

# Arms Embargo Now

May 7, 2024

As the catastrophe wrought by Israel's continued assault on Gaza grows, Canadian civil society organizations across multiple sectors are calling on the Canadian government to immediately suspend all trade in arms and military technology with Israel.

United Nations human rights experts warn that sending Israel weapons, ammunition or components that it would use in Gaza likely violates international humanitarian law, and the United Nations Human Rights Council has called on all states to immediately "cease the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel."

Canada's own laws, based on the Arms Trade Treaty, require that it stop permitting the export of military technology when there's a substantial risk those exports could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, or commit serious acts of violence against women and children.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that there is a "plausible" case that Israel is committing acts of genocide in Gaza, and that Palestinians there face a "real and imminent risk" of genocide. By reiterating that States have an obligation to prevent genocide, the ICJ ruling puts Canada on notice that, as a party to the Genocide Convention, it must do everything within its power to prevent genocide in Gaza.

That is not what Canada is currently doing.

Canadian companies export weapons, components, and military technology to Israel, including via the United States. These military exports, whether directly or by way of intermediaries, put Canada at risk of complicity in Israel's grave human rights violations in Gaza and the West Bank.

Canada also buys and permits the import of military technology from Israel. It is Israel's sixth largest arms buyer. Gaza and the West Bank function as a laboratory for Israeli arms manufacturers. The weapons deployed against Palestinians, including during Israel's wars on Gaza, are marketed to international customers like the Government of Canada as "battle-tested" and "combat-proven." Canadian tax-dollars pay for these Israeli-made weapons, providing profits to the Israeli arms industry and giving Israel moral cover for using those weapons against Palestinians.

While the Minister of Foreign Affairs has verbally committed to pausing approvals of future arms export permits to Israel, Canada must go further. It must cancel existing export permits, close all export loopholes, and implement an Arms Embargo under

Canada's *Special Economic Measures Act*, which recognizes the necessity of a two-way prohibition.

The Government of Canada [defines](#) an arms embargo as a sanction that “aims to prevent weapons and military equipment from leaving or reaching a targeted country. It prohibits exporting and importing arms and related materials to and from the targeted country, and may also prohibit communicating technical data or financial transactions related to military activities.”

Under the *Special Economic Measures Act*, Canada can and should also ban the export to and import from Israel of surveillance, security, and intelligence technologies, as well as a broad range of dual use items (electronics, computers, sensors, lasers, avionics, etc.) that may not be considered strictly “military” in nature but are integral to Israel's siege and assault on Gaza and its continual annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Ending Canadian arms exports to Israel may impact some workers in the arms and technology industries. We urge the government to work with trade unions representing these workers to develop short and long term plans for a just transition that will secure their livelihoods and enable them to work without the fear of being complicit with Israel's war crimes and possible genocide in Gaza.

Israel's actions in Gaza have made clear that the time for vague promises and half-measures is long over. We call on the Canadian government to uphold its moral and legal responsibilities and impose a full and immediate arms embargo on Israel.