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Complicity in Conflict: The UK's Arms Exports to Israel

The British government has recently suspended the export of 30 arms export licenses to Israel, citing the violation of international humanitarian law by the latter.

Calls for a Full Arms Embargo

However, this move has been widely criticized as insufficient given the persistent Israeli war crimes in the West Bank and Gaza. Experts hold that a full arms embargo on Israel is mandatory to uphold international law, established by the United Nations (UN) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The United Kingdom and other NATO members have often seen neglecting and compromising legal obligations for their geopolitical interests, continuing arms supply to Israel – a war criminal involved in genocidal acts against Palestine. Overall, the actions of the UK and NATO states disregard international law for their military allies.

The UK, despite being a UN member, prioritizes the interests of its NATO allies over the international law and obligations imposed by the United Nations

Recently, the British government suspended 30 arms export licenses to Israel out of a total of 350. In an official statement, it held that these arms exports could be used to “commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law”. Since October 7, Israel has indiscriminately targeted the civilian and military population of Gaza. Numerous hospitals, mosques, churches, and schools have been destroyed by the Israeli occupant forces. Moreover, multiple welfare workers have also been intentionally targeted by the Israeli forces. Israel is continuously attempting to expand the war into the whole region. It not only attacked the Iranian consulate in Syria, but also attacked the nuclear facilities inside Iran. Furthermore, it has also been attacking Lebanon since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. In a

recent Israeli cyber-attack in Lebanon, 9 people were killed and around 3000 people were injured. Israel also launched a missile attack on Lebanon after this cyber-attack.

NATO's Compromise of International Law

Although this step by the United Kingdom has been hailed by many as a positive development to pressurize Israel against its persistent war crimes and genocide in Gaza, it does not fulfill the UK's obligation to comply with international law. In reality, it depicts NATO members' persistence in prioritizing their allies over international law. Under international law, all the states are responsible for imposing an arms embargo on the war criminal state, Israel, due to its ongoing genocide in the West Bank and Gaza. This obligation derives from the recent decisions of the ICJ in January and July 2024, which declared that Israel is ostensibly involved in genocide in Gaza, violating the Genocide Convention, and is illicitly occupying Palestinian territory.

The United Nations Human Rights Council also obliges countries to impose this embargo on Israel. Hampering the export of energy, arms, and other such facilities is imperative to ensure the protection of the civilian population of Palestine and stop the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The British government has enlisted the violations committed by the Israeli government in its legal note, including suspending the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the violation of rights of the Palestinian prisoners. However, the legal note drafted by the United Kingdom's Foreign Office lawyers shows that they endorse the legality of Israel's occupation of Gaza and its operations in the territory.

The UK's interpretation of the Israeli acts in Gaza and the West Bank is by the US-made anti-terrorism framework developed by the US in the 2000s. This framework is widely recognized among all the NATO member countries and is known for providing impunity to powerful nations in achieving their ambitions militarily. Surprisingly, despite this sham arms embargo, British officials deny all the allegations of war crimes and genocidal operations of Israel, including attacks on civilians and their infrastructure. The British government holds that the available information is insufficient to make such declarations about Israel. Moreover, it supports Israel's stance over civilian deaths in its war against Hamas.

Implications for Global Order

The British government's stance is factually incorrect, as it considers the evidence provided by Israel more credible than the Palestinian officials, despite the former's history of deceiving. Israel's stance on civilian casualties is also a farce to justify its war crimes in Gaza. The embargo on merely 30 out of 350 arms exports to Israel is nothing more than a travesty, but the British government shamelessly justifies its continuation of 320 arms exports

to Israel by maintaining that it is mandatory to ensure peace and security in the region. Ironically, it fails to realize that Israel's conduct and its regional policy itself is a threat to Middle Eastern peace and security. The United Kingdom must not forget that the United Nations, an institution supported by all the Western states, is responsible for ensuring peace and security around the world.

The United Kingdom, despite being a UN member, prioritizes the interests of its NATO allies over the international law and obligations imposed by the United Nations. All NATO member states have leveraged the concept of "peace and security" to advance their interests. Such actions by the NATO members, especially the UK, Germany, France, and the United States, illustrate that these states are audaciously defying the International Court of Justice's decision about Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory. It is evident from such actions that the self-proclaimed champions of human rights and liberal world order are the biggest supporters of illegal occupations and war crimes. It would be apt to assert that all the states providing arms and energy to Israel are directly complicit in the ongoing war crimes in Gaza. Moreover, these states are also responsible for the rapid decline of the new world order led by the US and the West.

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