

wrongly suggests that the [Leahy] Law doesn't need to be applied," Rieser said. Few organizations have been as critical of Israel's military justice system as B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group.

"The military law enforcement system is used by Israel as a whitewash mechanism whose purpose is to block any criticism of Israel's and the army's policies in the territories. The percentage of convictions of soldiers is close to zero, even for the most serious violations," said Dror Sadot, B'Tselem spokesperson.

Paul, the former State Department official who resigned from his post in protest against the Biden administration's "blind support for one side", said he had long argued internally that the US ought not to consider Israel's military

justice system as a "responsible functional justice system" when it comes to abuses.

"I think the track record is really one of slaps on the wrist, temporary demotions, and short-term suspensions even for really serious violations," said Paul.

For advocates of the Leahy law, like Rieser, the lack of accountability for the killing of Abu Akleh, the prominent Al Jazeera journalist, is particularly galling and has been the subject of criticism by senior Democrats on Capitol Hill.

Abu Akleh was killed by a bullet that hit the back of her head while covering an Israeli operation in the West Bank city of Jenin. A CNN investigation found that there was no active combat or Palestinian fighters near Abu Akleh in the moments before she was killed, and

footage obtained by the network corroborated witness testimony that suggested Israeli forces had taken aim at the journalist.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) apologized for the killing last year, but the military advocate general's office in Israel said in a statement that it did not intend to pursue criminal charges or prosecutions of any of the soldiers involved.

'A disturbing number of reports'

Rieser said there is a long history of correspondence — from the George W. Bush administration through to the Biden administration — between Leahy and successive secretaries of state seeking answers to why the Leahy law was not being implemented in cases involving killings of Palestinians.

In a May 2002 letter to then-secretary Colin Powell, who served in the Bush administration, Leahy raised concerns that the Leahy law was not being applied to the Middle East.

In a January 2009 letter to then-secretary Condoleezza Rice, Leahy expressed incredulity that the State Department was "unaware" of a single incident involving the IDF that would trigger the Leahy law.

A month later, Leahy sent a new letter to then-secretary Hillary Clinton, who was serving under the Obama administration. He attached copies of correspondence he had sent her predecessor. A February 2016 letter from Leahy to then-secretary of state John Kerry cited a "disturbing number of reports of possible gross violations of human rights by security forces in Israel and Egypt",

including "extrajudicial killings by Israeli military and police".

An October 2017 letter to Rex Tillerson, who served as secretary of state under Donald Trump, queried what steps the US embassy in Israel was taking to ensure the Leahy law was being applied to the IDF.

Later, in a May 2018 letter from Leahy to then-secretary of state Mike Pompeo, who served in the Trump administration, Leahy sought a Leahy law review of the shooting deaths of about 100 Palestinian protesters from Gaza who had been killed since March of that year.

Several other letters from Leahy refer to gross violations of human rights by the IDF. None of the cases ever led to a unit being punished.

The full article first appeared on The Guardian.

Demands for Canada to stop supplying weapons to Israel grow louder



By Jillian Kestler-D'Amours
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

Human rights advocates are accusing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government of misleading the public over weapons sales to Israel, which have come under greater scrutiny amid the deadly Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

At issue is legislation that prohibits the government from exporting military equipment to foreign actors if there is a risk it can be used in human rights abuses.

But regulatory loopholes, combined with a lack of clarity over what Canada sends to Israel, have complicated efforts to end the transfers.

Dozens of Canadian civil society groups this month urged Trudeau to end arms exports to Israel, arguing they violate Canadian and international law because the weapons could be used in the Gaza Strip.

But in the face of mounting pressure since Israel's war on Gaza began on October 7, Canada's foreign affairs ministry has tried to downplay the state's role in helping Israel build its arsenal. "Global Affairs Canada can confirm that Canada has not received any requests, and therefore not issued any permits, for full weapon systems for major conventional arms or light weapons to Israel for over 30 years," the department told Al Jazeera in an email on Friday. "The permits which have been granted since October 7, 2023, are for the export of non-lethal equipment."

But advocates say this misrepresents the total volume of Canada's military exports to Israel, which totalled more than \$15m (\$21.3m Canadian) in 2022, according to the government's own figures. It also shines a spotlight on the nation's

longstanding lack of transparency around these transfers.

"Canadian companies have exported over [\$84m, \$114m Canadian] in military goods to Israel since 2015 when the Trudeau government was elected," said Michael Bueckert, vice president of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, an advocacy group. "And they have continued to approve arms exports since October 7 despite the clear risk of genocide in Gaza," Bueckert told Al Jazeera.

"Unable to defend its own policy, this government is misleading Canadians into thinking that we aren't exporting weapons to Israel at all. As Canadians increasingly demand that their government impose an arms embargo on Israel, politicians are trying to pretend that the arms trade doesn't exist."

Lack of information

While Canada may not transfer full weapons systems to Israel, the two countries enjoy "a consistent arms trade relationship," said Kelsey Gallagher, a researcher at Project Plough-

shares, a peace research institute.

The vast majority of Canada's military exports to Israel come in the form of parts and components. These typically fall into three categories, Gallagher explained: electronics and space equipment; military aerospace exports and components; and finally, bombs, missiles, rockets, and general military explosives and components.

But beyond these broad categories, which were gleaned by examining Canada's own domestic and international reports on weapons exports, Gallagher said it remains unclear "what these actual pieces of technology are."

"We don't know what companies are exporting them. We don't know exactly what their end use is," he told Al Jazeera.

Global Affairs Canada did not immediately respond to Al Jazeera's question about what "non-lethal equipment" the government has approved for export to Israel since October 7.

"What does this mean? No one knows because there's no definition of that, and it really could be quite a number



Pro-Palestinian protesters gather outside weapons manufacturer INKAS in Toronto, Canada, on October 30, 2023. INKAS supplies military equipment to Israel.
● WBWCANADA

of things," said Henry Off, a Toronto-based lawyer and board member of the group Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights (CLAHR). Human rights lawyers and activists also suspect that Canadian military components are reaching Israel via the United States, including for installation in fighter jets such as the F-35 aircraft. But these transfers are difficult to track because a decades-old deal between Canada and the US — 1956's Defence Production Sharing Agreement — has created "a unique and comprehensive set of loopholes that are afforded to Canadian arms transfers to the US," said Gallagher.

"These exports are treated with zero transparency. There is no regulation of, or reporting of, the transfer of Canadian-made military components to the US, including those that could be re-transferred to Israel," he said.

Despite these hurdles, Canadian human rights advocates are pressuring the government to end its weapons sales to Israel, particularly in light of the Israeli military's continued assault on Gaza.

Over 28,000 Palestinians have been killed over the past four months and rights advocates have meticulously documented the impact on the ground of Israel's indiscriminate bombing, and its vast destruction of the enclave. The world's top court, the International Court of Justice, also determined last month that Palestinians in Gaza face a plausible risk of genocide.

Against that backdrop, eliminating weapons transfers to Israel is effectively a demand for "Canada [to] abide by its own laws," said Off, the Toronto lawyer.

The full article first appeared on Al Jazeera.



Court orders Netherlands to stop F-35 parts delivery to Israel

AFP — The Netherlands must stop delivering parts for F-35 fighter jets used by Israel in the Gaza Strip, after a Dutch court on February 12 upheld an appeal by human rights organisations.

The groups had argued that supplying the parts contributed to alleged violations of international law by Israel in its war with Hamas.

"The court orders the State to cease all actual export and transit of F-35 parts with final destination [in] Israel within seven days after service of this judgement," said the ruling. The US-owned F-35 parts are stored at a

warehouse in the Netherlands and then shipped to several partners, including Israel, via existing export agreements.

"In doing so, the Netherlands is contributing to serious violations of humanitarian law of war in Gaza," the rights groups argue.

The International Court of Justice in The Hague, which rules on disputes between states, has said Israel must do everything possible to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza. That ruling "strengthens our confidence in a positive ruling in our case," said PAX Netherlands, one of the rights groups involved in the appeal.