

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Hamza Yusuf and Phil Miller

16.09.2024



Hamza Yusuf and Phil Miller

## ***RAF Spy Flights Over Gaza Could Benefit From Torture***

Britain's military could be receiving intelligence from Israel that was obtained under torture, according to human rights campaigners, as Hamza Yusuf and Phil Miller report.



U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Foreign Secretary David Lammy board plane to Washington D.C., on Thursday. (Simon Dawson / No 10 Downing Street, Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Israel's torture of Palestinian prisoners should have serious consequences for U.K. intelligence cooperation with Tel Aviv, human rights groups have warned.

It comes as Prime Minister Keir Starmer suspended some arms exports to Israel last week, which the government said was partly due to "credible claims of the mistreatment of detainees."

However Royal Air Force (RAF) surveillance flights continue almost daily over Gaza to help Israel locate hostages held by Hamas.

Campaigners fear the flight paths may be informed by intelligence Israel obtained through torture.

*Declassified* has seen testimony from three Palestinian civilians who allege Israeli troops interrogated them about the location of hostages and tunnels while under extreme torture.

Sharing such intelligence with Britain would breach rules designed to prevent a repeat of the extraordinary rendition scandal, which saw MI6 collude with C.I.A. abuses after 9/11.

Charlotte Andrews-Briscoe is a lawyer at the Global Legal Action Network. She also represents Palestinian rights group Al-Haq in its lawsuit to stop U.K. arms exports to Israel.

She told *Declassified*: "In our view it is possible, if not probable, that information and assurances Israel gives to the U.K. are founded on information derived from torture."

Freedom from Torture, a British medical charity, also expressed concern, commenting: "The U.K. must take all steps in its power to ensure that it does not take receipt of or make use of intelligence provided by any authorities where there is a real risk that it has been obtained by torture or other ill-treatment."

When contacted by *Declassified*, Britain's Ministry of Defence (MoD) avoided our questions about whether RAF surveillance of Gaza was informed by Israeli intelligence that may have been derived from torture.

A government spokesperson would only say: "Our focus remains on securing an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, a rapid increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza, and compliance with international humanitarian law."

Israel's Ministry of Defence said it was unable to comment when asked about intelligence sharing with the RAF.



IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv. (Justin LaBerge, Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### **Intelligence Gathering**

British attempts to find hostages in Gaza could put RAF personnel in a compromising position if they receive intelligence from Israel.

The U.K. government is aware of harrowing testimony filed at London’s High Court in which Palestinian medics detailed their abuse while in Israeli custody.

The signed statements were compiled by Al-Haq as part of its landmark litigation against British arms exports to Israel.

Andrews-Briscoe, Al-Haq’s lawyer, told *Declassified* the witnesses

“demonstrated that Israel interrogates Palestinians under torture about whether they are a fighter, or are transporting or hiding fighters, weapons or hostages.

“Our witnesses further confirmed that people are being tortured into making false confessions. We argued that this was a serious matter for the U.K. to take into account when assessing the legality of Israel’s military targeting decisions.”

She added:

“In our view it is possible, if not probable, that information and assurances Israel gives to the U.K. are founded on information derived from torture – which is not only unlawful under international law but renders such assurances wholly unreliable.”

Britain announced it was suspending some arms export to Israel the day before Al-Haq’s case was due back in court.

Concerns about torture are now thought to have wider ramifications for the U.K.’s military cooperation with Israel.

This goes beyond arms supplies and includes extensive surveillance flights over Gaza to find hostages.

### **‘A Big Hole Full of Blood’**

Al-Haq interviewed two Palestinian medics released from Israeli custody, who requested anonymity for their own safety.

They described being stripped naked, blindfolded and severely beaten by Israeli captors. Their arms and legs were restrained almost constantly.

One was kept in nappies for a month. Another was suspended from the ceiling and had dogs unleashed on him.

The prisoners were denied sufficient sleep, food and water, with one soldier urinating in a detainee’s mouth who asked for a drink.

Much of the abuse appears to be purely sadistic. One commented: “They were just getting amusement from torturing us.”

However some of it is motivated by an attempt to gather intelligence on hostage locations.

A senior nurse, who had been seriously injured by an armed drone, said he was “detained and tortured in an attempt to make me confess to things I knew nothing about.”

“One of the Israelis called ‘the captain’ asked me about the abductees and the tunnels. He put a gun in my head and told me that he would shoot me if I didn’t give them information.

“I told him, ‘Please shoot me,’ because at that moment, the pain in my leg was unbearable. He then asked me to explain the structure of [the hospital I work in]. I said yes, I can explain it.”

Israel has repeatedly alleged that Hamas holds hostages in tunnels beneath hospitals.

Despite the nurse agreeing to cooperate, his treatment did not improve:

“They unblindfolded me and carried me through a back door of the room that led to an open piece of land under the army’s control.

“There was a big hole full of blood, and lots of flies flew over it. I stayed there, undressed, until midnight.”

Later on during his detention, he recalls:

“I was interrogated over several things. They asked me about the whereabouts of Hamas members and the abductees.

“I denied my knowledge of any of these issues because I sincerely did not know anything about it.”

### **‘Where Are the Hostages?’**

Another witness, a volunteer ambulance worker, said: “During the first week, we were only subjected to torture without any investigation. One person who was detained with us died under torture.

“From the second week, they started interrogating me on three charges” of transporting hostages, weapons and Hamas militants,” he recalled.

“Some ambulance drivers confessed under torture that they transported fighters, weapons and captives,” the source noted, adding “the Israelis knew that this was not true.”

Such systemic abuse does not appear to be confined to medical workers. Speaking anonymously to *Declassified*, a Palestinian lawyer recalled the torture he endured at the hands of Israeli forces.

“I was taken to Netzarim detention centre,” he said. “After that to Sde Teiman torture camp for 18 days. Then in early December they moved me to Naqab prison, where I was detained for seven months.”

He describes it as the “hardest torture in the world, physically and psychologically.”

“I remember being stripped, handcuffed and blindfolded. I was repeatedly interrogated and the same questions always surfaced: where are the Israeli hostages? Where are Hamas hiding?”

Every time he insisted he had no information, he was brutally assaulted. “At Sde Teiman, one soldier was beating me and called four other soldiers to join in too, breaking my arm in the process.”

He adds that in the Sde Teiman camp specifically, a common method of torture was a “dogs room”, which entailed Palestinian prisoners being taken to a room, savagely beaten by Israeli soldiers before having military dogs let loose on them.

[See: *Whistleblowers Further Expose Israel’s Torture of Detainees*]

### **Complicity**

Britain’s Foreign Secretary David Lammy appeared last week to acknowledge that Israel does abuse Palestinian prisoners captured in Gaza.

Lammy told Parliament:

“This government is also deeply concerned by credible claims of mistreatment of detainees, which the International Committee of the Red Cross cannot investigate after being denied access to places of detention.

“Both my predecessor and all our major allies have repeatedly and forcefully raised these concerns with the Israeli government. Regrettably, those concerns have not been addressed satisfactorily.”

Concern over torture was one of Lammy's three main reasons for suspending some arms exports, yet it does not appear to have impacted U.K. intelligence sharing with Israel.

RAF surveillance flights over Gaza continue to take off from a British base on Cyprus almost daily, according to publicly accessible plane tracking data. There have been hundreds of such flights since December.

So far ministers have only confirmed a one-way intelligence sharing relationship, telling Parliament: "Information relating to hostage rescue is passed to the Israeli authorities."

However a retired senior U.K. military source told *Declassified* it was plausible that Israel shared intelligence on possible hostage locations with Britain before the RAF surveillance flights took off.

The U.K. signed a military pact with Israel in 2020 when Ben Wallace was defence secretary. Although the text remains classified, intelligence relations with Israel are thought to be close.



Wallace in 2022. (U.K. government)

An Israeli special forces veteran told *Declassified* the pact enhanced military intelligence cooperation between the IDF's surveillance unit 8200 and Britain's eavesdropping agency GCHQ, which has major facilities on Cyprus.

*Declassified* understands that Wallace also met the head of Israel's Mossad spy agency at the Israeli embassy in London. Such contact only seems to have deepened since Oct. 7.

A senior Israeli defence official familiar with efforts to find the hostages told *The New York Times*:

“Intelligence collection and analysis teams from the United States and Britain have been in Israel throughout the war, assisting Israeli intelligence in collecting and analyzing information related to the hostages.”

Another article by the newspaper said:

“As the war has drawn on, Israeli intelligence on the hostages has improved, aided by captured documents and the interrogation of captured Hamas fighters, as well as American and British assistance.”

Joan Ryan, a former MP who chaired Labour Friends of Israel, wrote in the Jewish News on Tuesday that “Israel’s Mossad agency is reportedly the second largest intelligence-sharing partner with Britain after the C.I.A.”

Richard Kemp, a retired British army colonel, previously worked for the U.K. Cabinet Office’s Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). He has said “in my capacity there, I was well aware of very close intelligence relationships between Israel and the United Kingdom.”

Kemp, who ran the JIC’s international terrorism team and had access to classified material on Hamas, added: “From my knowledge of the way that the Israeli Government and intelligence services operate, I think that...it is highly unlikely that Israel would cut off intelligence sharing with the U.K.”

### **‘Black Hole’**



GCHQ’s “doughnut” building in Cheltenham, west England. (U.K. Ministry of Defence, Wikimedia Commons)

Such a close intelligence sharing relationship with Israel could now put U.K. personnel in breach of a government rulebook called “The Principles...on receipt of Intelligence Relating to Detainees.”

It was introduced after the C.I.A.'s extraordinary rendition scandal saw MI5 and MI6 receive foreign intelligence obtained from detainees who had been mistreated.

Under the Principles, defence personnel must notify ministers if they receive intelligence from other countries that they think has originated from an abused detainee.

The U.K. government should then obtain assurances, or make demarches on “diplomatic channels” to avoid the “liaison service” believing that “continued receipt of intelligence is an encouragement of the methods used to obtain it.”

The Principles specifically list eight forms of “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” almost all of which Israel appears to have used.

These are stress positions, sleep deprivation, methods of obscuring vision, physical abuse, withdrawal of food, water or medical help; and sexual embarrassment.

U.K. officials are also meant to consider the “lawfulness of detention,” especially whether prisoners are being held “incommunicado.”

Amnesty International accuses Israel of holding Palestinian detainees in “a virtual black hole.”

Torture — a crime under both U.K. and international law — is supposed to be a complete red line for British intelligence sharing under the Principles.

Britain's MoD failed to answer *Declassified's* questions about whether these rules were being followed for RAF surveillance operations with Israel.

Freedom from Torture previously raised concerns that former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government may have suspended funds for the aid agency UNRWA on the basis of intelligence Israel derived from torture.

The charity's spokesperson Natasha Tsangarides told *Declassified*:

“Reliance on information obtained by torture or other ill-treatment is a betrayal of the U.K.'s obligations to prevent torture, whether committed under the U.K.'s own authority or by others.

“The U.K.'s commitment to upholding its international obligations and its own guidance on these matters must be without exception. Any evidence of a selective approach places the global torture ban at risk.”

The Israel Defence Forces did not respond to a request for comment.

*This article is from* *Declassified UK*.

**Hamza Yusuf is a British-Palestinian writer and journalist whose work focuses on Palestine. He has reported on daily life under occupation for Palestinians including home demolitions and forced expulsion and the conditions for Palestinians in Israeli**



prisons. He has also extensively covered the British political establishment's legislation and policies towards Palestine. He has also contributed to *Tribune Magazine*, *Jacobin*, *+972 Magazine* and *New Internationalist*.

Phil Miller is the editor of *Declassified UK*. He is the author of *Keenie Meenie: The British Mercenaries Who Got Away With War Crimes*. Follow him on Twitter at [@pmillerinfo](#)

September 13, 2024

By **Hamza**

**Yusuf and Phil**

**Miller**

*Declassified UK*