



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26 October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Re: Arms Sales to Israel

Thank you for contacting me about military exports to Israel.

The export of goods used for military purposes is subject to numerous regulations and taken together these put the UK as one of the most stringent countries in the world. Any evidence that UK manufactured goods are being used to inflict pain and suffering on civilian populations should be urgently investigated and our export regime responsive enough to deal with that.

This is something I have raised in the Chamber of the House of Commons too. If you would like to see my contribution on this you can do so at:

<https://www.antonyhig.co.uk/news/antony-calls-responsive-arms-export-regime>

It's imperative that the UK's arms export regime needs to be adaptable, responsive and deal with circumstances that change and alongside speaking on this I have also been vocal about the need to work towards securing a lasting peace in the middle east which you can also view:

<https://www.antonyhig.co.uk/news/antony-speaks-about-securing-peace-israel-and-west-bank>

I am assured by Ministers though that we take all our export control responsibilities extremely seriously. The regulations I noted at the beginning of this letter mean that all export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. This is a thorough risk assessment framework that requires licence decisions to take account of prevailing circumstances at the time of application, including human rights and international humanitarian law considerations.

On Israel specifically I believe it is important to note, at the outset, that they remain a good friend of the United Kingdom and an important beacon of democracy and tolerance in a very troubled region. That's why I am a firm supporter of Israel's right to defend itself, noting the threat of annihilation that they live under day-after-day, and it is right that the UK is committed to working alongside anyone in the Middle East who seeks to establish better stability and security for their people.

However, this support does not extend to support for the annexation plans for part of the West Bank and I strongly welcome the shelving of these annexation plans as part of the normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE.

Finally, I do want to see a strong UK defence export industry. The industry plays an essential part in supporting jobs across Burnley, Lancashire and the whole of the UK and that is more important now than ever. But under no circumstances will the

Government issues export licenses where there is a clear risk that the goods might be used for internal repression. This is in line with the Consolidated Criteria where we can suspend or revoke as necessary when circumstances require.

I will of course follow developments closely and thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley