

Press Release

The Italian Government should immediately stop sending military systems to Israel and should promote an EU arms embargo on Israel and Palestine

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Monday 14th July 2014

“The Italian Government should immediately stop sending military systems to Israel and should promote an EU arms embargo on Israel and Palestine”

Italy is the largest supplier in the European Union of military systems to Israel. A few days ago, during Israeli air raids on Gaza Strip, Alenia Aermacchi (a company of the State controlled Finmeccanica group) sent the first two M-346 trainer aircraft to Israeli Air Force.

“The Italian Government should immediately stop sending military systems to Israel and should promote an EU arms embargo on Israel and Palestine”. The request comes from the Italian Disarmament Network (which brings together the major Italian organizations engaged on disarmament and arms control) considering the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, a situation which - as stated by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon - “could spiral quickly beyond anyone’s control”.

Italy is the largest supplier in the European Union of military systems and light weapons to Israel. A few days ago, during the Israeli air raids on Gaza Strip, Alenia Aermacchi (a company of the State controlled Finmeccanica group) sent the first two M-346 trainer aircraft to the Israeli Air Force.

Italian Disarmament Network shares the “deep concern” expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, on the worsening of the situation. The Network demands that the dutiful words of the Minister condemning the air attacks on civilian areas are quickly followed by an unequivocal action by the Italian Government, such as the immediate suspension of the shipment of military systems and light weapons to the region. Moreover, the Italian Government, which this semester holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, should urgently promote actions leading to an EU embargo on weapons and military systems to all parties in the conflict, in order to protect civilians and foster the resumption of negotiations.

The Alenia Aermacchi M-346 is a new-generation trainer optimised for the role of training pilots who fly on latest-generation high-performance military planes but, as shown by technical datasheets and images, these planes can also be armed and used for bombing. In particular, thanks to their versatility, these trainer aircraft can be used in urban areas and in areas of scarce deployment of

armed forces and anti-aircraft systems. Our concerns therefore appear to be well-founded: it appears likely that military equipment produced in our country may end up making even more serious a long-lasting situation of conflict that has never healed.

According to the Italian Network for Disarmament all this is happening despite the principles enshrined in the Italian legislation on arms export, which expressly prohibits (in its very first and fundamental article) the supply of weapons to countries engaged in an armed conflict or to governments which are responsible for grave violations of the International conventions on human rights, as assessed by the competent bodies of the UN, the EU or the Council of Europe.

In what was a regrettable coincidence, the recent delivery of the first two (of the 30 planned) military trainer aircraft M-346 took place on the 9th of July, the exact day on which the Italian Law laying down "New rules for the control of export, import and transit of military goods" (Law 185/1990) was approved by Parliament 24 years ago. An excellent Law, which our country should be promoting as the "gold standard" internationally in the implementation of the new Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), but which unfortunately has often been disregarded, authorizing export licences that violate its clauses and the principles underpinning it. This same legislation, Law 185/90, empowers the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decide on the export of armaments: for this reason, the Italian Disarmament Network has asked Minister Federica Mogherini to take a prompt and unambiguous decision suspending the supply of M-346 aircraft, so as to stop Italian military systems from fostering future acts of war and human rights violations, against a population already hard hit by decades of conflict.

EU: Export Licences of Military Systems to Israel - Years 2008-2012

(Values in millions € at current prices - Source: EU Annual Reports)

[Table not reproduced here]

Italian Disarmament Network

(Rete Italiana per il Disarmo)

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