

British government blocks legal assessments of Israeli violations in Gaza

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People and health workers unearth bodies found at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on April 23, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

London, April 25 (RHC)-- Britain has blocked legal assessments over whether Israel has breached International Humanitarian Law (IHL) during its ongoing war on the besieged Gaza Strip, two weeks after London doubled down on exporting arms to the occupying regime.

Earlier this month, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, MP Alicia Kearns, admitted that the Foreign Office had received “official legal advice that Israel has broken international humanitarian law, but the government has not announced it.”

However, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on April 10 said arms exports to Israel would continue as before and the flow would not be suspended, despite the fact that the UK’s arms export guidelines maintain that the country must not grant a license if it determines there is a clear risk the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

On Tuesday, Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), a UK-based pressure group that seeks an end to the global arms trade, cited Trade Government lawyer James Eadie as admitting that there has been a “hiatus” in legal assessments over whether the Tel Aviv regime is breaching the IHL for reasons he “couldn’t go into.”

He said “decisions of some importance have been delayed for some time” and that these delayed decisions were due “imminently” probably in mid to late May.

Back in December, Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq and UK-based Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) initiated legal proceedings against the British government to halt its arms exports to Israel over its genocidal war in the Gaza Strip since October 7.

More than 1,000 lawyers, academics, and retired judges, including former president of the Supreme Court Baroness Hale, have signed an open letter underscoring that the constant flow of British arms into Israel puts the UK in clear breach of international law.

Late March, a cross-party group of 135 lawmakers wrote to the foreign and business secretaries, stating that the case for a suspension of arms export licenses to Israel is “overwhelming.”

Canada, Japan, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands have already announced they no longer ship arms to Israel.

Furthermore, a majority of Britons have called on London to stop giving arms to Israel, whose military has so far killed over 34,100 Palestinians in Gaza. They fear Israel may be using British-made weapons in military actions that violate international law in the Palestinian territory.

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