

UK announces partial suspension of arms exports to Israel



London, September 2 (RHC)-- The United Kingdom says it will suspend 30 of 350 arms exports licences to Israel, citing a "clear risk" they could be used in serious breaches of international humanitarian law.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy told parliament on Monday that the partial ban covers items “which could be used in the current conflict in Gaza” against Hamas but did not include parts for F-35 fighter jets.

He said the decision to suspend the licences did not amount to a blanket ban or an arms embargo, adding that the UK continues to support Israel’s right to self-defence in accordance with international law.

Soon after the Labour Party won the general election in July, Lammy said he would update a review on arms sales to Britain’s ally Israel to ensure they complied with international law.

“It is with regret that I inform the House [of Commons] today the assessment I have received leaves me unable to conclude anything other than that for certain UK arms exports to Israel, there does exist a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law,” Lammy said.

Shortly after the announcement on Monday, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said in a statement that Israel was “disappointed by a series of decisions” made by the British government, including the decision regarding defence exports. Katz claims the move “sends a very problematic message” to Hamas and its patrons in Iran.

“But there is a deception here because there is a huge difference between a right to defend yourself and the genocide that Israel has been doing, so we haven’t heard from the British government a critique or criticism of what the Israeli government is doing in Gaza. But, anyway, I think it’s a good step,” Barari told Al Jazeera.

Barari said this action is important because it serves as a “reminder to everyone, the international community, there is a need to do something to tell the Israelis they cannot continue the war unchecked in this way.”

British exports amount to less than 1 percent of the total arms Israel receives, and Lammy told parliament the suspension would not have a material impact on Israel’s security. Among the items that will come under the suspension will be components for military aircraft, including fighter jets, helicopters and drones.

Unlike the United States, Britain’s government does not give arms directly to Israel but rather issues licences for companies to sell weapons with input from lawyers on whether they comply with international law.

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