

Britain's Gaza Secrets Exposed: Governments buried war crimes to protect Israel and the arms trade

Paul Mitchell
23 October 2026

“We have 48 persons, 48 birthdays, 48 lives and dreams. Each moment we remember them.”

Khitam Elian is speaking of her family, all 48 members killed in a single Israeli strike in November 2023 on a house in Nuseirat in an area of Gaza that was supposed to be safe. Her daughter Roba describes how she first saw the footage on social media without knowing what it was: “People were under the rubble and their legs were out... I wished that they would be strong only to realise later that this is my own family house, and those legs are my people’s.” The babies, she says, “were only four months when it happened... they were both killed.”

Channel 4’s *Dispatches* investigation, *Britain’s Gaza Secrets Exposed*, is built on testimony like this and represents a rare break with the silence and evasions that have characterised the British media’s coverage of Gaza. It is a direct exposure of Britain’s complicity in Israel’s war and the mechanisms used to conceal it.

Dispatches: Britain’s Gaza Secrets Exposed argues that UK support for Israel is shaped by strategic, diplomatic and economic interests. Israel is viewed as a key ally in the Middle East, while maintaining support for Israel helps preserve Britain’s close alignment with the United States.

The programme highlights the importance of the arms trade, particularly Britain’s role in the international F-35 fighter jet programme. In what is known as the “F-35 carve-out” successive governments have continued to allow UK-made components to the multinational F-35 supply chain even while other licences have been suspended. Around £360 million of these components have been supplied Israel’s F-35 fleet, its Israel’s most significant combat aircraft, while British firms hold approximately \$7.8 billion in ongoing F-35 contracts.

The programme’s central finding, based on previously

unpublished internal government documents including legal assessments of Israel’s conduct in Gaza, is that the Foreign Office’s International Humanitarian Law Compliance Assessment Process (IHLCAP) was designed to ensure no war crimes could be found. Presented as a way to assess alleged Israeli war crimes, it allowed arms sales to continue.

Lawyer Dearbhla Minogue studied documents from the legal challenge brought by the Palestinian human rights organisation Al-Haq against UK arms exports to Israel. She explained how the methodology was “essentially incapable of allowing any kind of finding of breach unless the perpetrator tells you they’ve breached IHL.”

Asked whether Israel could ever be found in breach, she replied, “Not unless they admit it themselves... If Israel either says nothing or says everything was fine then everything’s fine.”

Former Prime Minister David Cameron, brought back into government by Rishi Sunak as foreign secretary, was personally briefed that Israel’s blockade of Gaza could constitute a breach of international humanitarian law. When challenged in Parliament, Cameron resorted to evasions: “I’m not a lawyer... I can’t recall every single bit of paper that’s been put in front of me.” He dodged the question 10 times. Just two days after the World Central Kitchen aid convoy strike killed three British aid workers, he approved the continuation of UK arms exports to Israel.

Within the Foreign Office, hundreds of civil servants signed letters warning that the UK risked complicity in Israeli war crimes in Gaza. Officials told *Dispatches* they were discouraged from using terms such as “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” and described an atmosphere of intimidation.

Former diplomat and whistleblower Mark Smith said he

resigned after witnessing “illegal activity at the heart of government” and losing faith in a system that could be manipulated because “the nature of the assessment is such that it can kind of make it say whatever you want.” Pointing to Gaza’s devastation, he said, “They’ve destroyed the vast majority of all residential buildings in Gaza. I’ve never seen anything like it in my career, in my life.” When he challenged government policy, he said he was met with a “barrage” of demands to “delete these emails” because “you shouldn’t be asking this.”

The documentary features surgeons who volunteered in Gaza. Professor Nick Maynard described treating groups of young boys whose wounds followed strikingly similar patterns. “One day there was 19 young boys, all of whom had been shot in the head and neck and the head and neck only. Another day mainly in the abdomen, another day in the chest, and one day they were shot in the testicles.” The pattern was so consistent that “we could not believe it was coincidental” and appeared to indicate deliberate targeting.

Maynard and other doctors later met then Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer but were barred from presenting photographic evidence. Surgeon Victoria Rose said, “We weren’t allowed to screen share” and that Starmer, “a very tiny figure at the back of the screen”, offered no response. Maynard’s conclusion? “There can be no question that our senior politicians know what’s going on and the fact they are ignoring it, I do believe amounts to complicity.”

Channel 4 deserves some credit for putting this material on British television, as it did in July 2025 with its screening of *Gaza: Doctors Under Attack*--after the BBC had commissioned and then suppressed it, functioning as an arm of the government’s cover-up.

However, the film closes by asking what happens when the law is “enforced for enemies but bent for allies.” It assumes there exists a body of international law and state institutions intended to restrain governments, and that Gaza represents a tragic departure from those principles. But the documentary’s own evidence points elsewhere. It shows that the IHLCAP process was structured to produce findings of “no violation” and that assessments were moved into political offices where experts could be sidelined. The law was not accidentally bent; it functioned as an instrument of state policy. Al-Haq’s challenge to UK arms exports failed, with judges insisting such decisions belonged to ministers. Likewise International Court of Justice rulings have been ignored with the backing of Britain and the United States.

The documentary’s political limitations are clearest in its treatment of Labour. It exposes Labour’s refusal to acknowledge genocide, its support for the “F-35 carve-out” and the fact that Keir Starmer’s administration approved £127.6 million of military export licences to Israel in the final three months of 2024, exceeding the total approved under the Conservatives during the preceding four years.

Yet it frames Labour’s persistence in supplying and licensing arms for Israel despite evidence of war crimes, legal concerns and public opposition as a gap between rhetoric and reality, asking whether its measures were “as meaningful as they say.”

The suggestion is that Labour has fallen short of its principles. The evidence presented points to a different conclusion: Labour’s support for Israel is a continuation of British imperial policy, pursued by governments of both parties.

PCS trade union General Secretary Fran Heathcote is presented as the voice of civil servants warning of British complicity in war crimes. She is allowed to describe their concerns without being pressed on what the union has actually done. Rather than mobilising its members to refuse cooperation, the union bureaucracy has confined opposition to letters, legal complaints and appeals to the very ministers implementing the policy.

The central political question--who can stop this, and how--is left unanswered. The global opposition to the war and mass protests appear only at the margins and the role that must be played by workers in opposing genocide is of course never considered, leaving the documentary trapped within the same political framework it set out to criticise.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact