

UK prime minister facing pressure over arms sales to Israel after death of WCK aid workers



London, April 4 (RHC)-- UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is facing mounting pressure over the country's arms sales to Israel following the death of seven aid workers of the World Central Kitchen (WCK) in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip.

In a letter signed on Wednesday, more than 600 prominent figures, including lawyers, academics and retired senior judges, urged Sunak to end arms sale to Israel as a measure to prevent genocide in Gaza. They described the present situation in Gaza as “catastrophic,” warning that the UK government is breaching international law by continuing to arm the occupying regime.

“While we welcome the increasingly robust calls by your government for a cessation of fighting and the unobstructed entry to Gaza of humanitarian assistance, simultaneously to continue (to take two striking examples) the sale of weapons and weapons systems to Israel and to maintain threats of suspending UK aid to UNRWA falls significantly short of your government’s obligations under international law,” the signatories wrote.

The 17-page letter further called for the government to work towards a permanent ceasefire and to impose sanctions “upon individuals and entities who have made statements inciting genocide against Palestinians.”

It also stressed that restoring funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency is necessary for “effective entry and distribution of the means of existence to Palestinians in Gaza, and by extension the prevention of genocide.”

The letter further emphasized that the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) conclusion that there exists a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza has placed London on notice that weapons might be used in its commission and that the suspension of their provision is thus “a ‘means likely to deter’ and/or ‘a measure to prevent’ genocide.”

Meanwhile, Tory MPs have piled pressure on Sunak over the country’s arms sales to Israel, saying the UK should stop exporting arms to Tel Aviv following the strike on the WCK aid convoy. The Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party (SNP) and a former UK national security adviser have also called for arms sales to Israel to be suspended.

First Minister Humza Yousaf has also urged an immediate end to arms sales from the UK to Israel in a letter to Sunak.

The Labour Party has not called for a suspension, but is urging the government to publish internal legal advice on whether Israel is in breach of international law.

On Tuesday, Gaza’s Government Media Office said at least seven foreign aid workers of WCK had been killed in an Israeli airstrike in Dayr al-Balah in the central part of the Gaza Strip. It said the foreigners included citizens of Australia, Britain, and Poland.

The British victims were identified as John Chapman, James Henderson and James Kirby, who were all military veterans.

Speaking to the Sun newspaper, Sunak described the deaths as “an awful tragedy,” saying the UK wanted to see “a dramatic increase in the amount of aid getting into Gaza”. He also called for an independent investigation into the Israeli strike, but stopped short of saying arms sales should end.



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