



Department for Business & Trade

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25 April 2024

Dear Liam,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Business and Trade Committee of 4 April 2024. I am replying on behalf of the Foreign Secretary and myself.

Israel is a vital defence and security partner to the UK, and we continue to support Israel's right to act in self-defence in accordance with international law. The UK has one of the most robust and transparent arms export control regimes in the world. Shortly after the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 the FCDO established the International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process (IHLCAP). This process gathers and analyses information regarding Israel's commitment and capability to comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and its record of compliance with IHL.

As part of this, the Foreign Secretary has reviewed the most recent assessment of the position in Gaza and Israel's conduct of their military campaign and provided his advice to me. On the basis of this advice, I took the decision on 8 April that our position on export licences would remain unchanged. As ever, this decision is being kept under careful review and I will continue to review decisions on new licence applications for Israel, on advice from the Foreign Secretary.

The Foreign Secretary and I were greatly concerned by the strike on the World Central Kitchen convoy. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have conveyed this to their Israeli counterparts, including the importance of effective deconfliction, for example, through embedding a member of UN staff with the IDF. As part of the IHLCAP set out above, the Foreign Secretary will receive advice from officials on recent events in due course, including the strike on the World Central Kitchen convoy.

The UK's arms export system is enshrined in law through the Export Control Act 2002 and implemented through our Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

Every quarter comprehensive Official Statistics are published on export control licensing decisions including those issued, refused or revoked. No other international export control regime offers this level and frequency of transparency. The next Official Statistics publication will cover export control licensing decisions made between 1 October – 31 December 2023, and will be published in June 2024.

In your letter you asked for a wide range of recent, unpublished data on export control licensing. To provide comprehensive statistics in advance of the Official Statistics publication would undermine our commitments to provide high quality, reliable and valuable statistics, equally available to all, that are released in an orderly and transparent way, in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the Code of Practice for Statistics. In your letter you note that some of the information requested has already been included in the Government's submissions in the Judicial Review brought by Al-Haq. As I'm sure you will understand, I cannot comment on ongoing legal proceedings.

Thank you for reiterating the recommendation from the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) for Israel to be included as a case study in the Strategic Export Controls Annual Report. Case studies are chosen to offer a range of geographies and how the criteria relate to them. We will consider your suggestion for inclusion in future Annual Reports.

I know our departments have been in contact with the committee regarding the BTC session that took place yesterday (24 April). As communicated, Minister Mak and the Deputy Foreign Secretary were unable to align diaries to attend on the requested date. We are working to identify a date on which both Ministers can attend and will be confirming this with the committee soon.

I am copying this letter to Alicia Kearns MP in her capacity as Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee given her interest in this matter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

THE RT HON KEMI BADENOCH MP

Secretary of State for Business and Trade, President of the Board of Trade and
Minister for Women and Equalities