

Stop Arming Israel!

Nine months ago, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared “*I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed.*” If he ever faces the International Criminal Court, those words will haunt him.

Collective punishment – the Israeli policy – is a war crime under the 4th Geneva Convention, which the UK is required to uphold and enforce.

LBC radio host Nick Ferrari asked Sir Keir Starmer if cutting off Gaza’s power and water was an appropriate response to Hamas’ armed rebellion, in which Israeli civilians died. “*I think that Israel does have that right,*” Starmer said.

With a blank cheque from the UK government and Opposition, Israel went on to kill at least 37,900 Palestinians and injure 87,000 others in bombings, destroying healthcare that could have saved them. The UN says 96% of Gaza’s population is food insecure and about 495,000 face starvation.

1.9 million Gazans have been forcibly displaced. On 1 July the Israeli military ordered people to leave the eastern part of Khan Younis yet again. Ahmed al-Bairam told Reuters “*we moved to the European hospital, then we went to Rafah, then we came back to Bani Suheila, then we returned to Nasser Hospital and now we just went up the Somood camp.*”

Impunity

Israel has continued its genocidal war on Gaza without facing any penalties. Although the



Khan Younis 2 February 2024 (Abdulqader Sabbah/Anadolu/Getty Images)

International Court of Justice ruled in January that Palestinians had “*plausible rights to protection from genocide*”, it was May before Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy called for a pause in arms sales to Israel. In June, Starmer finally suggested that a Labour government would review legal advice on UK arms sales to Israel. But this is only part of the story.

The RAF flies surveillance over Gaza. UK firms send components to US arms companies whose weapons are exported to Israel. BAE Systems supplies 15% of each Lockheed Martin F-35 jet sent to Israel carrying Raytheon missiles and used to bomb Gaza. Meanwhile, Israeli drone firm Elbit Systems supplies the MoD. Barclays bankrolls BAE, Raytheon and Elbit.

Whose arms embargo?

If the UK or US, Israel’s main supplier, wanted to compel Israel to comply with international law, they would impose a comprehensive two-way arms embargo. There’s no sign of it. Palestinian trade unionists knew that back in October. That’s why they called on workers internationally to refuse to build or transport weapons to Israel.

Arms firms implicated in the Gaza genocide including BAE, Raytheon and Leonardo are active at the University of Liverpool. The academic pension fund USS invests in BAE, Honeywell, General Dynamics, Barclays. The Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF) has £53.6m in 26 arms firms supplying the Israeli military directly or via the US.

The government won’t act. But it’s not their money. Student fees finance the University, staff pay for pensions, while local government workers and Council Tax payers finance the MPF. Divestment could start a real embargo.