

New Internationalist

THE WORLD UNSPUN

Oil and imperialism
in Guyana

Breaking up
the United States
Musk vs Brazil



GUNS AND POWER:
THE ARMS TRADE'S
THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

UK £8.45 | NI 553 January–February 2025



01



AMY HALL
for the New Internationalist
Co-operative newint.org

Amy Hall

Cover: This shot was taken at a Workers For A Free Palestine rally at the entrances to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in King Charles Street, London, on 24 July 2024. Protesters were calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and an end to UK weapon sales to Israel.

RON FASSBENDER/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST multi-stakeholder co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality, to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide, to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all, and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice. The New Internationalist magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Co-operative Ltd and its co-owners.

Advertising Michael York

Design: Lucerne Pfeifer

Copy editor: Amy Hall, Conrad Landen, Nick Dowson, Bernhard Reiter

Digital editor: Maxine Betteng-Moës

Editorial assistant: Paula Lacey

Contributing editors: Vanessa Baird, Chris Brauer, Jamie Kellsey-Fry, Dinyar Godrej, Zoë Holman

Funding and engagement: Laura Welch

Ethical Shop: Emma Blunt, Fran Harvey, James Rowland, Ben Davies

Marketing (Magazine): Rob Norman

Production: Fran Harvey

Subscriptions and administration: Louise Waters

Web and IT: Charlie Harvey

All monetary values are expressed in US dollars unless otherwise noted.

ARMS OF POWER

A young boy, Zein Yousef, sleeps on the grave of his mother who died in an Israeli air strike in Gaza. A mother cries as she speaks to journalists, cradling her listless and starving daughter in Sudan. Two-year old Ali Khalifeh, found alive after 14 hours under the rubble in Lebanon, lies on a hospital ward – his parents, sister and grandmothers were all killed.

The human cost of war and genocide is rarely far from the headlines at present. But what about the business behind it?

While war means devastation for most, for the arms industry it means big profits. The trade in weaponry, military equipment and private security can seem like a vast, secretive, faceless foe.

And in many ways it is. But a powerful resistance is growing. This Big Story explores the power of the arms trade, how it fuels violence, displacement and inequality, and the threats it poses to our planet, democracies and safety.

We need an internationalist movement to confront the global network of arms manufacturers, dealers, and political actors who profit from bloodshed. And the handy thing is there are so many ways we can take action on our doorsteps: on our high streets, in our workplaces and in our court rooms; with our pens, and with our bodies.

Also in this edition, Ben Jacobs explores Guyana's oil boom, Charlie Milner keeps the spotlight on migrants in Greece, and Tauseef Ahmad and Sajid Raina report on the hardships experienced by Kashmir's 'half widows'.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:



Lorraine Mallinder is a London-based print and broadcast journalist who focuses on international affairs.



Mohammad Asif Khan is an independent journalist based in New Delhi. His work focuses on defence, security, human rights and migration.



Eiad Husham is a Sudanese independent journalist with extensive experience in investigative reporting. His current focus is conflict, governance and human rights.



Kazi Md Jahirul Islam is a photographer who was born in Noakhali, Bangladesh. He has won a number of national and international awards for his photography.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Website: [subscribe.newint.org](http://newint.org)

Email: subscriptions@newint.org

Phone: +44 (0) 20 3868 4646

Phone (from Ireland): CallSave 1860 924 331

Phone (US Toll free): 1-888-846-0568

Post: New Internationalist, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

Save on the cover price by subscribing. For the subscription rate in your region please visit [subscribe.newint.org](http://newint.org)

UK OFFICE

Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd, Unit 6, The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 0PE. Tel: +44 (0)1293 312001

Indexing: Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index Quarterly (CPI-Q), Canadian Business and Current Affairs and the Alternative Press Index. Available in full-text electronic format from EBSCO and Proquest.

The New Internationalist is published bimonthly.



Regulated by IMPRESS: the independent monitor for the press
+ impress.org

For Complaints Scheme see: newint.org/about/complaints



X @newint I @newinternationalist f @newint
© New Internationalist Co-operative Ltd 2024 ISSN 0305-9529
ISO accreditation 8001-2008

PARTNERS IN POWER

Israel and India have gone from covert traders to public allies, and arms are part of the special relationship. Mohammad Asif Khan outlines the nexus of power and what people are doing to try and disrupt it.

As residents pick through the rubble of the UN school and shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp, Gaza, they find a fragment of a rocket with some writing on it. Israel had carried out a morning airstrike on 6 June 2024, killing at least 33 people. Shaky camera footage shows a torch flash across the fragment and, underneath the dust, the words 'Made in India'.¹

Indian companies like Adani-Elbit Advanced Systems India, Premier Explosives, and the state-owned Munitions India are actively supplying drones and weapons to Israel as it continues its genocidal war against the people of Gaza. In April, careful not to jeopardize these arrangements, India abstained from a UN ceasefire resolution that included calls for an arms embargo on Israel.

Israel, in turn, has continued its uninterrupted supply of military equipment to India – a significant commitment as Israel has delayed over \$1.5 billion in arms exports to other countries since October 2023.² Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rise to power in 2014 India has become a key player in Israel's arms trade. As the world's largest arms importer, the South-Asian country has become Israel's most reliable buyer, accounting for 37 per cent of its total arms exports.³

'India's arms trade with Israel began as a simple supplier-recipient relationship, but today it has evolved into co-development and co-production of military technology,' says Rajiv Kumar Narang, a defence analyst

from India's Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

The relationship between India and Israel was not always rosy. For decades, India did not have diplomatic ties with Israel, maintaining solidarity with the Palestinian cause. At the UN, India voted against the partition of Palestine in 1947 and became the first non-Arab country to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974.

But behind the scenes it was a different story. India and Israel began an unofficial relationship in the 1960s and traded arms covertly during the Cold War. India, a key member of the Non-Aligned Movement, had close political and economic ties with the Soviet bloc and Arab nations, all of which opposed Israel. Meanwhile, Israel was aligned with Western powers, particularly the United States and NATO.

After the Cold War, with the Soviet Union's collapse, India's leaders sought stronger ties with the US and it was clear that improving relations with Washington required closer ties with Israel. In 1992, India formally established diplomatic relations with Israel, moving the relationship on to official collaboration.

Ideological affinity

In 2017, Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. The bromance between Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is reflected in the deep-seated admiration among Modi's supporters for Zionism.

'Hindutva, as a Hindu supremacist ideology, envisions the creation of a Hindu nation and draws inspiration from Zionism. Both ideologies are rooted in the belief of a distinct and superior group entitled to their homeland,' says Apoorvanand, a political commentator and professor at the University of Delhi.

'Hindutva supporters admire Zionism because they see it as a successful model of subjugating and controlling a Muslim population,' he adds.

Central to this relationship is the Adani Group, an Indian conglomerate with businesses ranging from seaports to airports, renewable energy to gas, data centres to media, as well as various commodities. Led by Gautam Adani, the second-richest man in India, the group has expanded aggressively in recent years. Adani's proximity to Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has enabled him to secure favourable business deals in India and abroad; Modi has often been accused of lobbying in support of Adani.⁴

In 2016 Adani formed a joint venture with Israel's Elbit Systems to manufacture Hermes 900 drones domestically, establishing a production facility in Hyderabad. Elbit Systems is widely known for its complicity in war crimes against Palestinians due to the use of its weapons, and its surveillance systems are employed along walls and checkpoints in occupied Palestine. Its premises have been the targets of direct action internationally.



A protest against the war in Gaza on the streets of New Delhi, India, on 1 June 2024.

ALTAF QADIR/PHOTOALAMY

The Hermes 900 stands out as one of Israel's preferred tools of war, primarily because of its capacity to deploy lethal force with precision. First used during Israel's brutal 50-day assault on Gaza in 2014, the Hermes 900 has since become a recurring presence in the Israeli arsenal. In February 2024, it was reported that the Adani-Elbit facility in India had produced over 20 of them for Israel.³ In addition to producing drones and weapons, the facility also supplies Israel with counter-drone systems marketed as 'hunting drones'.

In 2018 Adani also entered a joint venture with Israel Weapon Industries (IWI) to produce a range of different guns

in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. This partnership, known as PLR Systems (short for Precise, Lethal, Reliable) is part of a broader arms collaboration. In October 2022, Adani expanded this business with IWI to include AI-controlled weapons, introducing India's first AI-based firing system, ARBEL.

Joint ventures

Adani's collaboration with Israel extends beyond arms. In January 2023, Adani Ports purchased Israel's Haifa Port for \$1.2 billion. This port is crucial to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), linking key regions from India to Europe via the Arabian Peninsula to Israel. Adani also controls Mundra Port, the largest in India, in Gujarat. This arrangement has acted as an alternative route to circumvent the

As the world's largest arms importer, India has become Israel's most reliable buyer, accounting for 37 per cent of its total arms exports



Red Sea blockade imposed by Yemen's Ansar Allah (Houthi) forces. Goods can be shipped from Mundra to the UAE and then transported overland to Israel.

Azad Essa, author of *Hostile Homelands: The New Alliance Between India and Israel*, says that Adani's endeavours are key to cementing the India-Israel defence relationship. Adani's joint ventures with Israeli arms manufacturers are not just about economic opportunity, but play a central role in consolidating India's military-industrial complex with Israel.¹⁶

Other Indian companies, such as Bharat Forge and Tech Mahindra, have jumped onto the bandwagon. Indian startup Tonbo Imaging is providing systems for precision-guided bombs, and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) has

partnered with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to convert Boeing-767s into refuelling tankers for the Indian Air Force.¹⁷

Another major Indian conglomerate with close ties to Israel, Tata, has come under scrutiny for its role in supporting Israeli infrastructure. In October 2024 a campaign called 'Tata Bye Bye' was launched in the US by the activist group South Asian Left (Salam), urging the New York City Marathon to drop the subsidiary Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as a sponsor. Activists are angry that sponsorship of sports events like this could soften the public image of TCS and allege that the company is complicit in the occupation of Palestine by providing IT and cloud services to the Israeli military, including through Project Nimbus,

Brinda Karat, former MP and member of the Communist Party of India, urges the government to stop trading with Israel during a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on 1 June 2024.

SEJAL PATEL

a computing project supporting Israel's defence infrastructure.

Tata builds weapons for Israel and whitewashes its reputation through TCS, which supports Israeli apartheid. I believe NYRR should drop TCS as a sponsor; says Randall, one of this year's NYC Marathon runners.

The India-Israel defence co-operation is not just focused on arms deals. The two countries have also engaged in joint military drills and facilitated police and army training during the past 10 years.⁸ In 2022, during the visit of the then-Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz, he and his counterpart signed the India-Israel Vision on Defence Cooperation agreement which laid out an extensive 10-year roadmap to deepen collaboration in emerging areas of defence technology.⁹

A nation divided

In his book *The Palestine Laboratory*, Antony Loewenstein (see 'Spygames' NI 546) writes: 'What Israel develops and perfects in Palestine, it exports to conflict zones globally.'¹⁰ His research reveals how Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestine has been transformed into a multi-billion-dollar arms industry, with military technology tested on Palestinians being sold around the world.

Israel has supplied India with key military technologies that have been deployed in the disputed region of Kashmir.¹¹ This includes surveillance drones like the Heron and Hermes 900. 'The continuous hum of drones is a grim reminder to Kashmiris that their entire region is constantly under surveillance, and they are just one wrong move away from being eliminated,' says Azad Essa.

Many Hindu nationalists in India have openly called for an 'Israel-like solution' to resolve the Kashmir conflict.¹² This includes advocating for demographic changes that favour the Hindu population, establishing settlements to weaken the Muslim-majority influence in the valley and suppressing resistance.

Meanwhile, pro-Israel sentiment has surged in India, particularly among Hindu supporters. Hashtags like

#IndiaStandsWithIsrael and #ISupportIsrael have trended on social media, with many expressing admiration for Israel's genocide in Gaza. This support is often intertwined with anti-Muslim rhetoric and hatred for Palestinians, which in turn helps in garnering acceptability for arms trading.

Since 7 October 2023, protests in India have erupted in support of both Palestine and Israel. However, the authorities have reacted very differently to these demonstrations. Pro-Palestinian activists have faced severe crackdowns, while pro-Israel rallies have proceeded without interference.

Sant Kumar, a PhD scholar at Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University and a member of the Students Federation of India (SFI), has been actively protesting.

'The core demand is an arms embargo on Israel and an end to India's arms exports, which fuel the genocide in Gaza,' he says. 'Our volunteers are beaten, detained, and labelled anti-nationals and terror sympathizers simply for standing up for Palestine,' he adds.

A group of concerned citizens, including judges, diplomats, writers and economists, urged India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, to cancel licences for arms exports to Israel.¹³ Social activist Harsh Mander was one of those who approached the Supreme Court, citing violations of international law. However, the court dismissed the petition, claiming such matters were beyond judicial purview.

'I was disappointed by the Supreme Court's decision,' says Mander. 'The court may lack jurisdiction over Israel, but it has the authority to revoke export licences that contribute to crimes against humanity.'

'We will not co-operate'

Workers are a key part of solidarity movements opposing the supply of arms to Israel in India. Leading the call is the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) which is known for its anti-imperialist stance. CITU has been vocal in denouncing the Indian government's military trade with Israel, emphasizing the ethical

implications of supporting a genocide. Tapan Sen, General Secretary of CITU and a former Member of Parliament, says, 'We will not get our hands dirty in this genocide. We call upon the Indian state to halt all arms trade with Israel that is being used against children.'

Indian trade unions have also opposed sending Indian workers to Israel to replace Palestinian who lost their jobs in the construction sector after 7 October 2023.

In February 2024, in a show of solidarity, the Water Transport Workers Federation (WTWF), which is stationed at 11 of India's major ports and represents over 3,500 workers, said it would refuse to load or unload arms cargoes.¹⁴ T Narendra Rao, WTWF's general secretary, says: 'We decided to boycott any ship carrying arms to Israel. We will not co-operate with that.'

On 21 October 2024, leftwing parties led by the Communist Party of India (CPI) staged a protest and sit-in outside the Adani-Elbit factory in Hyderabad, Telangana, calling for an immediate halt to all weapon supplies to Israel. Waving flags and banners, the protesters chanted slogans denouncing the Zionist regime and its alliance with India.¹⁵

However, showing solidarity with Palestine in India is not easy. There have been several instances of people arrested simply for posting content on social media that is sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians. In most cases, the person in legal trouble is a Muslim. In some cases, discussions and prayers for Gaza and Palestinians have been prohibited inside Indian mosques.

For activists like Harsh Mander, the struggle continues. 'We will keep pushing for justice, both for Palestinians and for Indians who oppose using their country as a weapons factory for genocide,' he says. 'This is not just a matter of policy; it is a matter of humanity.' •

MOHAMMAD ASIF KHAN IS AN INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST BASED IN NEW DELHI. HIS WORK FOCUSES ON DEFENCE, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND MIGRATION.

'We will not get our hands dirty in this genocide. We call upon the Indian state to halt all arms trade with Israel that is being used against children'

¹ Abdul Rahman, 'Left parties in India protest arms exports to Israel', Peoples Dispatch, 24 October 2024, a.nin.ti/peoplest 2 Jack Dutton and Adam Lucente, 'Israel's military exports to India booming...', Al Monitor, 24 February 2024 3 Pieter D Wezeman et al., 'Trends in international arms transfers, 2023', SIPRI, March 2024, a.nin.ti/trend 4 ET Online, 'Working like an Adani agent...', The Economic Times, 21 October 2024, a.nin.ti/adanagen 5 Neelam Mathews, 'India sends newly assembled MALE UAVs to Israel', Shepherd Media, 2 February 2024, a.nin.ti/shepherd 6 Azad Essa, Hostile Homelands: The New Alliance Between India and Israel, Pluto Press, London, February 2023, 7 IAI, 'IAI and HAL Sign MOU on Multi Mission Tanker Transport (MMTT)', 7 April 2022, a.nin.ti/iai 8 HT Correspondent, 'India, Israel conduct joint security drill in Delhi', Hindustan Times, 1 May 2024, a.nin.ti/joint 9 Dinakar Peri, 'India, Israel adopt vision statement...', The Hindu, 3 June 2022, a.nin.ti/vision 10 Antony Loewenstein, The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World, Verso, London, May 2023, 11 Stand With Kashmir, 'Who arms India's occupation in Kashmir?', 20 April 2022, a.nin.ti/stand 12 Gafira Qadir, 'Indian scientist calls for "Israel-like solution"...', 11 June 2024, Maktoob Media, a.nin.ti/maktoob 13 The Wire Staff, 'Eminent citizens urge Defence Minister...', 31 July 2024, a.nin.ti/halt 14 ET Online, 'Water Transport Workers Federation of India refuses...', 20 February 2024, a.nin.ti/transport