

Exporting occupation: the Israeli arms trade

The Occupation's economy of bloodshed in 2007

Manufacture of weapons is crucial to the Occupation's economy. The arms industry is heavily dependent on exports which make up 70-75% of its sales. The Occupation's economy is a military complex that permeates the whole state structure. The army, military industry, academic establishment and government are closely linked in the development of new weapons.

The Occupation promotes its products on the basis that they are "tested" in real war situations: the Palestinians are guinea pigs in this ongoing testing program. As former Defense Minister Moshe Arens puts it:

"every country should be dealing in those products in which it has a comparative advantage Israel's largest comparative advantage is in military products, because these demand advanced technology on one hand and military experience on the other. Today, it can be said that no country in the world is as dependent on arms sales as Israel. The Jaffa orange is fast being edged out of the public consciousness by the Uzi submachine gun as Israel's major export. Israel is the largest per capita arms exporter in the world."

Israeli children signing bombs to be dropped on the people on Lebanon in 2006





A soldier stands over a Palestinian child in Hebron

Israel is quietly lobbying for an exemption from nonproliferation rules so it can legally import atomic material.



The Occupation's Dimona nuclear facility, photographed by satellite in 1972

The arms industry in 2007

One of the Occupation companies exhibiting at the Paris Air Show arms fair in September 2007 is Elbit systems, which is showcasing its Hermes 450 and 900 drones – unmanned air vehicles, which were road-tested in bombing missions in Gaza during 2007, before being exported for foreign buyers. Elbit, one of the companies behind the Apartheid Wall, has also partnered with Boeing to construct the Department of Homeland Security's \$2.5 billion "virtual" border fence around the United States.

Thirty so-called 'homeland security' companies were established in the first half of 2007 alone, thanks in large part to government grants to universities to aid the development of weapon start-ups.

In addition to revenues from foreign sales, the Occupation benefits from massive foreign military aid. In August 2007 the US government signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding for \$30 billion in U.S. military aid to the Occupation.

The Israeli regime's belligerence has continued in 2007 with air-strikes on Syria on 6 September. In the last days of its war in 2006 the Occupation forces sprayed Lebanese towns, villages and agri-

cultural fields with some 1.2 million cluster bomblets and used phosphorous shells in defiance of international agreements and international law. For years to come Lebanese civilians will be dying of the cluster bombs. The military occupation and outright stranglehold of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza is costing daily lives and is aimed to destroy the livelihoods of an entire people, yet the regime continues to act with impunity.

Nuclear threat

The Israeli regime is also the only nuclear power in the Middle East. It has refused any international supervision and refuses to sign the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). On 20 September 2007, Middle Eastern states supported by South American, Asian and African countries pushed through a non-binding resolution in the UN, calling for a nuclear-free Middle East. The US and all the European powers except Ireland abstained – in public, officials objected to the resolution on the basis that it would 'politicize' the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This objection is particularly ironic given that the abstaining states are currently in the process of using the work of the IAEA in political manoeuvres against Iran, a state

which does not possess nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, on 25 September 2007 reports came to light that Israel is quietly lobbying for an exemption from nonproliferation rules so it can legally import atomic material. The initiative is apparently linked to the U.S.-India deal that would allow the United States to supply India with nuclear fuel outside the NPT provisions. In exchange, India would be constantly liable to US blackmail and Israel would be able to "legalize" its nuclear arsenal.

Up to this point, the US and Europe are maintaining a complicit silence over Israel's burgeoning nuclear program.

Business interests and political ends

The Occupation's arms trade is following business interests by ruthlessly exploiting the profits to be reaped from even the worst human rights abusers. Yet, Israeli arms trade also serves a specific political purpose. The Occupation is serving Western and especially US interests as it is the medium through which weapons can be channelled away from Human Rights clauses. More importantly, arms trade has proven to be an opening gate to countries hitherto closed to the Occupation. In fact, India's first trade deals started through the arms deals.

A history of violence

The Israeli regime has a long history of involvement with brutal dictatorships and export of arms. Full details can be found on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction site, www.bdsmovement.net, but it is worth citing a few examples where the Occupation has profited from instability over decades.

Supporting the Burmese junta

The repressive Burmese regime has been supported by the Occupation since its inception. There have been several reports that Israel is playing a crucial role in the construction and fitting out of three new warships, currently being built in Yangon. There have also been persistent rumors that Mossad provided training for Burma's intelligence agencies.

Israel is said to have trained

Burma's new anti-terrorist squad and the military dictatorship's personal bodyguards. Because of the secretive nature of Israeli/Burmese cooperation such claims have been difficult to verify.

However, the arms industry press describe in detail how Israeli companies and the Israeli government have been supplying and developing weapons for the Burmese regime and sharing intelligence. In 2002 Burma took deliv-

ery of air-to-air missiles and F-7 fighter upgrades from Israel. And in 2006 a new report noted the regime had received not just the missiles but military software, advanced electronic devices and intelligence training. The regime is the recipient of the Russian combat helicopter the Kamev KA-32. Kamev have manufactured helicopters with the avionics provided by IAI Lahav of Israel.

Exporting death to Africa: Apartheid South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe

The close ties and ideological affiliation between Israel and the apartheid regime in South Africa have ensured that Israel never applied any sanctions or arms embargo against the latter and, instead, supported the regime with nuclear material. In 1975, the Israeli regime aided Apar-

theid South Africa with its invasion of Angola and subsequently backed rebel faction UNITA. It made and aided arms shipments and trained fighters as part of the South African effort to destabilize the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). In the Democratic Re-

public of Congo, the Israeli regime has been linked to numerous scandals with both Kabila administrations, including claims of a military training/goods-for-diamonds deal in 2000. Recent exports also include supplying Zimbabwe with \$10m worth of 'riot control' vehicles.

Arming the Colombian regimes

The Occupation lends its support to Uribe in Colombia.

Activists report that from January 1 1991 to August 1 2005, the Colombian state and the paramilitary forces have committed 7,666 violations of the human rights of the Colombian Trade Unionists. 85% of those violations were due their social or political activities. Only a 33.7% of those cases have been investigated - and even these not deeply. Since 1991, 2150 workers from the trade unions have been murdered, 3,035 more have been threatened with death and 182 are missing. Several activists

have been abducted from their homes in front their families, murdered, then dressed up in guerrilla uniforms and guns and then dumped in other parts of the country in order to mislead the media.

The Colombian regime is supplied by Israeli companies backed by the Occupation. The Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI) has revamped Kfir aircraft put in storage by the Israeli Air Force and modernized with a new radar, advanced cockpit and avionics suite, advanced weapons and modern electronic warfare systems. Colombia was noted as a

recipient of upgraded Kfir units in 2003. In July 2006 Elbit Systems Ltd. was awarded a contract by the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer, to supply avionic systems for the Colombian Air Force's Super Tucano aircraft. Elbit Systems' share of the project is expected to amount to approximately \$17 million and will include a logistics support package. The current order awarded to Elbit Systems calls for the supply of a major portion of the contract's avionic systems, scheduled to take place during 2006 and 2007.

"The arms industry press describe in detail how Israeli companies and the Israeli government have been supplying and developing weapons for the Burmese regime and sharing intelligence."

Taking action

The campaign to stop governments from arming the occupation is one of the most urgent, and also one of the most challenging. Campaigners are mobilising on the issue in some creative ways. Cases have been compiled against former Israeli chief of staff Moshe Yaalon; his successor Dan Halutz. Yaalon has cancelled a scheduled visit to Britain for fears of arrest over charges of war crimes against Palestinians.

UK, 11 September 2007 - In the early hours of the morning, a group blockaded the entrance to the BAE Middleton factory carpark in conjunction with the day of action against the DSEi (Defence Systems and Equipment International) arms fair in London. BAE is the world's fourth largest arms manufacturer. It sells weapons to many countries on the government's lists of human rights abusers, including Israel.

US, August 2007 The End the Occupation campaign called activists to lobby the government to end arms to Israel.

Delhi, India March 12-14 2007 A solidarity conference gathered hundreds of activists to further Indian solidarity with Palestine and the Middle East and to mobilise against the arms trade with Israel. A petition gathering support among MPs against the arms trade is ongoing.

UN, November 10 2006 UN Special Rapporteur John Duggard issued a statement calling for sanctions and arms embargo on Israel.

November 2006 Saleh Hasan, a Palestinian who lives in Bethlehem, took the British Government to court over sales of military equipment to Israel arguing that the sales are in breach of the government's guidelines covering arms exports and are unlawful.

South Africa, 20-24 2006 September Cape Town Anti-War Coalition held two protests at the Africa Aerospace and Defence Weapons Fair (AADWF) from 20th - 24th September at the Air Force Base in Ysterplaat, highlighting the arms trade with Israel.

UK, September 2005 DSEI, the world's largest international arms fair, excluded the Israeli exhibitor TAR as it was exposing internationally illegal weapons of torture.

September 2006 A number of European states including Germany and Italy refused to allow El Al cargo planes carrying Israel Occupation Forces equipment from stopover landings in their airports.

Holland, August 16 2006 fifty protesters staged a "die-in" at the main entrance of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam,

to demand an end to the transit of US arms through the Netherlands to the Occupation.

UK, August 3 2006 Members of Parliament attacked the government for breaking its own guidelines on arms sales to Israel.

Spain, August 2006 Over 50 Spanish organizations have launched the campaign for the end of military cooperation that has been joined by trade unions and leftist parties.

UK, August 2006 Activists began to compile evidence necessary for a case against the British government for their complicity in the transportation of weapons from the USA to the Occupation in their illegal bombings of the Lebanese populace.

UK, July 2006 The Liberal Democrat party in the UK calls for suspension of all arms exports to Israel.

Switzerland, June 2006 Activists stopped the "First International Convention on Public Security" from taking place after learning that the event featured amongst the speakers Dani Arditi, ex-

general of the Occupation Army and current head of the "Counter Terrorism Bureau" of the National Security Council.

Ireland, July 2006 Two US aircraft carrying bombs to Israel were refused stopovers at Shannon Airport. Dermot Ahern, the Irish foreign affairs minister, said he would block any attempt by the US to transport arms to Israel through his country.

Sweden, April 2006 Sweden boycotted Nato air force drills due to Israel's participation.

Norway, April 2006 One of the three Norwegians governing parties, the Socialist Left Party outlined its call for a direct and secondary arms embargo. This was followed by the Norwegian Trade Union Confederation, who called for an arms embargo.

Stop the Wall

www.stophthewall.org