

Canada's arms exports to Israel at a 30-year high

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There is precedent in Canadian history for restricting sales to Israel over concerns about human rights and military aggression

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Infantry soldiers take aim in front of a tank during an exercise in southern Israel on August 14, 2017.

Photo by Cpl. Eden Briand/Israel Defense Forces/Flickr.

A new report published today by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) raises serious human rights concerns posed by Canada's arms exports to Israel. The report, titled *[Arming Apartheid: Canada's Arms Exports to Israel](#)*, finds that Canada's arms exports to Israel have been accelerating in recent years—reaching a 30-year high in 2020.

A significant percentage of Canada's arms exports to Israel are categorized as explosives and related components, and could include bombs, torpedoes, rockets, missiles, or other explosive devices. The report argues that Israel's occupation, violence against civilians, and

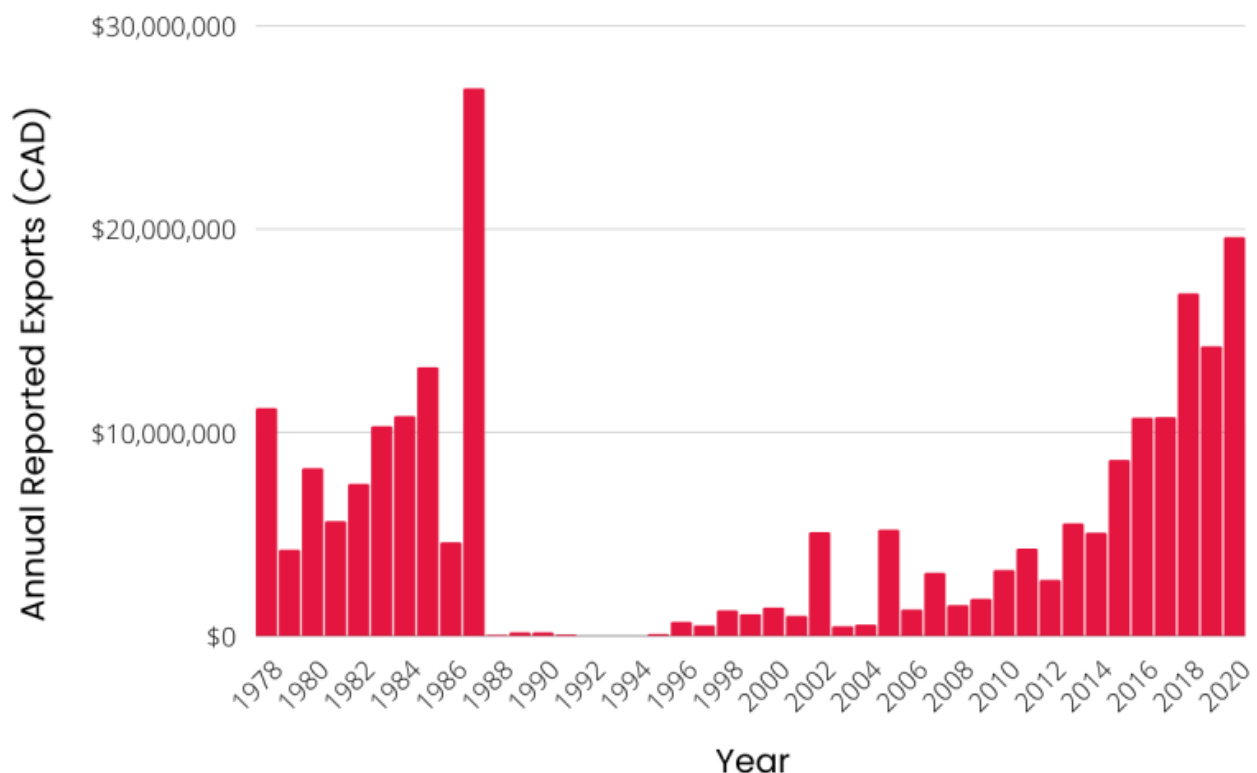
discriminatory policies—recently named as “apartheid” by Amnesty International—present a situation of extreme risk in which Canada’s arms exports could be implicated in violations of human rights and international law.

“It is shocking that Canadian officials have allowed military exports to Israel to accelerate over the past decade, given the undeniable evidence of Israeli human rights abuses,” said Michael Bueckert, Vice President of CJPME.

The organization points out that last year’s Israeli military offensive on Gaza killed 240 Palestinians, 63 percent of them civilians, and that human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have concluded that Israeli practices against Palestinians amount to the crime of apartheid under international law. “The potential risk to human rights is far too high to justify the transfer of any military goods into this context of occupation and apartheid,” Bueckert added.

The report further argues that Israel’s military occupation, repeated military offensives, and crimes against humanity of apartheid, present a situation of extreme risk in which Canadian exports may be contributing to violence against civilians and breaches of international law. The continued transfer of military goods into this context is inconsistent with Canada’s obligations under international treaties, and violates the spirit and intent of the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT).

Trends in Canadian Military Exports to Israel (1978–2020)



Values are expressed in constant (2021) Canadian dollars. Source: Global Affairs Canada, provided by Project Ploughshares.

The report recommends that Canadian officials take immediate and proactive measures to eliminate the risks associated with its arms exports to Israel, by: 1) suspending all military trade with Israel until it ends its military occupation of Palestinian territories, dismantles its apartheid policies, and complies with international law; and 2) launching a parliamentary study to determine whether past and current Canadian arms exports have been used against civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) or in airstrikes on Gaza.

The report also situates the current trend in arms exports within an historical context, including Canada's ban on most military trade with Israel following Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians in the late 1980s and early 1990s (during the first Palestinian Intifada). This ban was eventually lifted following the signing of the Oslo Accords as part of Canada-Israel free trade negotiations.

"Canada's former military embargo on Israel proves there is a precedent for restricting arms sales in response to Israeli violence against civilians," said Bueckert, "More than twenty-five years later, it is imperative that Canada once again prioritize human rights by suspending military trade with Israel."

CJPME notes that proposals for an arms embargo on Israel have previously been endorsed by the New Democratic Party, the Green Party of Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress, Amnesty International, and many other civil society organizations. However, there has been a lack of research into this subject which could provide context for this debate and inform policymakers and the public at large.

To download the full report from the CJPME website, click [here](#).

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a pan-Canadian grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to empowering Canadians of all backgrounds to promote justice, development and peace in the Middle East, and at home in Canada.