

Germany stops approving war weapons exports to apartheid Israel



Berlin, September 19 (RHC)-- Germany has put a hold on new exports of weapons of war to Israel while it deals with legal challenges, according to the Reuters news agency.

A source close to the Ministry of Economy in Berlin cited a senior government official as saying it had stopped work on approving export licences for arms to Israel due to legal and political pressure from legal cases arguing that such exports from Germany breached humanitarian law.

The ministry has not responded to requests for comment. However, the German government did issue a statement after the Reuters story was published.

“There is no German arms export boycott against Israel,” government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit said.

Last year, Germany approved arms exports to Israel worth 326.5 million euros (\$363.5 million), including military equipment and war weapons, a 10-fold increase from 2022, according to data from the Economy Ministry, which approves export licences.

However, approvals have dropped this year, with only 14.5 million euros worth (\$16.1m) granted from January to August 21st, according to data provided by the Economy Ministry in response to a parliamentary question.

Of this, the weapons of war category accounted for only 32,449 euros (\$36,016).

In its defence of two cases, one before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and one in Berlin brought by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, the government has said no weapons of war have been exported under any licence issued since the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, apart from spare parts for long-term contracts, the source added.

No case challenging German arms exports to Israel has yet succeeded, including a case brought by Nicaragua at the ICJ.

But the issue has created friction within the government as the Chancellery maintains its support for Israel while the Greens-led economy and foreign ministries, sensitive to criticism from party members, have increasingly criticised the administration of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Legal challenges across Europe have also led other allies of Israel to pause or suspend arms exports.

The United Kingdom this month suspended 30 out of 350 licences for arms exports to Israel due to concerns that Israel could be violating international humanitarian law.

In February, a Dutch court ordered the Netherlands to halt all exports of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel over concerns about their use in attacks on civilian targets in Gaza.

President Joe Biden’s administration this year paused – but then resumed – shipments of some bombs to Israel after US concerns about their use in densely populated areas in Gaza.

Approvals and shipments of other types of weapons, in more precise systems, continued as US officials maintained that Israel needed the capacity to defend itself.

Alexander Schwarz, a lawyer at the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, which has filed five lawsuits against Berlin, suggested that the significant decline in approvals for 2024 indicated a genuine, though possibly temporary, reluctance to supply weapons to Israel.

“However, I would not interpret this as a conscious change in policy,” Schwarz added.

[Source: Reuters]

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