



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

WHEN IT COMES TO MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE UK IS NOTHING BUT A ROGUE STATE



Yemenis gather around the burning wreckage of a drone in the capital Sanaa

Internally the UK likes to think and say they are “a world leader in promoting, defending and shaping international law”.

Yet the reality is different: Britain has been promoting at least six foreign policies violating international law, which make any criticism coming from the UK against other States a mockery.

Israeli goods

The first two concern Israel. Although Britain regards Israeli settlements in the occupied territories as illegal, in line with international law, it [permits trade](#) with “Israeli” goods from those illegal settlements and does not even [keep a record](#) of imports into the UK from them.

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Yet UN Security Council resolutions [require](#) all states to “distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967”.

Gaza blockade

Israel’s blockade of Gaza is [widely regarded](#) as illegal, including by [senior UN officials](#), a UN independent [panel of experts](#), [Amnesty International](#) and the [Red Cross](#), partly since it inflicts “collective punishment” on an entire population. Through its naval blockade, the Israeli Navy restricts Palestinians’ fishing rights, even firing on local fishermen, and intercepts ships delivering humanitarian aid.

Yet Britain, failing to uphold its [obligation](#) “to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law”, regularly collaborates with the navy enforcing the illegal blockade. In [December 2017](#) and [November 2016](#), British warships held military exercises with their Israeli counterparts.

“We’ve operated with several Israel Navy ships, practising communications and manoeuvring” and have a “great relationship with the Israeli Navy”, UK naval commanders have [said](#).

War in Yemen

The war in Yemen is a further example. Ministers have consistently [told](#) Parliament that Britain is “not a party” to the conflict – since this would formally implicate Britain in the violations of humanitarian law of which Saudi Arabia is accused.

London’s claim is nonsense: It is [arming, advising and training](#) the Saudis and maintaining their aircraft bombing Yemen, many of which have targeted civilians, as the British government has [long known](#).

UN Security Council Resolution 2286 of 2016 also calls to “end impunity and to ensure those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law are held to account”. Yet Britain is doing the opposite – it ensures the Saudis remain unaccountable by [allowing them](#) to conduct their own investigations into alleged war crimes.

Drone Wars

A fourth policy concerns the RAF’s [secret drone war](#), which involves a fleet of “Reaper” drones operating since 2007 to strike targets in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The UK/US spy base at Menwith Hill in Yorkshire also facilitates US drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia.



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Targeted killing (and the use of force generally) is only lawful in self-defence or following UN authorisation, and thus the drone programme is [widely regarded](#) as illegal.

When British drones killed two Britons in Syria in 2015, the government unconvincingly argued it was in “self-defence” to counter an “imminent attack”. Rather, as a House of Commons legal [briefing](#) argues, such strikes could set a dangerous precedent that other actors or organisations may follow.

War in Syria

There is a good reason why the UK never admits to undertaking covert action. As the same House of Commons briefing [notes](#), “assistance to opposition forces is illegal”.

A precedent was set in the Nicaragua case in the 1980s, when US-backed covert forces tried to overthrow the Sandinista government. The International Court of Justice held that a third state may not forcibly help the opposition to overthrow a government because it would breach the principle of non-intervention and prohibition on the use of force.

This means that Britain has been acting illegally in its years-long [covert operation in Syria](#), and anywhere else it deploys covert forces without agreement from the host state.

War in Libya

Finally, there is the 2011 war in Libya, for which British ministers remain unaccountable. While Tony Blair is [widely accused](#) of acting illegally in invading Iraq, UK Prime Minister David Cameron often escapes condemnation for the UK/NATO military intervention that overthrew the Gaddafi regime.

Yet this war was surely a violation of UN Resolution 1973, which authorised member states to use “all necessary measures” to prevent attacks on civilians but did not authorise the use of ground troops – which Britain [secretly deployed](#) to Libya – or regime change.

When it comes to Middle East policy, the UK is nothing but a rogue state.

ICSFT condemns the UK double standards in the conduct of its foreign policy and its empty words in selectively criticising human rights violations, when in reality economic and military interest are the real priority. The UK does not deserve its place at the UN Security Council when it is a consistent violator of the principles it is meant to uphold: It is like having a criminal as a judge.