



**GLOBAL  
NET**

**STOP  
THE  
ARMS  
TRADE**

**GN-STAT CASE 03: High-Tech For Authoritarians –  
How Human Rights Are Violated With Israeli  
Weapons**

**By Shir Hever and Wolfgang Landgraeber**

## Table of Contents

1. The Israeli Arms Industry - An Overview
2. Weapon deals and human rights - a critical view of Israel's arms export policy
  - 2.1. Israeli weapons in „Frozen Conflicts“
  - 2.2. Israeli weapons for India
  - 2.3. Israeli weapons for Azerbaijan
  - 2.4. The Israeli weapon partnership with African countries
    - 2.4.1. Israeli weapons in African civil wars and genocides
    - 2.4.2. Angola
    - 2.4.3. Rwanda
    - 2.4.4. Ivory Coast
    - 2.4.5. South Sudan
3. Drones: Israel's flagship weapons
  - 3.1. Armed drones
  - 3.2. Suicide drones
  - 3.3. Surveillance technology
4. Summary

# 1. The Israeli Arms Industry - An Overview

The four largest Israeli arms producers are simultaneously the only ones who have made it onto the SIPRI-list of the 100 largest arms companies world-wide in 2017. These are:

1. **IAI (Israeli Aerospace Industries)**, the largest state-owned Israeli arms producer. IAI is primarily known for producing of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV, "drones") and missiles. The company also repairs and produces civilian luxury jets.
2. **Elbit Systems**, the largest private arms company. It is often associated with former politicians and has specialised on a variety of military technologies that are compatible with products from US manufacturers.
3. **Rafael Advanced Defense System Ltd.** is state owned. They are best known for their missile defense system, nicknamed the „iron dome“, which is produced in collaboration with the US company Raytheon. Rafael also produces UVAs and protection systems for armed vehicles.
4. **IMI (Israeli Military Industries)** is Israel's oldest arms producer. They make ammunition, tank ammunition, missiles and engines, among other things. Currently (2018) they are in the process of being sold to Elbit Systems.

## **2. Weapons deals and human rights – a critical view of Israel's arms export policy**

### **2.1. Israeli weapons in „Frozen Conflicts“**

A "frozen conflict," in the definition of political scientists, peace researchers, and historians, is a situation that has arisen between states and state-like entities after an all-out war or a war-like conflict has been halted with a ceasefire, but no peace treaty has been made. There are many examples of such frozen conflicts in the world today. In Europe, several Balkan states are involved in such conflicts (e.g. Serbia/Kosovo), as are eastern Ukraine and Crimea, while in Central Asia there are Armenia and Azerbaijan (the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict), the "secessionist provinces" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the conflict with Georgia, not to mention the border conflicts between India and China. At any moment, frozen conflicts can thaw and become "hot wars."

One of the countries with the most experience of frozen conflicts is Israel. Since the country's foundation, hot and cold conflicts have taken place both on its territory and in its immediate neighborhood, and Israel's defense is based on finding a military answer to every conflict situation. This is presumably the reason why states similarly affected by frozen conflicts either at home or in their neighborhoods cooperate particularly closely with Israel when it comes to security policy and arms trade. The fact that Israel has now become one of the world's leading countries in military technologies may also contribute to this.

### **2.2. Israeli weapons for India**

Israel was for some time one of the most important arms exporters to India. In the three years until March 2016, Israel was India's third biggest weapons supplier, reaching a total trade-value of around \$1 billion. In fact, it seems Israel is able to fill even the smallest niches available: some of India's special forces in the army, air force, and the navy are equipped with Israeli Tavor and Galil rifles. Meanwhile, when it comes to high-tech weapons technology such as Barak anti-aircraft rockets, Israel has entered billion-dollar joint-venture projects with India. The latest ground- and sea-based missile program, Barak 8, is meant to combat airplanes, cruise missiles, and supersonic guided missiles. The first test of a Barak 8 was completed in 2010. Sea-based Barak 8 systems are due to be delivered to the Indian Navy in 2019 and 2020. Depending on the type of missile, (MR-SAM, LR-SAM and Barak MX), their ranges vary from 70 to 150 kilometers. The cost is reportedly \$2.5 billion.

Israel war zeitweise einer der wichtigsten Waffenlieferanten Indiens. z.B. in den drei Haushaltsjahren von 2014 bis 2016 mit einem Gesamtwert von rund einer Milliarde US-Dollar. Israel besetzt offenbar jede noch so kleine Nische, die sich anbietet. Teile der indischen Spezialtruppen in Heer, Luftwaffe und Marine beispielsweise sind mit israelischen Tavor- und Galil-Gewehren

ausgerüstet. Im Bereich der Waffenhochtechnologie, z.B. bei den Flugabwehrraketen vom Typ Barak, gibt es dagegen milliardenschwere Joint-Venture-Projekte mit Indien. Das neueste land- und seegestützte Raketenprogramm Barak 8 dient zur Bekämpfung von Flugzeugen, Marschflugkörpern und überschallschnellen Lenkwaffen. Der erste Teststart einer Barak-8 erfolgte 2010. Die Auslieferung der seegestützten Barak-8 an Indiens Marine ist für die Jahre 2019 bis 2020 angestrebt. Die Reichweiten liegen ja nach Typ (MR-SAM, LR-SAM und Barak MX) zwischen 70 und 150 Kilometern. Der Kostenrahmen soll 2,5 Milliarden US-Dollar betragen.

### **2.3. Israeli weapons for Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan is among the biggest importers of Israeli weapons, in third place after India and Vietnam. In 2016 alone, the country bought \$248 million worth. For decades Azerbaijan has been ruled by the Alijew family and is regarded as a dictatorship. The country has been in a "frozen" conflict with its neighbouring Armenia for the Bergkarabach region. Israel is also building a strategic alliance along with the US and Azerbaijan against Iran, which lies on Azerbaijan's southern border.

### **2.4. The Israeli weapons partnership with African countries**

A dissertation on Israeli foreign policy in sub-Saharan Africa published in 2016, illustrates their extensive collaboration on military matters (Maike Hoffmann, "Die außenpolitische Strategie Israels in Subsahara-Afrika - intensives Engagement zwischen Entwicklungshilfe und Rüstungsexporten", Dissertation, Universität zu Köln, 2016).

In her chapter "Military Relations," author Maike Hoffmann lists Israeli arms exports to Angola, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa in detail: handguns and rifles, bombs, grenades, torpedos, mines, rockets, bullets, as well as other ammunition and projectiles. Her source was Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, "Israel's Economy, Foreign Trade"). Her conclusion is this: "According to the official figures, Angola is the biggest buyer of Israeli weapons in sub-Saharan Africa, with \$22.968 million worth of exports ... But other sources, like the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, suggest that Nigeria is among the biggest buyers of Israeli arms. These are accounted for by complex systems like drones, patrol boats, and electronic surveillances systems ... Alongside Angola, Ethiopia and Kenya are also big customers for Israeli arms companies. Apart from the arms deliveries, Israel also provides training and consultation, which highlights the special significance of relations with those countries ..."

#### **2.4.1. Israeli weapons in African civil wars and genocides**

Even before the turn of the millennium there were reports of Israeli weapons exports to African countries caught in civil war. It has already been established that there were exports to apartheid South Africa and civil-war ridden Angola in the 1990s. Israel even helped South Africa develop its own nuclear weapon, a move that South Africa reciprocated by selling uranium to Israel for its own nuclear industry.

## **2.4.2. Angola**

During the Angolan civil war between 1975 and 2002, which cost half a million lives, Israel is believed to have maintained relations with all three civil war parties – the MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA. Four years after the end of the civil war, the Angolan and Israeli governments signed a contract for the sale of handguns, rifles, ammunition, artillery, and mortars along with the appropriate grenades as well as drones made by the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and the battery and electronics specialists Tadiran. Total value: around \$1 billion. Since then, Angola has been using Israeli drones to protect its borders and its oil production facilities, which are vital to its economy. In addition, Israel Aerospace Industries, along with a Polish company, took on the modernization of the Soviet SU-22 fighter jets in Angola's air force.

## **2.4.3. Rwanda**

According to the UN, around 800,000 men, women, and children fell victim to the genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsis. Most were killed with machetes, but many others were killed with small arms, such as handguns and rifles some of which had come from Israel. In 2014, Professor Auron and the Israeli lawyer and human rights activist Eitay Mack tried to force the Israeli Defense Ministry to release its files on arms exports to Rwanda. Their request was denied on the grounds that publication "would harm Israel's state security and foreign relations."

## **2.4.4. Ivory Coast**

In November 2004 a serious crisis erupted between France and Israel during the civil war in Ivory Coast. Nine French soldiers in the UN's blue helmet mission and an American aid worker were killed in an attack by Ivorian government planes near the demarcation line to the rebel-held area. Their camp had been found by Israeli-made drones, which were exported to Ivory Coast along with other weapons from Israel – some from the Israeli government itself, others from international arms dealers.

Maike Hoffmann writes: "These exports not only violated a 2004 United Nations weapons embargo, but also a voluntary ECOWAS agreement from 1998. According to Amnesty International, Israel sold drones to Ivory Coast that not only had a major influence on the conflict between 2002 and 2007, but which were deployed again during the government crisis of 2010-2011."

## **2.4.5. South Sudan**

The conflict between the two civil war belligerents – troops of President Salva Kiir, of the Dinka people, are fighting supporters of his rival Riek Machar, of the Nuer people – has already cost tens of thousands of lives and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes. Both sides have been accused of carrying out massacres and mass rapes and burning women and children in their homes.

Almost nothing was known of the weapons sent from Israel into the South Sudanese civil war region before 2016. But that changed with the publication of a report by the UN Panel of Experts on South Sudan from 19th September 2016 (S/2016/963), which cited the serial numbers of three Micro Galil rifles found in the country. The well-spread locations of the finds indicated that many more than these three rifles must have been deployed. Additionally, research by the human rights activist Eitai Mack revealed: five years earlier, in 2011, Israel had already sent Galil ACE rifles to a militia tied to the South Sudanese government, who used these weapons during an attack on members of the Nuer tribe in 2013. That attack has often been considered the spark for the civil war.

Nevertheless, after years of unsuccessful attempts to force a weapons embargo against South Sudan, there has now been a breakthrough. By the incredibly narrow majority of one vote, the UN voted in favor of an embargo in mid-July 2018. It remains to be seen whether either the state or private arms dealers in Israel stick to it.

### **3. Drones: Israel's flagship weapon**

The days in which the Israeli arms exports comprised Uzi submachine guns only are long gone. Today the flagship product of the Israeli arms industry are drones, land and water patrol vehicles, but especially aerial vehicles.

The Israeli arms industry prides itself not on its ability to produce large amounts of firepower, but rather on the "non-lethality" of its technology either through precision strikes to minimize the targeting of innocent bystanders, or through the application of nonlethal force, also known as "riot gear." Yet the flagship product of the Israeli arms exports, the drone, continues to be used to take the lives of large numbers of unarmed civilians.

Israeli soldiers have expressed concern that the credit for the kill goes to the drone, rather than the operator, and that as a result their prestigious status as "warfighters" may be harmed. They therefore insist on the term "remotely-controlled vehicles" rather than "unmanned." For peace activists and human rights activists, the concern is the same: drones can kill without accountability. Witnesses never see the face of the killer, not even an airplane in which the killer sits. They see a robot (if they see anything at all), while the drone operator stays in a remote air-conditioned room, possibly in a different country or even continent, and plays a video game with lethal consequences.

The label "battle-tested" has long been established as a primary marketing factor for drones. Für Drohnen hat sich längst als wichtiges Marketingargument etabliert, dass mit dem Slogan „kämpferprobt“ geworben werden kann. CEOs of Elbit Systems and IAI insist that every drone model produced by their company has been used by the Israeli military in Gaza.

Among the main customers of Israeli drones are Azarbeijan, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Poland, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

#### **3.1. Armed drones**

The use of drones in warfare can be classified into three levels of armament of drones. The first level is the use of drones for surveillance and intelligence gathering. At this level, drones can acquire targets for the military, and then the military can use other weapons against these targets (such as missiles or artillery). The drone operator who "paints" the target (to use the military jargon) and then transfers the coordinates to other soldiers who fire at a target without seeing it. In this case, the responsibility for the attack and any damage, injury or death which it causes is shared between the drone operator and the artillery crew.

The second level of drone armament is a drone carrying a weapon (usually a missile or a bomb). The drone operator not only locates the target, but immediately fires a weapon with deadly capabilities. In this case, the responsibility for the use of deadly violence rests on the shoulders of the drone



operator. The German government decided that it does not wish the German military to be equipped with armed drones, but only with surveillance drones. Nevertheless, it has chosen to lease the Heron-TP drones from the Israeli company IAI, which are heavy drones capable of carrying heavy ordnance.

### **3.2. Suicide drones**

The third level of armed drones is suicide drones, when the drone itself is the weapon. The official name of suicide drones is "loitering munitions" and they are in fact remotely-controlled missiles with sensors and the ability to remain for hours in the air. The drone operator uses the suicide drone to select a target, and the drone itself drops on the target and explodes, as a missile.

Two Israeli companies produce these drones: IAI and Aeronautics. Aeronautics is now under investigation over the incident in Azerbaijan from 2017 described in section 2.4 in which company employees fired a suicide drone against an Armenian military installation in order to demonstrate its capabilities. The ethical problems posed by the suicide drone are no different than those of "normal" armed drones, as the operator may take lives with impunity.

### **3.3. Surveillance technology**

Israeli firms earn billions with the sale of electronic border protection technology, reconnaissance and armed drones, as well as with the sale of the attendant expertise and training programs. In addition, the Israeli government has sent intelligence and military personnel to countries that have asked for it, as Kenya did in 2013, the year of the al-Shabab attack on the Westgate Mall.

The fact that Israel is able to "test" many of its weapons systems before the world's eyes in its own country or just beyond its borders has given the state and its companies an advantage in the market. What happens almost daily in Gaza and the West Bank is likely to be watched closely by countries who believe they are under threat from rebel or terrorist groups or whose autocratic rulers are being threatened by resistance movements, which is why it is no wonder that the most commonly asked question at the stands of Israeli firms at international weapons fairs is: "Have you tested your products in war conditions?"

Nevertheless, Israel will struggle to defend its leading position in the surveillance and border protection technology market. Other suppliers are already on the market.

## 4. Summary

Israel's arms export policy is evidently shaped by three principles:

1. „The enemy of my enemy is my friend“. This allows the Israeli government to export arms to almost any country that can be cast as an enemy of Israel's enemies. This applies to countries such as Iran and other Muslim governments as well as countries where Islamist terror groups are active, e.g. in parts of Africa.
2. The Israeli arms industry looks for and finds niches that promise a certain level of market domination, especially in the high-tech sector. They do not seem to have second-thoughts about supplying countries, that disregard human rights.
3. Israel views itself as an agent to US interests. They export into regions that the USA cannot or do not want to supply for political reasons. US-arms are presented in current crisis as if to demonstrate their superiority.

---

References can be found in the full version of Case 03: Israel.