SAVING PALESTINE’S CHILDREN UNDER THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

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The treaty, when enforced, will provide the much needed protection to innocent lives from arms that are used for war crimes and genocide.

            Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP) released this month a comprehensive and heartbreaking report, [OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE: A WAR WAGED ON GAZA’S CHILDREN](http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/operationprotectiveedge.awarwagedonchildren.160415.pdf) detailing, that places that should have provided children with shelter and safety were not immune from attacks by Israeli forces.

            Missiles fired from Israeli drones and warplanes, artillery shelling, and shrapnel scattered by explosions killed children in their homes, on the street as they fled from attacks with their families, and as they sought shelter from the bombardment in schools. (DCIP)

            The lives of Palestine’s children should be better protected since 24 December 2014, when the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) became binding in international law requiring states to end the transfer of arms that would be used in war crimes and genocide:

Article 6: 3. A State Party shall not authorize any transfer of conventional arms covered under Article 2 (1) or of items covered under Article 3 or Article 4, if it has knowledge at the time of authorization that the arms or items would be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes as defined by international agreements to which it is a Party.

            The ATT has been [ratified](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVI-8&chapter=26&lang=en) by 66 states and 64 have signed but not ratified including the USA and Israel. Notwithstanding, Israel is a prime target for ATT sanctions. Silencing Israel’s jibber-jabber of ‘self defense, the documentary, [The Lab](http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/10/turning-blood-into-money/) by Israeli Yotam Feldman, reveals that 1.6 million Gazans are locked in an Israeli military laboratory where weaponry is battle-tested. Billions of international dollars from western defense departments, fuel the demand and validate Israeli atrocities;

“A key player in the military industries told me that the operational testing in Gaza of Elbit’s BMS (Battle Management System – a special internet-like system for ground forces), a huge project worth $1 billion, has allowed Elbit to raise its price in a deal signed a year later with Australia. The same goes for Rafael. The company stated openly that it would capitalize on the escalation that preceded operation Pillar of Defense..A salesman for the IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries) told me that assassinations and operations in Gaza bring about an increase of tens of percentage points in company sales”. [Yotam Feldman](http://972mag.com/wars-on-gaza-have-become-part-of-israels-system-of-governance-an-interview-with-filmmaker-yotam-feldman/71957/)

            As a military economy, Israel has a pragmatic interest in maintaining the siege on Gaza and its occupation of Palestine,

…the Israeli economy is so much dependent on these operations. It's 20% of the exports. It's 150,000 families--not people--in Israel actually dependent on this industry. [Feldman](http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=10220)

            To boost Israeli arms sales, Palestinian families have suffered three onslaughts of ‘systematic genocide’ wars in six years and are condemned to a life that is unnatural and traumatic waiting for the next Israeli weapons testing. Gaza is a cemetery for over a thousand war-slaughtered children, a sealed death camp for 800,000 maimed and traumatised surviving children waiting for the next inevitable Israeli bombardment and stark terror.

            Israel’s war crimes and crimes against humanity must be considered in human suffering such as the tragedy of little Hamza Mus'ab Almadani, 3, of Khan Younis, Gaza.

            On 25 July 2014, Israel’s soldiers loaded and fired artillery shells that discharged hundreds of phosphorous-impregnated felt wedges that struck and burrowed through his soft three year old skin. Phosphorous continues burning until the oxygen is cut off and even then, the extreme pain and the horrific tissue damage endures.

            The agonising pain and trauma turned a once happy and boisterous child, mute. Hamza can no longer speak, a common symptom of trauma among Gaza’s children terrified by Israel’s relentless and tumultuous bombardments watched on TV and distant hillsides by [cheering Israelis](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/world/middleeast/israelis-watch-bombs-drop-on-gaza-from-front-row-seats.html?_r=0) in front-row seats.

            Decent people can neither comprehend nor tolerate Israel’s war mongering against Palestinian children and their families whom Israel has hemmed in with no escape. The ’most moral army in the world’ is a vile coward – ultimately shooting innocent Palestinians like fish in a barrel – for profit.

            Corporate Watch states, “85% of drones used by the Israeli military are manufactured by Elbit’ and sets out the [Use of Elbit's equipment in Gaza](http://www.corporatewatch.org/company-profiles/elbit), Elbit is Israel’s largest private arms manufacturer and is complicit in the direct targeting of children:

Israel, the world’s largest exporter of aerial drones, killed at least 164 children in drone attacks during its assault on Gaza. In a number of incidents, evidence suggests that Israeli forces directly targeted children. In one such case, Rawya Joudeh, 40, and four of her five children were killed by an Israeli drone-fired missile as they played together in the family’s yard in Tal al-Zatar, Jabalia refugee camp, North Gaza, on the afternoon of August 24. The children were aged between 6 and 14. (DCIP)

            Elbit Systems, during Israel’s 51 day war on Gaza was occupied in protest by [UK](http://rt.com/uk/178132-palestine-protesters-uk-factory/) and [Australian activists](http://mondoweiss.net/2014/08/lady-comes-melbourne) to bring attention to Elbit’s complicity in the monstrous destruction of Gaza.

            Elbit is owned by the Federman Group. Chairman Michael Federman is also chairman of the Hebrew University which has R & D links, as do most Israeli universities, to Israel’s major arms companies, Rafael, Elbit, IMI, IAI.

            For this reason alone, academic boycotts are justified.

            Other Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) actions against Elbit are divestments by Aegon, a Dutch financial services organisation, by the Norwegian Pension Fund, Danksk Bank and PKA Ltd, Denmark’s largest pension fund managers, and by Första AP-Fonden, the largest of Sweden's pension funds.

            Conversely, the EU deplorably bestows Elbit with,

“generous, taxpayer funded, EU grants under the EU's Horizon 2020 research programme. The company benefited from involvement in 5 European projects under the Seventh Framework Programme for research and tecnological development.” (Corporate Watch)

            Global arms sanctions will end Israel’s profit from the death of children. Western governments have multiple import and export defence contracts with Israeli private and government arms manufacturers worth billions of dollars: Can these governments guarantee their exports have not contributed to Israel’s war crimes? No.

            The Arms Trade Treaty was the centrepiece of Australia’s presidency of the Security Council. Australia’s, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, and her fellow Israelophiles, i.e. the majority of western leaders, will be challenged, by unrelenting grass roots pressure, to honour their legal obligations under the ATT.

            “The Arms Trade Treaty,” Bishop told the UN, “will help stop destabilising arms flows to conflict regions and to illicit users. It will prevent human rights abusers and those who violate the laws of war from being supplied with arms.” – Third World Network Features.

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