



Business and Trade Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security
Department for Business and Trade
[by e-mail]

20 May 2025

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 2 April. I write today to propose an oral evidence session with you and FCDO and MoD ministers before the summer recess because there are now three acute issues on which I know Parliamentary colleagues need some urgent clarifications.

First and foremost, we have questions about the department's export licensing statistics released on 15 May which indicate that the UK approved licences for £127.6 million worth of military equipment to Israel in single issue licenses between October to December 2024. I understand this is greater than the combined total for 2020-23.

As you know these licences were approved after the Foreign Secretary's announcement on 2 September 2024, in which he told the House that the Government had suspended licences for "equipment that we assess is for use in the current conflict in Gaza, such as important components that go into military aircraft, including fighter aircraft, helicopters and drones, as well as items that facilitate ground targeting" (House of Commons Official Report, 2 September 2024, col 38).

Three months later, on 10 December 2024, you underlined this point and assured us—as did Minister Doughty and officials—that licences had been suspended for items that might be used in carrying out or facilitating Israeli Defence Force (IDF) military operations in Gaza (for example see Qq15-23 and Qq 55-58 of the [transcript](#)).

However, we have now heard concerns that most of the licences subsequently agreed were for military radars, components and software as well as targeting equipment

We would therefore be grateful if you could set out:

- the reasons for the increase in the value of approved export licences in respect of Israel;

- an analysis of the types of items that will be exported and how this compares to previous years (for example have there been any large increases in particular exports or are there any new items being exported); and
- what proportion of the items are intended for use by the IDF or any other part of the Israeli state.

Going forward, it would be helpful if you would reconsider your rejection of our proposal to publish Ad Hoc Export Control licensing management information for Israel on a quarterly basis. The ad hoc releases are important because they give additional information not contained in the official statistics, such as:

- the number of extant and suspended export licences for Israel, including examples of the type of goods covered by the suspended licences;
- details of the number of licences for Israel which have expired, licences that have been amended to remove Israel as a potential ultimate end-user and Open General Export or Trade Control Licences (OGELs/OGTCLs) amended to remove Israel as a permitted destination; and
- Israel export control licence applications in progress.

This information is important to Parliament as it enables tracking and comparison over time. We therefore request you reconsider the decision not to commit to publishing quarterly releases of the above information, especially as the parliamentary and public interest in arms exports to Israel is unlikely to diminish in the near future.

Second, we would be grateful if you would clarify why 'speculative values' are being provided in some licences. In your letter you noted "the values included in some licences in recent reporting periods at the time of application are speculative" and that "the actual values of exports taking place under these licences are likely to be much lower". We agree that it is important that the official statistics give an accurate picture, so I would be grateful if you could outline what steps are being taken to remedy these potential inaccuracies.

Third, I am grateful that you have provided us with the Government's Skeleton Argument document submitted to the Al-Haq judicial review case, but I am struggling to understand why a Government determined to maximise Parliamentary accountability and transparency has refused to supply the Committee charged with responsibility for

scrutinising ministers on arms exports decisions with the Government's "Grounds of Resistance" document.

I want to be able to tell the House that ministers are maximising efforts to ensure oversight of UK arms exports. I cannot provide that assurance if Parliament is told to approach the courts rather than your good self to understand and access HM Government's legal position, not least because of the slight risk of a potential conflict with the Ministerial Code. I know complying with the Code and operationalising it in all your work will be priorities for you, but as you know it does require ministers to cooperate with select committees to support effective scrutiny (paragraphs 1.6b, 1.6d, and 1.7). I hope that you will take this opportunity to give further consideration to providing the document, and all other relevant documents, because I know you would agree that transparency and proper scrutiny by Parliament necessarily involves the Government assisting with select committee requests for information unless there are very compelling public interest reasons for not doing so.

Thank you again for the answers supplied in your last letter and I look forward to receiving positive responses on the above points by 2 June.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, Minister Doughty at the FCDO and Minister Coaker at the MoD.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Liam Byrne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chair of the Business and Trade Committee