri in facilitating the Israeli assault on Gaza.

In November 2024, the British government granted the Israeli military’s then Chief of Staff, Herzl Halevi, “Special Mission Status” to visit the UK. During his visit, he met with the Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office and Attorney General, providing further indication of the depth of military collaboration between the UK and Israel, given Halevi’s role as the coordinator of Israel’s operations in Gaza.<sup>69</sup>

On 10 December 2024, Keir Starmer visited Akrotiri to thank British personnel for their work across an “extraordinarily busy year”. As Starmer explained, “although we’re really proud of what you’re doing, we can’t necessarily tell the world what you’re doing here”.<sup>70</sup>

## 4. Yemen: Direct Intervention

“Between 12 January and 31 December 2024, US-UK airstrikes on Yemen – many of which have been launched from RAF Akrotiri – have killed an estimated 85 civilians.”

Since at least January 2024, the UK’s military collaboration with Israel has extended beyond the use of military bases and infrastructure to include direct military intervention. In Yemen, the British military has launched an air and naval campaign in partnership with the US. On 19 October 2023, Ansar Allah – which controls most of Yemen – demanded an end to the Israeli assault on Gaza and launched missiles and drones at the port of Eilat. A month later, Ansar Allah began a blockade of the Red Sea to increase pressure on Israel to end its genocide in Gaza. Instead of ending Israel’s war, the US and UK decided to expand their support for Israel further and begin a direct military confrontation with Ansar Allah.

The British military is well accustomed to intervention in Yemen. Between 2015 and 2022, the British military and military industry played a fundamental role in the bombardment of Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition. Direct Saudi air strikes on Yemen killed nearly 20,000

67 [Gaza: Air Force, Question for Ministry of Defence | UK Parliament](#)

68 [How US and UK military airlifts have supported Israel's war on Gaza | Al Jazeera](#)

69 [UK confirms meeting with Israeli Defence Chief Herzl Halevi | UK Defence Journal](#)

70 [PM's address to British troops in RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus: 10 December 2024 | GOV.UK](#)



civilians over seven years, while the UN estimated that by the end of 2021 the war had led to 377,000 direct and indirect deaths.<sup>71</sup> 80 RAF personnel were deployed to Saudi Arabia to assist with the war in this period, including liaison officers that operated within the coalition's command and control centre. Meanwhile, 6,300 **BAE Systems** employees were contracted by the British Ministry of Defence to train Saudi pilots, maintain fighter jets, and help equip them with lethal payloads.<sup>72</sup>

British intervention in Yemen over the past year has been an effort to disrupt Ansar Allah's blockade without ending the UK's military collaboration in Israel's assault on Gaza. On 30 November 2023, HMS Diamond was deployed to the Red Sea as a show of force against the blockade. Less than three weeks later, the naval destroyer was designated as the UK's representative in the US-led "Operation Prosperity Guardian". Unlike the UK, other US allies including France, Italy, and Spain all declined to join the coalition which purported to break the blockade. The US and UK soon escalated beyond the stated intent of Operation Prosperity Guardian and began direct military intervention in Yemen.

Between 12 January and 31 December 2024, US-UK airstrikes on Yemen – many of which have been launched from RAF Akrotiri – have killed an estimated 85 civilians.<sup>73</sup> This bombing campaign, named "Operation Poseidon Archer", has involved at least 300 strikes, including an attack on a radio station next to a hospital in Al Hudaydah that killed at least two civilians.<sup>74</sup> In parallel, the Israeli military has conducted its own bombing campaign, killing an estimated 212 civilians in Yemen between 20 July and 31 December 2024.<sup>75</sup>

The US and UK both had the option of ending their collaboration in Israel's genocidal war and exerting pressure to secure a ceasefire earlier, as a means to end the Ansar Allah blockade. This has been confirmed by Ansar Allah's statements since the agreement of a truce in Gaza in January 2025, in which they have repeated their consistent position that they will end their operations if there is a sustained ceasefire.<sup>76</sup>

## 5. Protecting Israel's Military Infrastructure During Escalation

“This military support has been extended even while Israel has been acting against stated British policy.”

On a visit to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in October 2023, Rishi Sunak agreed that “we need to do everything possible to stop a contagion of conflict in the region”.<sup>77</sup>

71 [Data | Yemen Data Project; Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery | United Nations Development Programme](#)

72 [‘The Saudis couldn’t do it without us’: the UK’s true role in Yemen’s deadly war | The Guardian](#)

73 [Data | Yemen Data Project](#)

74 [US Forces in Yemen | Airwars](#)

75 [Data | Yemen Data Project](#)

76 [Yemen’s Houthis to continue attacks if Gaza ceasefire breached | Reuters](#)

77 [Rishi Sunak warns Israel-Hamas war risks ‘contagion of conflict’ in Middle East | Sky News](#)

Nearly a year later, Keir Starmer called on the UN General Assembly to prevent a “regional war in the Middle East”.<sup>78</sup> Despite the rhetoric of both prime ministers, the UK has supported Israel in both its genocide of Palestinians, and its efforts to expand the war across the region since October 2023. Alongside its direct military intervention in Yemen, the UK has protected Israel’s military infrastructure during its escalation against Iran.<sup>79</sup> This military support has been extended even while Israel has been acting against stated British policy.

On 1 April 2024, Israel bombed an Iranian consulate building in Damascus killing 16 people including two Syrian civilians.<sup>80</sup> Under the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations, consular premises are inviolable and protected from attack.<sup>81</sup> Instead of reconsidering its support for Israel following this escalation, the British military joined efforts to shield Israel’s military infrastructure from an Iranian response.

Just under two weeks after Israel’s consulate strike, Iran informed international partners that it was about to launch an attack on Israel from its own territory. Using slow moving missiles and drones, Israel had hours to prepare for the strike which was choreographed as a statement of deterrence and aimed at military targets.<sup>82</sup> RAF fighter jets helped shoot down Iranian drones, and shortly afterwards the British government introduced new sanctions on drone production in Iran.<sup>83</sup> Despite Israel acting against the UK’s policy and international law in its attack on consular property, the British military acted directly to shield Israeli military infrastructure. This protection afforded to Israeli military facilities is striking given that the UK has played an active role in supporting Israel while it attacks Palestinian civilians.

On 1 October 2024, Iran launched another retaliatory strike on military targets in Israel. This was in response to Israel’s killing of Ismail Haniyeh – head of the Hamas political bureau and lead ceasefire negotiator – two months earlier in Tehran, and also its killing of Hasan Nasrallah – Secretary-General of Hezbollah – in Beirut on 27 September. Once again, RAF Typhoons and a British naval destroyer were deployed to respond to the strike, although they were unable to engage Iran’s ballistic missiles for technological reasons.<sup>84</sup> A fortnight later, the UK announced a new round of sanctions against Iranian military personnel, its cruise missile programme and the Iranian Space Agency.<sup>85</sup>

Iran had waited to retaliate for Haniyeh’s killing due to US assurances that it expected a ceasefire in Gaza, which would end the regional war.<sup>86</sup> Instead, Israel expanded the war

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78 [‘Escalation serves no one’: Sir Keir Starmer calls on Israel and Hezbollah to agree ceasefire in address to UN | Sky News](#)

79 [RAF shot down Iranian drones heading for Israel, Sunak confirms | The Guardian](#)

80 [Iran says Israel bombs its embassy in Syria, kills commanders | Reuters](#)

81 [Inviolability of the Mission Premises | Diplomatic Law: Commentary on the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations | Oxford Academic](#)

82 See for example: [Iran signals ‘calibrated’ retaliation to Israeli strike | Financial Times](#); [The night Iran’s missile spectacle rattled Israel | Financial Times](#)

83 [Israel-Iran April 2024: UK and international response | House of Commons Library](#)

84 [UK forces involved in response to Iran attacks on Israel | BBC News](#)

85 [UK announces sanctions against Iranian military figures and organisations following attack on Israel | GOV.UK](#)

86 [Iranian president says he doesn’t want war with Israel | NBC News](#)

further through massive aerial attacks on Lebanon, and, eventually, an attempted ground invasion. On 23 September, Israel's air strikes on Lebanon killed 492 people in a single day.<sup>87</sup> On 1 October – the day of Iran's retaliatory strike against military targets – Israel attempted to invade Lebanese territory with ground forces.<sup>88</sup> Later on 1 October, the UK again provided military and diplomatic support to protect Israel's military infrastructure, even after Israel had acted directly against the UK's stated interests. The same concern shown for Israel's military facilities has not been extended to civilians in Gaza as the British military has continued to collaborate in Israel's genocidal assault.

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87 [Israeli air strikes kill 492 people in Lebanon | BBC News](#)

88 [What to know about Israel's ground invasion in southern Lebanon | Associated Press](#)

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“These findings ought to further inform the British public... that its government is, in effect, engaged in military actions without being subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and that these actions implicate its institutions and officials in the gravest breaches of international law.”

The information contained within this report has been gathered thanks to the courageous work of journalists. Mainstream media outlets have a duty to expose this evidence of the UK's military collaboration in Israel's military operations.

With the thresholds of material contribution and knowledge clearly met, the UK government is not simply failing in its third-party responsibilities to uphold international law, including its duty to prevent genocide; it is actively complicit in the genocidal acts being perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people.

These findings ought to further inform the British public – including the hundreds and thousands who have taken to the streets week on week to call for an end Israel's genocidal assault and a majority of the overall public who have been in favour of ending arms sales<sup>89</sup> – that its government is, in effect, engaged in military actions without being subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and that these actions implicate its institutions and officials in the gravest breaches of international law.

British parliamentarians and wider civil society must now press the UK government to:

- Bring its collaboration with Israel's military activities to an immediate end, by imposing a full two-way arms embargo, and ceasing its provision of all forms of military support as outlined in this report.
- Drop the 2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations, and impose economic and diplomatic sanctions in order to apply pressure on Israel to abide by its international obligations as set out, inter alia, in the ICJ Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's prolonged occupation.
- Support the South African submission at the ICJ in the genocide case against Israel, and push for the arrest and prosecution by the ICC of Israeli officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

If the UK fails to take such steps, then it should face the appropriate legal consequences, including condemnation by international bodies, sanctions, and the prosecution of individual politicians and officials.

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89 [British attitudes to the Israel-Gaza conflict: May 2024 update, YouGov](#)

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