

Killer drones

UK complicity in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people



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Preface

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In November 2012, the Israeli army launched a military assault on the Palestinian population of occupied Gaza using drones, Apache helicopters, F-16 fighter jets and naval vessels. The attack lasted eight days, with civilian areas bombarded from air and sea with horrific effect. Israeli drones constantly circled the skies over Gaza launching hundreds of missiles. Despite Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian human rights, the British government is importing Israel's drone technologies to be integrated into its armed forces.

In 2005, the UK Ministry of Defence awarded the contract for the development of a new surveillance drone – the Watchkeeper – to a joint venture formed between Israel's Elbit Systems and its partner company, Thales UK. The design and technology of the Watchkeeper is based closely on Elbit's Hermes 450 model, extensively used over Gaza. The British government is, in effect, buying technology that has been 'field tested' on Palestinians. After numerous costly delays in its development, in October 2013 the Watchkeeper finally passed a key hurdle in the journey towards its release for active service.¹

Disregarding abundant evidence in UN resolutions and reports by international human rights organisations of Israel's unlawful use of force, the British government continues its collaboration with Israel's army and military industry. Despite previous British government statements that it cannot accept Israeli assurances that British arms will not be deployed against civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the government currently has 381 extant arms licences to Israel worth £7.8 billion.² By continuing to

license arms exports to and imports from Israel, the British government is giving material support to Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people, and sending a clear message of approval for its actions.

In July 2011, the largest Palestinian civil society coalition, encompassing Palestinian trade unions, NGOs and mass organisations, the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee, issued a call for an immediate and comprehensive military embargo on Israel.³ Supporters of the embargo include Nobel Peace Prize winners Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire, Betty Williams and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. Alternative Nobel Prize winners Walden Bello and Chico Whitaker and best-selling Canadian writer and journalist Naomi Klein have also supported the demands of the call.

Working in partnership with popular movements in Palestine, War on Want has taken up this call for a military embargo under the banner of the Stop Arming Israel campaign. In light of Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian human rights, the British government and the European Union must end their complicity with Israel's aggression and implement an immediate two-way arms embargo on Israel. We urge all those who believe in human dignity and justice to join us in this call.



**John Hilary
Executive Director
War on Want**

1 Importing terror

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In 2005, the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) awarded UAV Tactical Systems Ltd (U-TacS), a joint venture between Israeli arms company Elbit Systems and its partner company Thales UK, a contract which would ultimately be worth nearly £1 billion for the development of the Watchkeeper WK 450 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), or drone. This drone is based on the Israeli Hermes 450, described as the 'workhorse' of Israel's military in its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israeli companies such as Elbit will often boast of their competitive advantage in the global arms market due to their extensive 'testing' of their weaponry in 'real life' situations.⁴

Operations with the new Watchkeeper system were due to have started in Afghanistan from September 2010, but the programme has been mired in delays

attributed to U-TacS failure to deliver project requirements to schedule. Then Minister for Defence Equipment, Peter Luff, said in March 2012 that "it would be speculative to provide a forecast as to when Watchkeeper will achieve release to service or its in-service date."⁵

Despite the delays, in January 2013 UK defence minister Philip Dunne announced further planned expenditure of £73 million, £59 million and £28 million on Watchkeeper equipment and support over the next three financial years.⁶ In October 2013, the drone and its software finally received a 'Statement of Type Design Assurance' from the UK's Military Aviation Authority. This statement allows the MoD to move towards the final safety and airworthiness tests which would see the Watchkeeper belatedly enter active service.⁷



The Watchkeeper WK450



U-TacS operates the overall Watchkeeper programme from its facility in Leicester, with work subcontracted to a host of other British companies. Local sourcing is a common strategy of Israeli arms companies in order to avoid the licensing difficulties associated with moving parts and technology across international borders. The British company UAV Engines Limited (UEL) based in Lichfield, Staffordshire, manufactures the engines which allow the Watchkeeper to be airborne for 14-16 hours at a time and to fly at an altitude of up to 16,000 feet.⁸ UEL's parent company, Israeli drone specialist Silver Arrow, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Elbit. In 2009 Amnesty International pointed to evidence that the engines for Elbit's Hermes 450 – which have been used in military assaults on Gaza – originate from the UEL plant.⁹ British defence firm QinetiQ received the contract to conduct Watchkeeper test flights, managing its first flight at Parc Aberporth, Wales, on 14 April 2010.¹⁰



Besides the Watchkeeper programme, U-TacS was awarded a further contract in 2007 worth £69 million to provide the British armed forces with Hermes 450 UAV systems, as well as training in the use and maintenance of the systems.¹¹ Former President and CEO of Elbit, Joseph Ackerman, commented on the deals: "We are proud to be a part of a winning team together with Thales UK in a project based on the high end tactical Hermes 450 UAV, globally recognised as a brand name for UAV customers worldwide."¹² Elbit and Thales have agreed to jointly market drones in other countries worldwide.

The British government has already come under scrutiny for the Watchkeeper programme's links to Israel. In 2008, Elbit was forced to cancel a series of Watchkeeper trials that it had been planning to carry out

"We are proud to be a part of a winning team together with Thales UK in a project based on the high end tactical Hermes 450 UAV, globally recognised as a brand name for UAV customers worldwide."

Joseph Ackerman, Former President and CEO of Elbit

for the British army over the Golan Heights – Syrian territory illegally occupied by Israel since 1967. In 2011, British troops were found to be undertaking training in drone technology in Israel itself, just two years after the widespread use of drones by the Israeli military in its assault on Gaza (see below).¹³ Indeed, the first ten Watchkeeper drones were built in Israel, with production then switching to the U-TacS facility in Leicester.

Israeli arms companies play a leading role internationally in the development and export of drone technology. Israel's military began developing drones in the early 1970s and was the first to make widespread use of drones in its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. It has since continued to hone the technologies through regular military attacks on the Palestinian territories it occupies, and on surrounding countries.¹⁴ In order to develop its own drones programme, the British government turned to a joint venture with a company whose products had already undergone extensive battlefield testing.

Remote control wars

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, are aircraft remotely controlled by 'pilots' from the ground, often at great distance from war zones. While ground troops launch drones from the conflict zone, their operation is then handed to controllers who 'fly' the missions remotely on video screens.

Drones are a new mode of remote control warfare that stands in contrast to the 'traditional' launching of ground offensives and the concomitant risk of losing troops. While there are dozens of different drones, they generally fall into two categories: those that are used for reconnaissance and surveillance purposes, and those that are armed with missiles and bombs. In its 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the British government committed to invest in a fleet of UAVs in both combat and reconnaissance roles.¹⁵

"There is extra money for unmanned aerial vehicles, and I think that anyone who has been to Afghanistan and seen the incredible work that is being done there knows that is a capability in which we should be investing"

David Cameron's statement on the Strategic Defence and Security Review, 19 October 2010.¹⁶

To date, only three countries – the USA, the UK and Israel – are known to have used armed drones. All three have made clear their intentions to further expand their

drone fleets. The USA has the largest fleet, increasing spending on drones from £177 million in 2000 to £2.5 billion in 2010.¹⁷ The USA has deployed drones in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya.

Despite claims that drones are 'precision weapons', many hundreds of civilians have been killed in US drone attacks in Pakistan alone, including up to 200 children.¹⁸ In addition to the death toll, there is the psychological impact of living under constant surveillance. In their *Living under drones* report, researchers at Stanford and New York University found that civilians in Pakistan were being "terrorised" by the drones.¹⁹



Photo: Medill DC



Photo: War on Want

Britain's drones programme

In Afghanistan, British forces are using Reaper drones purchased from US firm General Atomics. The Reaper is equipped with 500lb laser-guided bombs and Hellfire missiles. Requests for information about the blast radius and the accuracy record of the Reaper's arsenal have been refused.²⁰ Britain has doubled the size of its fleet of Reaper drones in Afghanistan from five to ten aircraft. In April 2013, the Ministry of Defence confirmed that drone flights in Afghanistan are now being piloted from Royal Air Force (RAF) Waddington in Lincolnshire.²¹ Previously, RAF crews had piloted Britain's armed drones from the Creech US Air Force base in Nevada.

The government has also admitted that, apart from hundreds of missions flown by the RAF's own Reaper fleet, RAF crews have carried out more than 2,000 missions using 'borrowed' US armed drones. Defence minister Andrew Robathan made the further revelation that British military

personnel have been embedded with the US Air Force flying combat drones in Libya and Iraq as well as Afghanistan.²²

The Watchkeeper programme focused on in this report is part of a larger push to develop British-built drones. The Royal Air Force, in a joint programme led by BAE Systems, is developing its own pilotless combat aircraft, the intercontinental Taranis 'superdrone'. The prototype for the Taranis, which is designed to be able to fly and select targets autonomously, was unveiled by BAE Systems in 2010. According to evidence provided by the MoD to a hearing of the Commons Select Committee on remotely piloted air systems, the Taranis began flight trials in 2013, with no further details given.²³ BAE Systems has funded its own drone research for the last 10 years, sometimes in conjunction with public universities, and has developed a number of programmes for surveillance and reconnaissance drones.

2 Exporting the occupation

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Israel is one of the most heavily militarised states on earth. In 2012, Israeli military expenditure exceeded £9.9 billion²⁴, the third highest per capita expenditure in the world. Israel takes advantage of its armed conflicts and military assaults against the Palestinian population and neighbouring states to 'field test' its weapons. While greater attention has been given to the use of drones by the USA to carry out extrajudicial assassinations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, less attention has been paid to the country that has become the global pioneer in the development, production and export of drones - Israel. **Israel is the single largest exporter of drones in the world, responsible for 41% of all UAVs exported between 2001 and 2011.**²⁵

An Israeli official gave the following reasons for Israel's leading role in the drones market: "We have unbelievable people and innovation, combat experience that helps us understand what we need and immediate operational use since we are always in a conflict which allows us to perfect our systems."²⁶

Israeli companies export drone technology to at least 24 countries, including the UK. The two largest Israeli companies manufacturing drones – Elbit Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries – dominate the market, and both have seen huge increases in profits over the past decade. Elbit has registered growth in revenues of 700% since the beginning of the century, and gross profits for 2012 topped £507 million.²⁷ With the US Predator and Pioneer models both based on Israeli designs, most global drone transfers involve Israeli-designed systems. Annual spending on drones around the world is expected to rise from its current level of £3.24 billion to £7.2 billion by 2022, creating a market of £55 billion over the coming decade.²⁸

The principal armed drones used by the Israeli military are Elbit's Hermes 450 drone (described in more detail below) and the Heron²⁹, which is produced by Israel Aerospace Industries. Both aircraft can carry missiles for use in combat operations, and both were deployed in Israel's assault on Gaza in 2008/09.

Hermes: Israel's drone 'workhorse'

With its ability to carry missiles and surveillance equipment, the Hermes 450 drone has been described as the 'workhorse' of the Israeli military.³⁰ It has been used by Israeli forces for nearly 15 years, and has become a vital component in the Israeli state's arsenal of weapons technology. According to the Elbit website, the Hermes 450 is a "primary platform of the Israeli Defense Forces" and is "combat-proven".³¹

The drone provides high quality images, both during the day and at night with infrared cameras. These are fed back to operators in real time. Most Hermes 450 drones carry target tracking and laser illumination systems, which can highlight a target with a spot of laser light and then either strike with an on-board missile or provide information to combat aircraft, naval vessels or ground units to strike.

The Hermes 450 has a range of 300 km, a listed endurance of 17 hours and an ability to fly at 18,000 feet.³² The Elbit promotional brochure claims the drone has logged over 300,000 operational flight hours. Israel has the largest fleet of Hermes 450 drones, and has placed orders with Elbit for its successor Hermes 900 drone.



Photo: Giles Thomas

Israel's extrajudicial assassinations policy

Israel exports not only drone technology, but also new policy justifications for extrajudicial assassinations – the killing of a person without due process or legal sanction – for which drones have been used. In September 2000, Israel moved from a secretive policy of 'doing and denying' to become "the first state in the world to officially proclaim a policy of 'liquidation' and 'preemptive targeted killing'".³³

The official prohibition of targeted killings in the USA ended in September 2001 when President George W. Bush secretly authorised the capture or assassination of suspected terrorists. Following a drone strike in Yemen in November 2002, the USA adopted Israeli-like reasoning, arguing that because the arrest of the target was not possible, so-called targeted killing was a legitimate tactic.³⁴ This argument has been applied even where the target is in a country not at war with the USA, such as Yemen.

To date, the UK claims to have only used drones where there is a UN mandate for the use of force. British drones have flown over 45,000 hours in Afghanistan, firing over 350 weapons.³⁵ British special forces have also been involved in extrajudicial assassinations. In Iraq, the Special Air Service (SAS) reportedly killed or captured hundreds of key targets.³⁶

Christof Heyns, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, summary or arbitrary executions, has stated that the policy of using drones to carry out extrajudicial assassinations presents a major challenge to the system of international law that has endured since the Second World War.³⁷ Heyns warned that the use of drones makes it easier for states to increasingly engage in low-intensity drawn-out conflict without geographical limitations. This, he argued, presents a "danger to the protection of life".³⁸

3 Elbit: Global war profiteer

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Elbit is Israel's largest publicly traded arms company, but three quarters of its business is overseas. The USA accounts for 30%, Asia-Pacific 25% and Europe 20%. In addition to its work on drones, it designs, manufactures and provides support for aircraft, helicopter, naval, land vehicle, surveillance and homeland security systems. Elbit capitalises on the Israeli army's use of its technologies, marketing and selling its products around the world as 'battle tested'. This means, like all other Israeli military and security companies, Elbit profits from the continuation of war and occupation. On its website Elbit boasts: "We tailor and adapt our technologies, integration skills, market knowledge and battle-proven systems to each customer's individual requirements in both existing and new platforms."³⁹



Elbit is becoming a truly global war profiteer. In 2006 Elbit's American subsidiary Kollsman Inc was awarded a contract to participate in the construction of the US-Mexico border wall. Elbit has also sold its technologies to Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, South Korea, the Netherlands, Turkey, the UK, and the US. For example, since 2005, Australia has deployed the Skylark IV, one of Elbit's drone models. In 2006 Canada made an emergency purchase of five of Elbit's Skylark drones for deployment in southern Afghanistan.



Former President and CEO of Elbit, Joseph Ackerman



Photo: Reuters / Baz Ratner



Act now: **Boycott Elbit**

The call to divest from Elbit is a key demand of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. In September 2009, after years of campaigning by War on Want partner organisation Stop the Wall, the Norwegian government excluded Elbit from its state pension fund on ethical grounds. In March 2010, Sweden's national pension funds announced that they were excluding Elbit from their investment portfolios. Danske Bank, the largest bank in Denmark and a leading player in the Scandinavian financial markets, followed suit. On 28 May 2010, Deutsche Bank, Germany's biggest bank, announced it was 'out of Elbit' and confirmed exclusion of the company from its portfolio.⁴⁰

UK government contracts with corporations such as Elbit (and its subsidiaries) which are involved in violations of international law must end. War on Want is calling for a two-way arms embargo between the UK and Israel. This would see an end to all dealings with Elbit and other Israeli weapons companies, and an end to all licences for UK arms exports to Israel.

4 EU subsidies for drone terror

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Israeli arms companies benefit enormously from European Union public funds. The EU's Framework Research Programme is the biggest single research and development budget in the world. The FP7 programme⁴¹ (2007-2013) has a budget of €51 billion; the upcoming programme, Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), will have between €70 and €80 billion, with €2 billion earmarked for security research.⁴²

Israeli organisations are involved in the European Security Research Programme, participating in 46 projects. No other non-European country is involved in so many projects. Marcel Shaton, General Director of Israel-Europe Research and Development Directorate, stated: "From the perspective of the Framework Programme, Israel is part of the European continent."⁴³

Both Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries participate in the programme. Beyond drone technology, both are involved in different ways in the occupation of Palestinian territories, notably by supplying technology for the Apartheid Wall.

Elbit is a partner in 5 EU projects (3 of which are ongoing) funded by the European taxpayer, totalling €29.2 million. Israel Aerospace Industries participates in 25 EU projects (10 of which are ongoing), totalling €215 million. Israel Aerospace Industries is a partner in the EU-funded OPARUS (Open Architecture for UAV-based Surveillance Systems) project, receiving an EU subsidy of €11.88m for the development of drones. Other OPARUS partners include BAE Systems (UK), Dassault (France), EADS (pan-European) and Thales (France).

In 2004, the International Court of Justice held that international law places obligations not only on Israel but also on other states. These obligations include not providing support in maintaining the situation created by an unlawful act in occupied Palestinian territory, and ensuring that any impediment to the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination is brought to an end.⁴⁴ The EU must abide by international law by ceasing to provide generous grants to Israeli companies involved in violations of international law and human rights.



Catherine Ashton, EU foreign affairs representative with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



Photo: European External Action Service

5 Gaza: Israel's drone lab

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Under UN resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Gaza Strip continues to be regarded as an occupied territory and an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.⁴⁵ Israel has imposed a siege on Gaza since 2007, blockading the area by land, air and sea. A territory of 365 km² with a population of 1.5 million, Gaza has become the world's largest open air prison.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 90% of Gaza's drinking water is unsafe to drink, and 85% of schools are running double shifts of overcrowded classrooms that were never rebuilt after Israel's military assault on the territory in 2008/09. This is the result of 46

years of military occupation, continued wars and a blockade that, according to the UN, will make Gaza an 'unliveable' place by 2020.⁴⁶

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights reported that 825 Palestinians had died from attacks carried out by drones between June 2006 and October 2011.⁴⁷ What is not captured by these statistics is the devastating psychological impact on Palestinians, particularly children, of living under the constant threat of drones. Drones in the Gaza skies terrorise the population. People feel that their personal space is being invaded, making it impossible to lead a normal life. Hamdi Shaqqura, deputy director for the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, said: "For us, drones mean death... When you hear drones, you hear death."⁴⁸



Gaza after Israeli air strike. 18 November 2012



Photo: Reuters / Mohammed Salem

Israel's siege of Gaza has condemned its inhabitants to a humanitarian disaster with no end in sight. There is a near constant presence of drones, sometimes seen but always heard, often several at a time circling the air over the tiny strip. This presence is coupled with frequent and spectacular displays of military firepower, such as F-16 flyovers at low altitudes that break the sound barrier, shatter windows and fill the strip with deafening sounds as loud as actual bombardment.⁴⁹ The Israeli air force systematically targets infrastructure, civil institutions such as the police, and medical services including ambulances and hospitals.⁵⁰

"Every night the Palestinians in Gaza relive their worst nightmares when they hear drones; it never stops and you are never sure if it is a surveillance drone or if it will launch a rocket attack. Even the sound of Gaza is frightful: the sound of Israeli drones in the sky."⁵¹

Dr Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian doctor who worked at Gaza's al-Shifa hospital during the 2008/09 military assault.

The al-Astal Family



Drone strikes on Gaza: The human cost

On 27 December 2008, Israel launched Operation 'Cast Lead' without warning, marking the start of a week of incessant aerial bombardment of the civilian population of Gaza.⁵² This was followed by two more weeks of ground assaults that resulted in the killing of over 1,400 Palestinians, including some 300 children. Entire residential areas of Gaza were razed to the ground, leaving many thousands homeless and the already besieged economy in ruins. The scale and intensity of the attacks were unprecedented, even in the context of decades of deadly Israeli military campaigns in Gaza. More Palestinians were killed and more properties were destroyed in the 22-day military campaign than in any previous Israeli offensive.⁵³ Drones played a central role in the attacks.

On 2 January 2009 at 2pm in al-Qarara, near Khan Yunis, three children from the al-Astal family – Abed Rabbo, 8, his brother Muhammad, 11, and their cousin Abd-al-Sattar, also 11 – were killed by a missile launched by a drone. The children were eating sugar cane and playing near their home. "An Israeli drone was flying in the sky above us at that moment," their father Eyad recalls. Since the death of his sons, Eyad is tormented by fear for the safety of his other children. Before the death of Muhammad and Abed Rabbo, Eyad allowed his children to go anywhere at any time. Since the incident he keeps them inside. The children themselves are aware that their brothers were killed by a drone – the same type of drone they often hear flying overhead. Eyad explains that "when they hear a drone they are too afraid to go outside. 'The drone will bomb me if I go out', is what they say."⁵⁴

On 4 January 2009 at 11.30am, Mahmoud Khaled al-Mashrawi, 13, and his cousin Ahmad Khader Sbeih, 17, were playing on the roof terrace of Mahmoud's home, in the Yarmouk district of Gaza City, when they were struck by a missile from a drone. Ahmad was killed instantly; Mahmoud was seriously injured and died a few days later.

On the morning of 8 January 2009, Mather Abu Zneid, a 23-year-old English teacher in a UN school, and her cousin Faten Abdelaziz Abu Zneid were killed in a drone strike in al-Qarara, near Khan Yunis, as they walked unarmed in an empty street.

On 15 January 2009 at 9am, five members of the Rmeilat family – three children, their mother and grandmother – were killed by a missile fired at them by a drone while they sat outside their home on the outskirts of Beit Lahia in northern Gaza. The victims were Amal Rmeilat, 29, her 60-year-old mother-in-law and her three children, Sabreen, 14, Bara', 13 months, and a ten-week-old baby girl, Arij.

'Pillar of Defence'

On 14 November 2012, the Israeli army began attacking Gaza with drones, Apache helicopters, F-16 fighter jets and naval vessels. Israel launched its offensive, dubbed operation 'Pillar of Defence', with the assassination of Ahmed al-Jabari, chief of staff of the military wing of Hamas. For eight days, civilian areas of Gaza were bombarded by Israel from air and sea, with horrific effect. Israeli drones, often a dozen at a time, constantly circled the skies over Gaza, launching hundreds of missiles and seeking out 'targets' for F-16 and artillery strikes.⁵⁵

Drone strikes killed 36 people, including four children under the age of 16, and wounded 100 more. Eighteen houses were destroyed and a further 52 were damaged. Six stores, one mosque and one hospital were also damaged in the drone strikes or subsequent jet attacks. In the history of combat involving drones, 'Pillar of Defence' was "without doubt a milestone, not only for Israel but for any other UAV [drone] user," reports an Israeli observer of the drone industry.⁵⁶ Israeli sources emphasised that the type of warfare fought over Gaza could not have been performed without the intensive use of drones.

Reports from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights document the results of drone attacks in Gaza. The following are just two of the individual cases recorded.

"I had only just become a mother when I lost my child."

Huda Tafesh, Gaza

Haneen Tafesh, infant, killed by Israeli strike

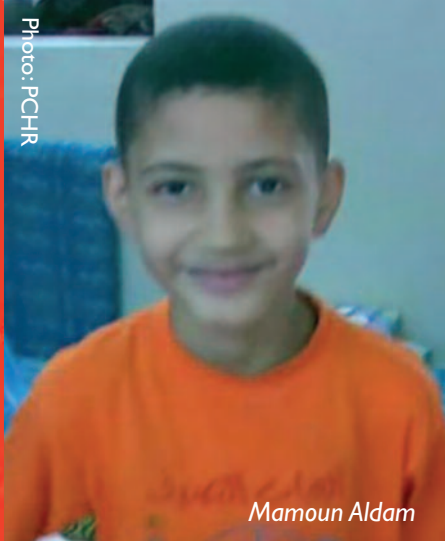
Huda and Khaled Tafesh (21 and 25) got married in 2010. One year later their daughter, Haneen, was born. The young family were living in a modest tin-roofed dwelling in the al-Zeitoun area of Gaza



which came under attack in the eight-day Israeli military offensive in November 2012. A missile fired from a drone struck directly opposite their small home, showering their baby daughter in rubble.

Both Khaled and Huda, realising that Haneen's injuries were serious, decided Khaled would take Haneen to hospital instead of waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Little Haneen would later be pronounced dead at the hospital. Yet the story did not stop there. As Huda explains: "Once an ambulance came to take me to hospital, a drone dropped a second missile. This one landed directly opposite our front door. It didn't explode. When the police came to remove the missile, they said it was defective. It might have been dropped just to terrify us." Huda was left living in a single room shack that was badly damaged by the strike: "I had only just become a mother when I lost my child."

Photo: PCHR



Mamoun Aldam

Mamoun Aldam, 12, killed by drone

"Mum, I am scared because of the drones in the sky. There are many of them. I can hear them. I can also see a helicopter. Please hurry up and come." Mamoun Aldam, 12, made two such phone calls to his mother, Amna, on 20 June 2012. At around 2:30pm, shortly after his parents arrived, Mamoun was killed by a missile fired at the family's farmland in the al-Zeitoun area. His blind father, Mohamed, was also severely injured in the attack.

Mamoun's mother has kept the deflated red ball that Mamoun had been playing with when he was killed. She breaks down and cries as she talks about him: "Look at that picture on the wall. He was just a small boy. I want to understand why they killed my son. Why? My Mamoun was kind to all people and animals. He never harmed anyone. He used to feed a stray cat, and even now it comes outside the house to wait for him. I remember how he used to kiss my feet and

"Mum, I am scared because of the drones in the sky. There are many of them. I can hear them. I can also see a helicopter. Please hurry up and come."

Mamoun Aldam, 12, killed by drone

tell me 'You are my darling, I want to keep you locked inside my heart.' I just want to know why they took him from us."

The children in the neighbourhood have also been affected by Mamoun's death: "Every time the children hear planes passing overhead, they run to their houses shouting and crying. Why do they kill children? What wrong have they done? Why the huge number of drones in the sky attacking innocent people? I held my Mamoun in my arms when he died and everything felt destroyed for me. I hope that he is the last child to be killed in Palestine."

According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, "in the month of June 2012, 16 children were injured and three were killed, including Mamoun, during Israel's various attacks on the Gaza Strip. The targeting and killing of a child, a protected civilian, is a war crime, as codified in Articles 8(2)(a)(i) and 8(2)(b)(i) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court."

8 Conclusion

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Israel takes advantage of its armed conflicts to 'field test' its weapons on Palestinians. By exporting arms to and importing arms from Israel, the British government is sending a clear message of approval for Israel's actions. In light of the British government's complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian human rights, War on Want is calling for a two-way arms embargo between the UK and Israel. This would see an end to all dealings with Israeli weapons companies, including Elbit, and an end to all licences for UK arms exports to Israel.

The failure of governments around the world to hold Israel to account has led to a grassroots Palestinian call for a global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign until Israel complies with international law. The goal is to build pressure on Israel to respect the rights of all Palestinians by ending its occupation and blockade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; respecting the rights of Palestinian refugees who are currently excluded from returning to their homes; and ending all forms of discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

In 2011 the Palestinian BDS National Committee issued a call for an immediate military embargo: "A comprehensive military embargo on Israel is long overdue. It forms a crucial step towards ending Israel's unlawful and criminal use of force against the Palestinian people and other peoples and states in the region, and it constitutes an effective, non-violent measure to pressure Israel to comply with its obligations under international law."

Act now: Stop arming Israel

It is crucial that we keep the pressure on the British government to end its arms trade with Israel. Act now to tell the UK government to stop arming Israel.

1. Send an email urging your MP to call on the British government to:

- end all contracts with Elbit Systems and Elbit subsidiaries;
- end all arms trade with Israel; and
- suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement and all EU research funding for Israel's arms companies.

2. Support the Stop Arming Israel campaign. Order campaign materials from us to use in your local campaigning including posters, leaflets, and copies of this report.

3. Get involved in the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. Download and share War on Want's report, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: Winning justice for the Palestinian people*, at www.waronwant.org/BDSreport

Notes

- ¹ See Thales press release, 'Thales's Watchkeeper receives Statement of Type Design Assurance from the UK Military Aviation Authority', 8 October 2013.
- ² See House of Commons committee on arms exports report, *Scrutiny of arms exports and arms control*, 17 July 2013.
- ³ See Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions national committee call, 'Impose an immediate, comprehensive military embargo on Israel!', 8 July 2011.
- ⁴ See 'Gateway to Israel's homeland security industries 2009-10', the website of the Israel Export & International Cooperation Institute, accessed 28 October 2013.
- ⁵ House of Commons Hansard, 20 March 2012, c586W.
- ⁶ House of Commons Hansard, 7 January 2013, c41W.
- ⁷ See Thales press release, 'Thales's Watchkeeper receives Statement of Type Design Assurance from the UK Military Aviation Authority', 8 October 2013.
- ⁸ 'Watchkeeper and land forces operational UAS', Royal Artillery presentation to Air Warfare Centre symposium on UAVs, Shrivenham Defence Academy, 8 September 2011; see Drone Wars UK press release, 'UK MoD release presentations on Reaper and Watchkeeper drones to Drone Wars UK under FOI', 13 October 2011.
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