



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

Stephen Twigg MP
Chair
International Development Committee
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

19 July 2018

Dear Stephen,

When I appeared before the International Development Committee on 19 June, Mr Burden and Mr Russell-Moyle asked about the possible use of UK-supplied equipment by the Israel Defence Forces in Gaza. I undertook to write to the Committee on their queries.

As you are aware, we assess all export licence applications, case-by-case, against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the Consolidated Criteria). This is a rigorous and robust process. The assessment takes into account the most up-to-date information and analysis available at the time, including from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) overseas network, as well as NGO, media and other reporting. We consider the capability of the items, the end user, and the proposed end use. We will not grant a licence where there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law or for internal repression.

In view of the situation in Gaza, FCO officials recently conducted a review of all export licences for Israel, as we do from time to time for countries where there have been significant events that might be relevant to licensing. The review considered all licences issued over the last five years, both extant (active) and exhausted (where the exporter has already shipped the goods). The review found that:

- i. Many licensed items are or were for incorporation into products made by Israel's large defence manufacturing sector, or for weapons testing and demonstration; we judge that only a relatively small proportion might be in active use by the Israel Defence Forces;
- ii. We have not licensed the export of sniper or assault rifles for use by the Israel Defence Forces, and found no reason to believe that the very small number of rifles we have licensed for export to Israel might be in use by them; we have

granted four licences in the last decade for a total of ten rifles plus magazines, which were for an Israeli company to test ammunition on its own firing range;

- iii. After scrutinising reporting by the British Embassy in Tel Aviv, NGOs, media and other sources, following the recent events in Gaza, we found no information to suggest that UK-licensed equipment has been, or might be, used against protestors or in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law or for internal repression.

In light of the review, we do not believe that the export of items under any extant licences would now be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

Mr Russell-Moyle asked about end-use monitoring. We do not generally seek to carry out end-use checks; instead, we make a rigorous assessment of the risk of diversion before any licence is issued. We are confident that our robust process for assessing export licence applications manages the risk that UK-supplied equipment might be used in a way that is inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria. We do not judge that it would be practical or effective to carry out verification checks on end users in-country. We keep extant licences under review and the FCO will ask the Department for International Trade to revoke a licence if we judge that the licence is no longer consistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

If any member of the Committee has evidence of the use of UK-licensed equipment being used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law or for internal repression, I should be very grateful if they could bring this to the attention of the FCO.

I shall place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House of Commons.

Yours ever
Alistair

THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa