

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh calls for Canada to block arms sales to Israel amid escalating violence | The Star

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By [Alex Ballingall](#) Ottawa Bureau

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OTTAWA—NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is calling on the federal government to block arms sales to Israel amid escalating violence in the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Singh accused the Liberal government of “arming one side of the conflict” by allowing military exports to Israel as Palestinians face forced evictions in occupied East Jerusalem.

“It is undermining the peace process and it is supporting illegal occupation,” Singh said Wednesday in the House of Commons.

“Will the prime minister commit to stopping the sale of arms to Israel while they are violating international human rights?”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did not answer the question. Instead, he said the government is “following the situation with grave concern.” He also condemned rocket attacks on Israel by the Islamist militant group Hamas, called violence against Palestinian demonstrators in East Jerusalem “unacceptable” and said Canada is “gravely concerned” with the expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied territories.

“Canada supports a two-state solution and we urge all parties to renew their commitment to peace and security,” Trudeau said.

Tensions erupted this week amid protests over the displacement of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and clashes with Israeli police. Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip have fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, which launched its own airstrikes in Gaza and reportedly assassinated Hamas military leaders on Wednesday.

By Wednesday night, 65 people — including 16 children — had been killed in Gaza, while seven people had been killed by Hamas rocket fire in Israel, the Associated Press reported.

Singh said earlier in the day that Canada can play a bigger role in soothing tensions in the region. And he argued Canada should do so by banning arms sales to apply “pressure” on Israel to ensure a “peaceful resolution” to the current crisis.

“One of those elements of pressure we can place is making sure we’re not selling arms to Israel that are being used in a conflict which is breaching international law or violating human rights,” he said.

Singh’s call comes after 80 per cent of NDP delegates endorsed a similar policy at the party’s national [convention](#) in April. The party voted to ban arms sales to Israel and block trade with Israeli settlements on territory occupied since the Six Day War of 1967.

According to the [latest government statistics](#) tabled in Parliament, Canada exported \$13.7 million in “military goods and technology” to Israel in 2019. That’s a fraction of the total of almost \$3.8 billion in exports that year, and includes military goods in categories including electronic equipment and military spacecraft; aircraft, drones and related gear; explosives like bombs, torpedoes, rockets and missiles; and guns.

Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau’s office did not respond Wednesday afternoon to questions about Singh’s demand.

Singh’s call is the latest sign that the violence erupting in the Middle East this week is spilling into Canadian politics. On Tuesday, Green MP Jenica Atwin criticized her own party leader’s statement on the situation, which called for a de-escalation of violence and “a return to dialogue as a means to seeking a peaceful solution.”

“It is a totally inadequate statement,” Atwin [wrote on Twitter](#). “I stand with Palestine and condemn the unthinkable airstrikes in Gaza. End Apartheid!”

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Atwin did not respond to a request for comment from the Star on Wednesday.

A spokesperson for Green Leader Annamie Paul also declined to comment.

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