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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Israeli Arms Deals and Arms Factories in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's Arms Deals with Israel

Israel's military sector is made up of over 200 public and private companies. It is dominated by Elbit Systems and three state-owned companies: Israel Aircraft Industries, Israel Military Industries and Rafael. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland spends millions of pounds each year on "battle-tested" arms from Israeli companies. One growing link is in the area of unmanned aerial vehicles or drones. In 2016, Israeli company Elbit, in conjunction with Thales United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, completed delivery of 54 Watchkeeper WK450 UAVs as part of an £800 million contract. The Watchkeeper is based on Elbit's Hermes drone, which has been exported to 11 countries, according to SIPRI. More recently in 2021, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland awarded a contract to Israel Aerospace Industries for 4 unmanned Jaguar Remote Patrol Vehicles (RPVs), as part of an experimental programme for unmanned land systems. Jaguars armed with machine guns have been used by Israel to help enforce the siege of Gaza.¹

Official figures show that since the Conservative government was elected in May 2015 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has licensed over £400m worth of arms to Israeli forces, including aircraft, bombs, armoured vehicles, and ammunition.² Between 2016 and 2020, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland issued Single Individual Export Licenses (SIELs) for arms sales to Israel to a value of £387 million, compared to just £67 million from 2011 to 2015. In addition, 37 Open Individual Export Licenses (OIELs) have been issued since 2014, allowing unlimited deliveries of specified types of equipment to Israel by the licensee over a longer period, typically 3 or 5 years. Even these do not cover sales of components for US-made F-35 stealth fighters sold to Israel, worth hundreds of millions of pounds to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland arms companies. As well as the military equipment being supplied directly from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, there are also components that go into US-built equipment destined for Israel. These include missile triggering systems for Apache helicopters, and Head-Up Displays for F-16s, both of which have repeatedly been used to bomb Lebanese and Palestinian towns and villages. In a ministerial statement on 21 April 2009, then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary David Miliband admitted that Israeli equipment used in Gaza in the 2008-9 conflict "almost certainly" contained UK-supplied components. He cited F16 combat aircraft, Apache attack helicopters, Saar-Class corvettes and armoured personnel carriers.³

Between 2016-2020, Israel was the eighth largest exporter of arms worldwide. Israeli arms manufacturers often market their products as 'battle-proven', meaning they have been used extensively by Israeli forces in attacks against Palestinians. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Ministry of Defence awarded Elbit Systems United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland a contract worth £102 million over five years to deliver military surveillance technology to the British Army. Surveillance technologies are a significant, growing section of Israel's military exports. A key element of Israel is its deployment of extensive surveillance technologies on the occupied Palestinian population. Israeli surveillance companies maintain close links with the Israeli military; many are headed by veterans of Unit 8200, the intelligence wing of the Israeli military responsible for the mass surveillance of Palestinians. These companies export technologies originally developed to deepen Israel's military control over the occupied Palestinian territory. This includes Israeli intelligence firm NSO group, which has sold military grade 'Pegasus' spyware to a multitude of repressive regimes to be used in human rights abuses. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland maintains close links with the Israeli cyber sector; in 2020, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland government invited NSO Group to participate in a Home Office securities fair. By purchasing and enabling Israeli arms exports, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland facilitates the human rights abuses that are carried out using Israeli technology. By continuing to trade in arms with Israel, the

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland helps to perpetuate the occupation and the violence and illegality it entails.⁴

Israeli Arms Factories in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The privately owned Elbit Systems arms company is the largest Israeli arms company, and had 10 sites across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland including 5 Arms factories, however due to anti-war protestors, they now only have 9 sites still operating. The Palestine-solidarity activist group known as ‘Palestine Action’ successfully managed to permanently shut down Elbit’s drone factory in Oldham, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland through continuously protesting its presence.²

Elbit Systems is known primarily for its military drones, specifically the Hermes, which have been used repeatedly in Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. The company also produces components for the illegal separation wall in the occupied West Bank. In addition, Elbit produces systems for so-called “sterile” security zones, artillery, and optical, targeting and navigation components, which can be installed into Nato-produced equipment, surveillance equipment and even cyber security products.⁵ All of these arms components are made in arms factories located across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Israeli Arms Murdered 44 Palestinians in 72 Hours in Gaza

From the 5th to the 7th August 2022, Israel killed over 44 Palestinians in Gaza. In the space of 72 hours Israel killed over 15 Palestinian children with the weaponry and arms that are created, facilitated and bought from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. At least 15 children were among the 44 people killed in the Gaza Strip in three days of Israeli bombardment, according to Palestinian health ministry officials.⁶ The very impact of Elbit Systems operating its British sites is having a direct deadly impact thousands of miles away on a besieged and unarmed population in Gaza.

Conclusion

The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) is deeply concerned with the seeming impunity Israel is repeatedly dealt in response to its extensive role in the arms industry and more specifically its role in using its own arms to oppress the Palestinian people and also arm other oppressive regimes around the world.

The Palestinian Return Centre calls on the international community to take the necessary measures towards the State of Israel to bring its arm industry to halt by immediately shutting down the sites of Elbit Systems, refusing licenses for exports to Israel, to ban arms imports from Israel, to put binding regulations into place to stop businesses within countries from trading with Israeli arms companies, to call for and support independent investigations into the use of Israeli arms and to ensure adherence to international law in the instances of Israeli arms usage.

¹ CAAT: Campaign Against the Arms Trade - Israel’s arms industry & its links with the UK. Caat.org.uk. Available at: <https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/israel/israels-arms-industry-its-links-with-the-uk/>

² The Independent, Revealed: The British military hardware used in Israel’s bombardment of Gaza. Independent.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israel-gaza-uk-arms-exports-airstrikes-b1851734.html>

³ CAAT: Israel. Caat.org.uk. Available at: <https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/israel/>

4 War On Want, UK weapons and Israel's use of force against civilians. Waronwant.org. Available at: <https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/UK-Israel%20arms%20trade%20briefing.pdf>

5 Middle East Monitor, Elbit Systems: The Israeli arms company under fire from activists. Middleeasteye.net. Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-uk-elbit-systems-arms-company-under-fire-activists>

6 Al Jazeera: Gaza hospital at breaking point after Israeli bombardment. Aljazeera.com. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/8/gaza-hospital-on-breakpoint-after-israeli-bombardment>