

Greens welcome Defence Secretary Streeting's comments on Israeli war crimes

In a letter to the new Defence Secretary, Green MP Dr Ellie Chowns, has called on Wes Streeting to work with counterparts in the Foreign Office and the Department for Business and Trade to end all arms sales to Israel, following [his comments earlier this year that Israel is committing war crimes in Gaza](#).

Wes Streeting in an interview to the News Agents on 5th June 2026 said, "I had seen serious and substantial allegations of war crimes being committed and I felt this country had a moral and legal responsibility to respond."

The text of the letter sent to Wes Streeting today is below:

21st July 2026

The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Defence

Dear Wes,

I am writing to congratulate you in your new role as the Secretary of State for Defence, and to ask you what steps you will now be taking to end the UK's complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

In private correspondence with Peter Mandelson, which you made public in February 2026, you said that Israel was 'committing war crimes before our eyes'. More recently, on the 5th June, whilst being interviewed by the News Agents podcast, you stated the following: 'I had seen serious and substantial allegations of war crimes being committed and I felt this country had a moral and legal responsibility to respond.'

Your appointment therefore marks a first. We now have a Secretary of State in the UK Government who has made public their view that the Israeli government has committed war crimes during the genocide in Gaza.

This position has long been held by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), who ruled in 2024 that Israel is 'plausibly' acting in breach of the rights and obligations set out under the Genocide Convention. The Court also ruled that war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed, and that states must not aid or assist Israel in its unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory, including through economic or trade dealings (ICJ, 2024). In November 2024 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and Minister of Defence for war crimes (UN, 2024). And just last month, the UN Independent Commission found that Israel continues to commit genocide, by deliberately targeting Palestinian children (UN, 2026).

As you will know, the UK has obligations under domestic and international law, to stop issuing licences for arms sales if there is a clear risk they might be used to commit serious violations of international law. Further, criterion 2C of the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria states that the government must not issue export licenses if there is 'a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law'.

As you will also know, as Defence Secretary you now hold responsibility for advising and assisting on military and technical matters to the UK Defence and Security Exports, the government body that exists to help the arms industries sell their products around the world.

This advice can have huge repercussions. Government submissions to the High Court suggested that the F-35 carve out was based on detailed advice from the Defence Secretary (CAAT, 2024). This created the unprecedented loophole that ensured the UK has continued to participate in the production of F-35 fighter jets despite an admission of clear risk of their being used in violations of international law. It is a decision that has degraded our stated principles on arms licensing.

In light of your recent comments, the comprehensive evidence of war crimes, and the responsibilities of your new role, please will you answer the following questions:

What steps will you take to work with counterparts in the Foreign Office and the Department for Business and Trade to end the UK's complicity in war crimes, and impose a full arms and other military cooperation embargo on Israel?

Will your view, that Israel has committed war crimes in Gaza, be included in advice from your Department to the Foreign Office and the Department for Business and Trade on UK arms sales, including participation in the F-35 programme, and other military cooperation with Israel?

Now that you have returned to government, will you be making representations to the new Prime Minister that the UK recognise the findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry that the Israeli government has committed genocide in Gaza and commit to implementing the July 2024 ICJ ruling in full?

As you have said, we have a moral and legal responsibility to respond to the horrors we have seen, and continue to see, in Palestine. You now have a direct responsibility for the UK's complicity in these horrors. But as ever, we need action, not words. If you are serious about ending this injustice, you will start by ending the sale of all arms to Israel.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ellie Chowns

Defence lead for the Green Party of England and Wales

[Adblock test \(Why?\)](#)