

February 2020



STOP ISRAELI KILLER DRONES



**FROM INTENSIFYING THE EU'S
BORDER MILITARIZATION**

WE NEED TO STOP THIS NOW!

The EU is quadrupling its border militarization budget to reach more than €21.3 billion in 2020 (1). It is increasing funds to ensure their border militarization agencies - mainly Frontex and EMSA - have their own military equipment.

Israel's military industry has been lobbying for years to get a share of the EU multi-million spending on border militarization. Israel's Ministry of Defense announced in 2018 that Europe is a "significant target for defense transactions, mainly in terms of 'border defenses'". (2)

The results are coming in: Frontex and EMSA have started using Israeli killer drones.

Since 2018, €63,750,000.00 of EU public money has been used to directly finance and fuel Israel's war economy as Frontex and EMSA further militarize European borders and the Mediterranean with the surveillance and war technology Israel has developed and tested in the brutal assaults on Gaza. (3)

Meanwhile, the number of 'ghost boats' - boats with migrants that disappeared without trace in the Mediterranean - has continued to increase in 2019.

We have the responsibility and the possibility to stop this now.



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH ISRAELI DRONES?

Heron drones have a notorious history of use against the Palestinians. Following Operation Cast Lead, Israel's assault on Gaza in late 2008 and early 2009, a Human Rights Watch investigation concluded that dozens of civilians were killed with missiles launched from drones.(4) The Heron was identified as one of the main drones deployed in that offensive. Elbit's Hermes 900 is an attack drone with a payload of 350 kg.(5) It was deployed operationally for the first time during Operation Protective Edge.(6)

The Hermes 900 is a larger and more advanced version of the Hermes 450 that was used by the Israeli army to deliberately target civilians in Gaza during Israel's 2008-2009 onslaught, according to Human Rights Watch.(7) DroneWatch reports a Hermes drone has as well been involved in the killing of the four boys from the Bakr family while playing at the beach. (8) Elbit drones were also used to kill civilians in Israel's war on Lebanon in 2006, including Red Cross workers, ambulance drivers and dozens of people fleeing their homes for refuge from relentless Israeli bombardment.(9)

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH ISRAELI AEROSPACE INDUSTRY AND ELBIT SYSTEMS?

Israel Aerospace Industries is a major manufacturer of drones used by the Israeli military. Its drones are also widely used during Israel's military assaults on Gaza and have been documented by Human Rights Watch as being used by the Israeli military to deliberately attack Palestinian civilians. Israel Aerospace Industries is also a key partner in the construction of Israel's illegal separation Wall.

According to the contract award notice published by FRONTTEXT in January 2018, the IAI (Israeli Aerospace Industry) got paid €4.75 million for 600 hours of trial flights, winning the contract over two competitors from EU countries.(10)

Elbit Systems provides 85% of the drones used by the Israeli military (11) and has developed the Hermes 900 specifically for the needs of the Israeli army to keep Gaza under the current inhumane siege.(12) Elbit Systems has further developed technology for Israel's illegal Wall in the West Bank and has a history of producing white phosphorous and cluster bombs.(13)

ISRAELI KILLER DRONES IN THE EU'S ANTI-MIGRATION POLICY

EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency)

November 2018: EMSA has awarded Israeli military company Elbit Systems a 2 years contract to lease Hermes 900 drones. The contract sees the Portuguese contractor CEiiA as the intermediary between Elbit and EMSA and has two single year option periods with a total value of €59 million.

The Hermes drones are being used within the framework of the EU's anti-migration policies, implemented in cooperation between EMSA, FRONTEX and EFCA (European Fisheries Control Agency).(14)

2019: At least until mid-March, one of the two drones was not serviceable.(15) From April to August 2019, the drones have been operated in Iceland for 119 operational days/96 mission days. Drones are used to support the Frontex deployment in Greece until March 2020. (16)

2020: The following states have so far requested drones services, possibly the Hermes drones, from EMSA for 2020: Bulgaria, France, Great Britain, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal. (17)

Frontex (EU Border Guard Agency)

2018: Frontex, the EU border guard agency, spent 4.750.000,00 Euros to test Israeli Aerospace Industries' Heron 1 military drone for 600 flight hours (18) in Greece and Italy, in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Interior under far right, anti-migration leader Matteo Salvini, for maritime border surveillance in the Mediterranean Sea. This test came at 7,916.67 Euros per flight hour. The Falco drone from Italian arms giant Leonardo (ex-Finmeccanica) was as well tested during that year.(19)

January 2019: an Elbit Systems employee wrote to Frontex asking "do you think we could meet to discuss different ways to cooperate with Elbit? like the EMSA drone service contract we signed recently?"(20)

December 2019: Frontex has become able to receive information from the Hermes drones, run by EMSA and CEiiA. (21) Nonetheless, Frontex had its own tender for Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (MALE RPAS) that closed on December 13. The drones are to deliver the same services as EMSA's Hermes 900 drones: services in Greece and/or in Italy and/or in Malta for maritime surveillance. The service contract will last 2 years, with a renewal option each year. (22) According to media reports, the required specifications exclude the Italian Falco, tested in 2018, from the tender.(23)

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE USE OF DRONES FOR 'COAST GUARD' FUNCTIONS?

Drones are an effective way to elude the EU's obligation under international law to save the lives of migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean. According to a recent article in *The Guardian* (24): "There is no obligation for drones to be equipped with life-saving appliances and to conduct rescue operations," said a German Green party MEP, Erik Marquardt. 'You need ships for that, and ships are exactly what there is a lack of at the moment.'

By August 2019 the death rate for people attempting to cross the Mediterranean had risen from a historical average of 2% to as high as 14%. In total, 567 of the estimated 8,362 people who have attempted the crossing in the first six months of the year had died.

Gabriele Iacovino, director of one of Italy's leading think-tanks, the Centre for International Studies, said the move into drones was 'a way to spend money without having the responsibility to save lives'.

Aerial surveillance without ships in the water amounted to a 'naval mission without a naval force', and was about avoiding embarrassing political rows in Europe over what to do with rescued migrants. Beyond the Israeli drones, the EU is operating as well European drones and testing new robot system, including long and short range drones for its border militarization.

HOW DO ISRAELI DRONES MAKE THE EU COMPLICIT IN ISRAELI VIOLATIONS?

Israel uses military force and technology to maintain its system of military occupation and apartheid. Israel's violations of international law and war crimes during its frequent attacks on Palestinians are well documented. United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry stated that Israeli forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity by using lethal military force against unarmed protesters in Gaza. (25)

Israeli military companies work in direct connection with the Israeli military, providing necessary equipment and weapons for illegal operations within the framework of Israeli military aggressions and Israeli colonisation of the occupied Palestinian territories. Israeli military and security companies regularly promote their equipment as 'combat proven' or 'battle tested', meaning it has been used for example in the occupation of the West Bank or the blockade of Gaza. Using the Palestinian Territories as a testing ground, Israel has become a leading global producer and exporter of 'combat tested' drones.

EU funding for these companies inherently fuels Israel's capacity to sustain its war crimes and grave violations of human rights and international law. It makes the EU and all of us complicit in those violations. We have a responsibility to ensure that European public money is not spent on contracts with companies accused of war crimes. The EU must stop using taxpayers money to fund Israeli military companies.

NOTES

- (1) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-securing-external-borders_en.pdf
- (2) <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-s-defense-export-sales-exceed-record-9-billion-1.6052046>
- (3) <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/21941/1-300-reported-deaths-in-the-mediterranean-in-2019-iom>
- (4) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/06/30/precisely-wrong/gaza-civilians-killed-israeli-drone-launched-missiles>
- (5) <https://elbitsystems.com/product/hermes-900-5/>
- (6) <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140812/DEFREG04/308120026/Israeli-Forces-Praise-Elbit-UAVs-Gaza-Op>
- (7) https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iopt0609webwcover_0.pdf
- (8) <https://dronewars.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DW-FracturedLives-WEB.pdf>
- (9) <http://www.stophthewall.org/downloads/pdf/Elbit-fc.pdf>
- (10) <http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:10629-2018:TEXT:EN:HTML>
- (11) <https://corporateoccupation.org/2015/01/27/elbit-new-company-profile/>
- (12) <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IAF-declares-Hermes-900-drone-fully-operational-503282>
- (13) <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/elbit-systems>
- (14) <https://digit.site36.net/2020/01/31/against-migration-eu-drone-crashed-in-crete/>
- (15) On March 13, EMSA and CEiiA explained that the second Hermes drone was still waiting for technical parts necessary for its functioning to arrive.
<https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/7359/response/24318/attach/html/2/luzquiza%20Luisa%20CMS%202019%2000010%200371%2028%20Nov%202019.pdf.html>
- (16) <https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/7585/response/24930/attach/html/3/Amendment%201%20to%20CEIIA%20contract%20redacted.pdf.html>
- (17) https://netzpolitik.org/wp-upload/2019/12/E-2946_191_Finalised_reply_Annex1_EN_V1.pdf
- (18) <https://www.uasvision.com/2018/10/24/iai-and-airbus-maritime-heron-completed-200-flight-hours-in-civilian-european-airspace-for-frontex/>
- (19) <https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/7359/response/24318/attach/html/3/TIN%20sector%20docs.pdf.html>
- (20) <https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/7359/response/24318/attach/9/Email%206.pdf>
- (21) Answer to written question E-002890/2019 by MEP Miguel Urban.
- (22) <https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:490010-2019:TEXT:EN:HTML>
- (23) <https://digit.site36.net/2019/12/15/frontex-stations-long-endurance-drones-in-the-mediterranean-sea/>
- (24) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/04/drones-replace-patrol-ships-mediterranean-fears-more-migrant-deaths-eu>
- (25) <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/un-independent-commission-of-inquiry-on-protests-in-gaza-presents-its-findings-press-release/>