

CAAT NEWS

The quarterly magazine for Campaign Against Arms Trade

Issue 268

Spring 2024



STOP ARMING ISRAEL

PLUS

CAAT annual report **P6**

UK arms to Israel **P7**

Legal challenges to arms sales **P10**



**CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
ARMS
TRADE**

Since the last issue of CAAT News we have seen the terrible killings in Israel and the brutal bombardment and collective punishment of Gaza, which has killed over 23,000 people and created a humanitarian crisis.

In this issue of CAAT News we have focused on the UK government's role in arming, supporting and fueling the destruction. The complicity we have exposed is not limited to Israel; the UK has poured weapons into war zones around the world.

Cover image Alisdare Hickson (Source: Flickr)

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Campaign Against Arms Trade works to end the international arms trade. The arms business has a devastating impact on human rights and security and damages economic development. Large-scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems.

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Image:BBC



Photo: UK Parliament | Source: Flickr

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HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

Israel's all-out war on the Gaza Strip and its people began on 7 October 2023, following the appalling attacks by Hamas in Israel that day, which killed over 1,100 people.

The Israeli air and ground attack has reached genocidal proportions, killing over 23,000 people, with thousands more buried beneath the rubble. Reports show that Israel has damaged or destroyed 70% of Gaza's residential buildings, and has systematically degraded Gaza's healthcare and food production systems, bombing, shelling, and raiding hospitals.

Meanwhile the Israeli government has tightened its 16-year blockade of Gaza, reducing the amount of food, water, and medicine it will allow in to a trickle, while completely cutting off fuel and electricity supplies. This is collective punishment of a particularly vulnerable civilian population.

Multiple NGOs have accused Israel of using starvation as a method of war, and UN bodies have warned that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza face "catastrophic" levels of food insecurity – essentially famine.

With lack of clean water and sanitation, and 85% of the population displaced, disease is rife, and combined with hunger may soon kill more even than the direct military attacks, according

to Save the Children. Meanwhile, senior Israeli politicians and military figures have openly talked of expelling the population of Gaza to Egypt, and have used blatantly genocidal language.

In December, South Africa brought a case before the UN's International Court of Justice under the Genocide Convention, supported by an 84-page dossier meticulously documenting Israel's genocidal acts and the genocidal intent expressed in their actions and language.

The UK's failure to take any action to mitigate this appalling civilian toll is shameful, all the more so as the UK has supplied hundreds of millions worth of arms to Israel

The US and UK have steadfastly supported the destruction, and have continued to do so even as the vast majority of the world has called for a ceasefire, including many western countries normally supportive of Israel. Despite clear expressions of intent to commit war crimes, they have maintained the fiction that Israel is acting in "self-defence".

Sadly, the Labour opposition Leader Keir Starmer and his front bench have also fully backed the war, with Starmer going as far as defending Israel's "right" to cut off food, water, and fuel to Gaza. Both the Government and the opposition have failed to condemn any of Israel's war crimes.

UK support involves both political and diplomatic backing, and arms sales (see p7), including the 15% produced in the UK of every US-supplied F-35 combat aircraft used by Israel in Gaza. These arms sales make the UK government directly complicit in genocide.

CAAT calls on the UK government to immediately revoke all licences for arms exports to Israel, to join global calls for an immediate ceasefire, and to make strenuous diplomatic efforts to halt the genocide. CAAT likewise calls on the opposition to condemn Israel's war crimes, and mount serious pressure on the Government for a ceasefire.

The UK's failure to take any action to mitigate this appalling civilian toll is shameful, all the more so as the UK has supplied hundreds of millions worth of arms to Israel.

ARMS TRADE SHORTS

USA

The Pentagon has failed its sixth annual audit in a row. It has shown little in the way of progress, with auditors finding that only seven of the nearly 30 sub-audits were rated as clean.

The Pentagon began auditing itself in 2018, making it the last US government department to do so. It is believed to hold \$3.8 trillion in assets alongside \$4 trillion in liabilities. These are located in all 50 states and in more than 4,500 sites around the world.

Defense News, 16/11/2023

The US is using the UK's airbase in Cyprus to move arms to Israel from around Europe, according to an investigation by Declassified. Declassified has found these US weapons and equipment are likely being delivered to RAF Akrotiri from US bases in Turkey, Spain and Germany. However, the Ministry of Defence has refused to confirm what American aircraft are flying or what weapons are on board. **Declassified, 17/11/2023**



Photo: Thomas Hawk | Source: Flickr

The Pentagon has failed to track over \$1 billion worth of arms exports to Ukraine, according to a report by the US Department of Defence. The arms covered in the report include shoulder-fired missiles, drones and military goggles. The report has fueled concerns that equipment may have been misplaced or diverted. **FT, 11/01/2024**

Turkey

Turkish arms sales to Russia have soared since the invasion of Ukraine. Over the first nine months of 2023, sales to Russia and other former Soviet states believed to be conduits for Moscow reached a reported \$158 million, which is three times the value of sales during the same period in 2022.

Sales are believed to include microchips, communications equipment and parts such as telescopic sights. This has caused tensions with the US and others who have called for exports to be halted. **FT, 27/11/2023**

China

Analysis from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute shows that revenues have increased for the largest Chinese arms producers for the fourth year in a row. Analysts have attributed the scale of growth to "uninterrupted increase" in military spending since 1995. **South China Morning Post, 04/12/2023**

China is in the process of selling FC-31 fighter jets to Pakistan, according to the head of the Pakistan Air Force. No timeline has been published for the deal. Pakistan has previously expressed interest in buying Turkish-produced fighter jets. **Defense News, 04/01/2023**

Europe

A coalition of European countries have jointly ordered up to 1000 patriot air defence missiles. The purchase, which is being made by Germany, Netherlands, Spain and Romania is worth \$5.5 billion. **Defense News, 03/01/2024**



Photo: Billyhill | Source: Wikimedia Commons

Russia

According to reports in the Russian media, Russia has exported \$211 billion worth of arms to 122 countries since 2000. The announcement comes despite a decline in Russian exports since the invasion of Ukraine. **Sputnik, 03/11/2023**

UK

The UK government has promised to champion arms companies as “positive ambassadors for the UK, in the face of investment threats.” The focus was announced by defence secretary Grant Shapps as part of a strategy to increase arms exports. **Ministry of Defence, 15/11/2023**

The Defence Secretary, Grant Shapps has also appeared to encourage Saudi Arabia to join a defence partnership to build the next generation of fighter jets. This is part of a major international collaboration with Italy and Japan to produce a successor aircraft to the RAF Typhoon.

In the summer it was reported that Saudi Arabia had asked to join the partnership, but there were suggestions that Japan was opposed to such a move. In a press conference in Japan, Mr Shapps said “We’ve always said if other countries are interested then of course, this is an interesting conversation, whether that is Sweden or Saudi or anyone else.”

The Independent, 14/12/2023

Photo: Number 10, UK Prime Minister | Source: Flickr



It has been claimed in court that UK Ministers have approved over £60 million worth of payments to Saudi royalty and high-ranking officials over recent decades. The accusation was made by barrister Tom Allen, who was representing one of two men who were being prosecuted for alleged corruption in a longstanding arms deal between the UK and Saudi Arabia.

The Guardian, 27/11/2023

France

The French government has announced the sale of three Ground Master 200 radar systems to Armenia, although the value of the sale has not been published. France has also signed a letter of intent for Armenia to purchase air defence systems produced by French arms giant Thales and European missile maker MBDA.

Le Monde, 23/10/2023

World’s largest arms companies

In December 2023, our friends at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute published their annual report on the world’s largest arms-producing and military services companies.

The companies’ combined arms revenues totalled \$597 billion in 2022. This represents a 3.5 per cent decrease from 2021 in real terms. For more info go to **SIPRI.org**

			Total revenue (£ millions)	Arms revenue as a % of total revenue
1	Lockheed Martin Corp.		65,984	90
2	Raytheon Technologies		67,074	59
3	Northrop Grumman Corp.		36,602	88
4	Boeing		66,608	44
5	General Dynamics Corp.		39,407	72
6	BAE Systems		27,712	97
7	NORINCO		82,537	27
8	AVIC		82,499	25
9	CASC		44,458	44
10	Rostec		30,295	55
11	CETC		55,837	27
12	L3Harris Technologies		17,062	74
13	Leonardo		15,025	83
14	Airbus Trans		61,805	20
15	CASIC		37,364	32
16	CSSC		51,443	20
17	Thales		18,479	51
18	HIIA		10,676	82
19	Leidos		14,287	58
20	Amentum		8,750	75

CAAT ANNUAL REPORT ON UK ARMS EXPORTS

In October 2023, CAAT launched its second annual report, detailing UK arms exports in 2022.

We launched it with a hybrid online and in-person panel featuring the report's lead author, Sam Perlo-Freeman, who is CAAT's Research Coordinator, Rhona Michie of Shadow World Investigations, and Josh Cooper of Alqst, a UK organisation that campaigns on human rights in Saudi Arabia. A recording of this event is available on the CAAT website.

The report draws together information and data on UK arms exports from several sources, including Government export licence data, surveys of new arms export contracts by UK Defence & Security Exports, the arms export promotion agency in the Department for Business and Trade, data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on transfers of major conventional weapons, and others.

The report also highlights some of the key countries of concern in relation to UK arms exports: the top five export licence recipients in 2022, which were Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the USA, Turkey, and Ukraine, followed by India, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates.

While Israel is not one of the leading UK arms recipients, arms sales to Israel are nonetheless highly relevant to their current war in Gaza (see p7), which began soon after the report's publication.

The report highlights some of the key countries of concern: the top export licence recipients were Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the USA, Turkey, Ukraine, India, Israel, and the UAE

The information covered by the report shows a big surge in the value of single arms export licences issued by the Government in 2022. These more than doubled to £8.5 billion. Moreover, this does not include most of the £2.3 billion worth of arms that were given to Ukraine as military aid. This is because MoD stocks – the majority of the aid – do not require an export licence. Data from SIPRI also shows an uptick in deliveries of major conventional weapons by the UK in 2022, albeit from a relatively low base.

In 2022, the UK started deliveries of Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Qatar, a Gulf dictatorship with a poor human rights record and

a “critical” risk of corruption in arms procurement, according to Transparency International.

This made Qatar the largest recipient of single export licences by value in 2022, at £2.7 billion, and the second largest recipient of major conventional weapons between 2018-22 according to SIPRI, with 15.8% of the total. The US was top on this measure, with 20.4%. Saudi Arabia of course remained an important customer, with £1.1b in export licences in 2022, consisting mostly of bombs and missiles.

The report also discusses some of the concerns surrounding UK arms supplies to Ukraine. These include the risk of the diversion of equipment to other countries or criminal gangs, particularly after the end of the war. When asked what measures the MOD has in place to guard against such risks, they refused to confirm or deny if any such plans exist. This stands in contrast to the US, which has published a fair amount of detail on their anti-diversion efforts.

CAAT aims to publish an annual report covering UK arms exports in 2023 in autumn next year.

TIV value of UK arms exports 2000–2022

Source: SIPRI arms transfers database



UK ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL

The brutal bombardment of Gaza has put UK relations with Israel under the microscope.

Arms have played an important part in this destructive two-way relationship. Unfortunately there's nothing new about it. Successive UK governments have provided almost uncritical political and military support for Israel.

Israel's two main arms suppliers by far are the USA, which provides it with \$3.8 billion a year in military aid, and Israel's own domestic arms industry, including major companies Elbit, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Rafael.

The most important US arms supplies are the F-16 and F-35 fighter aircraft and many of the bombs and missiles that go with them, as well as elements of Israel's Iron Dome air defence system. The US is also currently supplying huge quantities of artillery shells for use in the war in Gaza, with President Biden declaring a "national emergency" to bypass Congress in doing so.

Nonetheless, the UK still plays a significant role in arming Israel. Between 2018–2022, the UK government approved single export licences to Israel to the value of £146 million. This included many highly pertinent pieces of equipment such as "components for combat aircraft" and "components for military head-up/down displays". However, this probably represents only a minority of UK arms sales to Israel, as it excludes equipment supplied under what are known as "open" licences, which have no limits on the quantity or value of exports.

In particular, it does not include the UK arms industry's contribution to the US F-35 stealth fighter jet programme, for which Israel is a customer. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Israel has ordered 50 F-35 aircraft, of which 36 had been delivered by the end



Photo: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office | Source: Flickr

of 2022. The Israeli military has confirmed that these planes are being used, alongside earlier US-made F-16s, in the bombing of Gaza.

The ongoing war in Gaza will require a continuous stream of spare parts for the aircraft involved, including for those components made in the UK.

As the only "Tier 1 partner" in the F-35 programme, the UK produces around 15% of the value of every F-35, including those sold to Israel. These exports to the US, for inclusion in the complete planes – and directly to Israel for spare parts – are covered by an Open General Export Licence (OGEL), which allows registered companies to export unlimited quantities of equipment for the F-35 to partner and customer countries, including Israel.

Based on the \$80 million production cost of the F-35, the UK's 15% share of Israel's 50 aircraft would represent

about \$600 million, which is around £475 million. In October, a response to a Freedom of Information request disclosed that 79 UK companies are registered for the F-35 OGEL. Details can be found at [workersinpalestine.org/who-arms-israel](https://www.workersinpalestine.org/who-arms-israel)

It probably wouldn't be the first time that UK-produced weapons have been used against Gaza. A review by the Government at the time found 12 licences for arms which were likely to have been used in the 2014 bombardment of Gaza. Likewise, in 2010 the then Foreign Secretary David Miliband said that UK-made arms had "almost certainly" been used in the 2009 bombing campaign.

The ongoing war in Gaza will require a continuous stream of spare parts for the aircraft involved, including for those components made in the UK. This means that the UK government and arms industry is directly complicit in sustaining Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.



Photo: Alisdair Hickson | Source: Flickr

RESISTANCE TO THE WAR AGAINST GAZA

The bombing of Gaza has been met with some of the biggest and most powerful protests to take place in the UK since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

From Brighton to Shetland and Cardiff to Belfast, hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets calling on the UK government to end its complicity and to back calls for a ceasefire.

CAAT supporters have been active on the ground and in organising protests in their communities and acting in solidarity with people across the UK and beyond.

The London protests saw 300,000 people joining in a sea of opposition to the war and calling for an end to the bombing and to the collective

punishment and the occupation, but there have also been direct actions and targeted campaigns focused on arms companies and businesses that are directly implicated or directly profiting from the war.

Wherever there is war and conflict there are arms dealers trying to cash in on it and to fuel it further. CAAT will always stand against war and with peace campaigners in Israel, Palestine and around the world.

The military relationship between the UK and Israel is a two-way

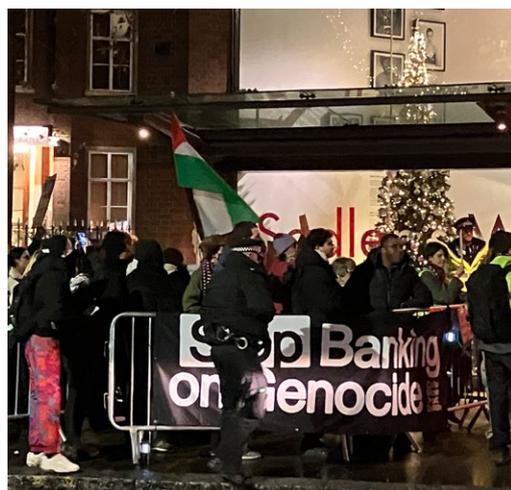
relationship, with arms sales both ways and collaboration on military projects including the development of drones.

We must remind ourselves that while the bombs that are dropped may be thousands of miles away, the offices where they are ordered are all over the world and on all of our doorsteps.

Here are just some of the local protests that CAAT supporters have taken part in, with the reports based on the experience of organisers and attendees.

Don't bank on genocide

Hundreds of campaigners including CAAT supporters joined Culture Workers Against Genocide outside Sadler's Wells Theatre in London before Christmas.



They were telling it to drop its Barclays sponsorship. Barclays has large investments in a range of arms companies, including BAE Systems, Boeing and Elbit, all of which are complicit in the Israeli bombing of Gaza. As well as the financial support from Barclays, the Chairman of Barclays Bank sits on the board of trustees for Sadler's Wells.

Attendees at the theatre's gala event were asked to reconsider allowing Barclays to launder its corporate reputation in this way.

Cultural spaces should be places of joy and wonder not funded by destruction!

CAAT, Palestine Solidarity Campaign and War on Want have come together to tell Barclays to Stop Banking on Apartheid and to end its links with the Israeli military.

The joint campaign page is at palestinecampaign.org/campaigns/stop-arming-israel-3 or contact outreach@caat.org.uk for more info.



Arms Factories Picketed: No to the genocide in Gaza!

In December, campaigners supported by Workers For A Free Palestine, trade unionists, alongside local CAAT supporters and others picketed arms company sites in Samlesbury, Wimborne, Brighton, and Glasgow, with more than 1000 campaigners taking part.

They were highlighting the deep complicity of the UK government and arms trade in the genocidal attacks by Israeli forces on Palestinian people in Gaza.

For example, the BAE Systems factory in Samlesbury manufactures the rear fuselage of every F35 warplane. Around 15% of each F35 is of UK origin, making it critical to the aircraft.

Other UK-made components used in Israeli aircraft include

bomb release mechanisms, fuel systems, and heads-up displays, all contributing to the death and destruction caused by the aircraft.

Those on the pickets asked workers at the factories to end all forms of complicity with Israel's crimes – most urgently halting the arms trade with Israel, as well as all funding and military research.

Well done to these brilliant campaigners, showing solidarity where and when it matters most!



Stop Elbit

On the morning of October 25th, a crowd of around 30 people gathered outside Elbit Systems' HQ in North Bristol to protest against Elbit's direct complicity in the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine and genocide of the Palestinian people.

Elbit Systems is Israel's largest private arms company. It makes the majority of the drones currently being used to bomb Gaza, and most of the small calibre ammunition used by the Israeli military. Elbit profits directly from the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and has seen its shares rise dramatically in recent weeks as Israel's military offensive has intensified.



Elbit is just one of many arms companies that sell arms to Israel – alongside companies like Boeing, BAE Systems, and Airbus – and their HQ was targeted last year by activists with Palestine Action.

Arriving bright and early with banners, flags, megaphones, and a powerful speaker blaring Palestinian resistance music, campaigners disrupted the façade of normality by which atrocities are enabled in comfortable offices.

The demonstration illustrated the need to come together and break the feelings of powerlessness that so many have felt watching atrocities on our screens from afar.

LEGAL CHALLENGES

Palestinian human rights organisation Al Haq and the UK based Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) have commenced judicial review proceedings against the UK government after written requests to suspend arms sales to Israel due to grave breaches of international law and UK rules were repeatedly ignored.

The submission itself includes over 3000 pages of evidence detailing allegations of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, starvation, forced displacement, and the serious risk of genocide.

Since 2015 there has been £474 million worth of arms exports licences issued to Israel, and a further 58 “open licences” which allow arms exports of an unlimited value.

These include licences covering components for aircraft, helicopters, drones, bombs, missiles, military technology, armoured vehicles, tanks, ammunition, and small arms.

Under the UK’s Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, Criterion 2C states that the Government will “not grant a licence if it determines there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.”

It seems certain that Israeli forces have committed serious violations of these laws, with

widespread reports of war crimes.

This legal action seeks an order requiring the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to no longer grant – or to suspend – all export licences to Israel, both directly and where Israel is the State of destination.

In some respects the action is similar to the successful judicial review that CAAT brought against UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen, which resulted in a temporary halt to new arms licences.

CAAT is working with our legal team to see how best we can support this judicial review.

This legal action seeks an order requiring the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to no longer grant – or to suspend – all licences of exports to Israel

In December, South Africa brought a case before the UN’s International Court of Justice under the Genocide Convention. The application was supported by an 84-page dossier that meticulously documents what it believes are Israel’s genocidal acts and the genocidal intent expressed in their actions and the language of Israeli leaders.

The application says Israel’s actions are “genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group.”

Both Israel and South Africa are signatories to the UN Genocide Convention. This means that they are obligated to “take measures to

prevent and to punish the crime of genocide,” such as enacting legislation or punishing those deemed guilty of the crime.”

The application will be heard by an international panel of judges, with the first hearing taking place on 11–12 January, just after the copy deadline for CAAT News. A verdict is expected within weeks.



Photo: Ontheday Advice | Source: Flickr

WESTMINSTER AND ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL

CAAT has been involved in a number of activities in Parliament challenging UK arms exports to Israel and supporting calls for an immediate ceasefire.

This includes supporting our allies in Parliament to table Early Day Motion 117, which calls on the Government to immediately halt all transfers of military equipment and technology, including components, to Israel, and to suspend the issuing of new licences.

Hundreds of CAAT supporters have written to their MPs urging them to sign, and so far, at the time of writing, 68 MPs from across parliament have signed the motion.

We also supported MPs in speaking at an important Westminster Hall debate on Arms Export Licences to Israel on December 12th, which was called for by Labour MP Zarah Sultana, who is a long-term opponent of the arms trade.

Unfortunately, in December, MPs rejected calls to support a ceasefire, with a majority of Tory and Labour MPs refusing to back an SNP amendment to the Queen's Speech that would have joined



Photo: UK Parliament | Source: Flickr

the growing calls from the UN and others.

Hundreds of CAAT supporters have written to their MPs urging them to sign Early Day Motion 117, which calls on the Government to immediately halt all transfers of military equipment and technology to Israel

In December CAAT wrote to the Foreign Secretary, along with our partners at War on Want, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International UK calling for an immediate halt to arms exports and licences from the UK to Israel.

We will continue to work with MPs from all parties to oppose arms sales to Israel and beyond.

Unlike Downing Street, the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments have supported international calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. Both Parliaments voted to clearly back

the calls, adding to the growing international consensus and putting pressure on Westminster to finally do the same.

The Scottish Government has taken a clear and unambiguous stance for peace, with Ministers speaking at demonstrations across Scotland. All Scottish Government Ministers backed the calls for a ceasefire, alongside MSPs from the SNP, Labour, Greens and Liberal Democrats.

The family of the Scottish First Minister, Humza Yousaf has been directly impacted by the war, with his parents-in-law having been trapped in Gaza but now thankfully safe.

Welsh Government Ministers, including the then First Minister Mark Drakeford, abstained on the vote in the Welsh Parliament, which was brought by Plaid Cymru. The Welsh Labour government has taken a similar position to the UK party in backing a “humanitarian pause” rather than calls for a ceasefire.

The Scottish government has also pledged to ensure that no procurement contracts are going to any of the companies that have been named by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as profiting from the illegal settlements in the West Bank.



Photo: Scottish Government | Source: Flickr

STOP THE TELFORD ARMS FAIR

November 2nd was the day of action for the campaign to stop the Specialist Defence & Security Convention UK arms fair (SDSC-UK) in Telford. This is a particularly controversial arms fair that had previously taken place in Malvern under a different name until resistance from local activists drove it out.

The Stop SDSC campaign brought together CAAT supporters, local Quaker meetings, Palestine Solidarity Campaigners from Birmingham, local trades unionists and campaigners from our friends in the Peace Pledge Union among others.

As cars and taxis entered the gates to drop delegates at the Telford International Centre they could have been left in no doubt about the opposition the event faced from the community, with banners, chants and drumming.

Despite heavy rain, campaigners from Stop SDSC maintained a presence of up to 60 protesters outside the arms fair throughout the day. This followed a courageous action by activists the day before, who used their bodies to block the entrance to the fair. Six people were arrested that day for this nonviolent action. We stand in full solidarity with those activists.

Speakers on the day, including from CAAT, emphasised that weapons can't be excused as being used for security when their ultimate purpose will always be to kill. They highlighted the role of the weapons sold at the arms fair in upholding racial and colonial violence, enabling attacks like the ones we have seen on Gaza, as well as their use in special forces "night raids" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

As well as hearing words from a range of speakers, the Peace Pledge Union laid a wreath of white poppies at the gates, a reminder of all the victims of war past and present. The wreath was placed by Telford Quakers at the Wellington Peace Garden to be part of Remembrance Day services.

Another powerful part of the day saw a Quaker Meeting for



Worship attended by Quakers and fellow travellers, which was held in a space that overlooked the fair itself. The contrast could not have been starker.

As cars and taxis entered the gates to drop delegates at the Telford International Centre they could have been left in no doubt about the opposition the event faced from the community

As well as getting good coverage in local media in the run up and during the fair, campaigners were able to engage with arms dealers and the public who walked past, with one young person from the local community joining the protest and saying how much they supported what the campaigners were doing. The protest ran right

up until after the arms fair had finished.

Sadly, despite our hard work, the arms fair still took place. With that in mind, local campaigners are already turning their minds and energy to how to stop it taking place in 2024. They will also use the connections made through this year's campaign to build a wider ongoing movement for peace in the area and send a message loud and clear: No to the Telford Arms Fair – Stop SDSC!



This piece is based on a report by local activist Ellis Brooks from Stop SDSC.

VIGIL AND THE ARMS TRADE

Vigil is a thriller available on BBC iPlayer. Its first acclaimed season focused on detectives trying to solve a murder that took place on a nuclear submarine in Scotland.

The second season, which has recently gone online, offers an exploration of UK arms exports and complicity in human rights abuses. This time, rather than the Clyde, the action takes place in a fictional oil rich dictatorship called Wudyán, which is clearly based on Saudi Arabia.

The military relationship between the UK and this fictitious

state is a very integrated one, with the government and arms

CAAT is one of the human rights groups and NGOs that producers of the show spoke to during the development, so there was a clear attempt to ensure that it was grounded in reality

companies working hand in hand and government personnel in place to oversee the trade.

Meanwhile Wudyán is using UK-made weapons in a bombing campaign against a neighbouring state that is in a state of civil war. If that sounds familiar it's because it mirrors the Saudi-led bombardment of Yemen, which UK-made weapons played a crucial role in.

CAAT is one of the human rights groups and NGOs that producers of the show spoke to during the development, so there was a clear attempt to ensure that it was grounded in reality as well as providing an entertaining and pacey piece of television.

The show itself may not be to all tastes, but it is interesting to see the arms trade and the UK's role in it explored in this way and with a level of accuracy that you don't often see in dramas of this kind.



Glasgow students against the arms trade

Glasgow University students have taken action to demand that their university ends all investment in arms companies, with a staged sit-in, open letter and other actions all targeted at university management.

Among companies that Glasgow University invests in are BAE Systems. BAE is Europe's biggest arms company and has a long and shameful history of arming human rights abusers.

BAE is one of the lead producers on the Eurofighter jet that Saudi forces have used against Yemen, and is a provider on the F-35 jet that Israeli forces have used against Gaza.

The choice to keep these investments stands in complete contradiction to the University's own public commitment to follow a Socially Responsible

Investment policy. This is public money that should be used for the public good.

CAAT has worked with students across Glasgow to oppose these investments and to call for the university to live up to its pledges.

Unfortunately, Glasgow is far from the only major UK university that holds significant investments in arms companies. Many other universities, including many in the influential Russell Group, still profit from the arms trade and have their research shaped by these same companies.



THE RED CARPET THAT NEVER UNFURLED

Last summer, the UK government announced that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the tyrant responsible for Saudi Arabia's brutal war in Yemen, the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and at least 1,257 executions since 2015, would be visiting London in the autumn.

If history was anything to go by he would no doubt receive a red carpet welcome. When successive UK Prime Ministers have hosted Saudi royalty they have pulled out all the stops. During MBS's last visit he had lunch with the Queen in Buckingham Palace and enjoyed dinner with Prince William and the then Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton.

It wasn't all going to be about photo-ops and gladhanding. The UK government had also hoped this visit would herald the signing of another huge arms deal, with many suspecting it could deliver 48 more of the Typhoon combat aircraft that have been used to pound Yemen.

A memorandum of intent was signed for the sale in 2018, but due to a combination of the war in Yemen, CAAT's legal case, and the Khashoggi murder, a contract was never sealed.

Just as we went to press the German government indicated that it was reversing its position and that the Typhoon sales could go ahead after all

A coalition of organisations, including CAAT, Reprieve, Amnesty International, and Alqst, a London-based Saudi human rights organisation, were all geared up to make sure MBS received the welcome he deserved, and an

initial protest against the planned visit was held in September. But in the end, the visit was indefinitely postponed.

The problem for the UK and Saudi Arabia is that the Eurofighter is a collaborative programme delivered with Germany, Italy, and Spain, all of which must authorise any exports.

With German NGOs opposing the deal, the Green Party members of Germany's coalition government had previously held fast against pressure from the UK, coalition partners, and the arms industry, and insisted on maintaining Germany's *Nein* to the sale.

The German government originally halted sales in the aftermath of the Khashoggi murder, but, with the election of a new German government in 2021, the Saudi regime and arms companies had hoped that Berlin would show a change of heart.

Press reports indicate that even the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, lobbied the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to allow sales to go ahead. The Times even reported that the UK had considered using a legal clause to temporarily remove Germany from the program.

However, just as we went to press the German government indicated that it was reversing its position, and that these sales could go ahead after all. If they continue with this U-turn it will be met by widespread opposition from campaigners in Germany.

With the stalemate having ended, it is possible that this visit will be rescheduled. If it is, CAAT will support protests and help to ensure that MBS knows he is not welcome.



Photo: Number 10, UK Prime Minister | Source: Flickr

Thank you

The 2023 Round Up of CAAT's activities was sent by email and post at the end of December. It's also available to read on our website. Please do pass it on to your friends or any groups that you are part of.

We continue to be grateful to you all for your support, CAAT simply wouldn't exist without you. Whether you've written to your MP, made a donation, shared a post on social media, picketed an arms fair, spoken to friends, or helped in other ways – thank you!

Stay in contact

Do we have your email address?

If you have received this issue by post only, it means we may not have an active email address for you. For reasons such as speed or postage costs, we send most of our communications by email.

Of course, you may not have an email address or prefer not to be contacted in that way, which is absolutely fine. But if you would like to receive our emails and presently don't, please consider getting in touch and joining our supporter list so that we can keep you up to date with our campaigns.

You can opt out at any time. **Contact Charles on supporters@caat.org.uk**

CAAT is 50 this year

In November 2024, we will be marking 50 years of CAAT's struggle and activism against the arms trade. We'll be doing this throughout the year,

looking back at how CAAT started and what it has achieved, involving some of the people who have made such a difference from the very beginning.

As part of our 50th anniversary, we have been invited by the LSE Library (The British Library of Political and Economic Science) to be part of an exhibition on the theme of peace and solidarity movements. This will use the LSE's archives, including items from CAAT's own archive, which was moved to the LSE in 2022.

The exhibition and a series of talks will take place in late February or March – we'll publish details on our website and in our email updates once they are confirmed.

We want to thank every single person who has been a part of CAAT in that time, and sincerely hope that we do not need another 50 years before we live in a world without weapons and war.

 **CAMPAIGN
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THEY SAID IT

"It's not the gun that kills but the person who pulls the trigger."

Anonymous Israeli arms worker justifies arms sales. CTech, 13/11/2023

"I think really across the entire Raytheon portfolio, you're going to see a benefit of this restocking."

Raytheon CEO Greg Hayes on the extra demand created by the war in Gaza. The Guardian, 30/10/2023

"We're horrified by the situation in Israel and Gaza and the devastating impact it's having on civilians in the region and we hope it can be resolved as soon as possible."

BAE Systems spokesperson when asked about protests against their role in arming Israel. Lancashire Telegraph, 07/12/2023



Photo: Mohammed Ibrahim | Source: Unsplash

DONATE TODAY!

You can donate to CAAT by either visiting our website at caat.org.uk, or completing the form below (in block capitals) and returning it to: Freepost RUEA-ERLT-XLZC, CAAT, 7 Wellesley Rd, Tharston, Norwich NR15 2PD

Donations direct to CAAT are the most useful for the campaign, but if you send a Charities Aid Foundation cheque please make it payable to TREAT (Trust for Research and Education on Arms Trade) making clear that you wish for your donation to support CAAT's research programme. Unlike CAAT, TREAT is a registered charity (No.328694).

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A direct debit is the most convenient and cost effective way to support CAAT.

A donation of £10 a month makes a real difference and helps us plan our future work.

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