



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Three Palestine action activists end hunger strike after Elbit UK loses \$2.7 billion contract

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Palestine Action activists in detention, amid concerns over deteriorating health conditions. Photo: Prisoners for Palestine, via AJE

“Elbit Systems is living on stolen time - we will see it shut down for good, not because of the government, but because of the people.” - Prisoners for Palestine.

Three Palestine Action-affiliated activists ended their hunger strike on Wednesday, saying one of their key demands had been met after Elbit Systems UK was “denied a crucial government contract.”

Heba Muraisi, Kamran Ahmed and Lewie Chiaramello announced their decision after 73 days of hunger strike, which began on Balfour Day, Nov. 2, 2024, the Prisoners for Palestine group said in a statement.

The decision came after it was revealed that Elbit Systems lost out on a \$2.7 billion contract that would have seen them train 60,000 British troops each year, the statement said, adding that since 2012, Elbit “have won over 10 public contracts, marking a shift in their popularity amongst officials.”

“The \$2.7 billion contract, which would have seen Elbit provide training to the British Army over 10 years, was lost despite the best efforts of officials both in the Ministry of Defence and British army, who it was revealed had been colluding with both Elbit Systems UK and its parent company Elbit Systems in backroom meetings and ‘tours’ to the capital of Palestine, Jerusalem,” the group stated.

Whistleblower’s information

The Times reported on Wednesday Elbit Systems UK was one of two consortiums bidding to win the contract. It cited a Ministry of Defence (MoD) source as saying that the department had chosen Raytheon UK, a subsidiary of the U.S. defense firm Raytheon, after it was decided that the latter was a “better candidate,” without providing further information.

The report said that in August the MoD received “details of a dossier compiled by a whistleblower that had been submitted to the department months earlier,” which accused Elbit UK of “breaching business appointment rules.”

A former brigadier, Philip Kimber, was accused of sharing information with Elbit after he left the army and that he had “attended key meetings” at Elbit UK about the training contract. He also allegedly sat in a meeting with Elbit to discuss how to win the contract, sitting out of camera shot and declaring he “should not be there,” according to the whistleblower. He was also allegedly “dined by Elbit Systems UK seven times.”

‘Resounding victory’

Prisoners for Palestine said, “The abrupt cancellation of this deal is a resounding victory for the hunger strikers, who resisted with their incarcerated bodies in order to shed light on the role of Elbit Systems, Israel’s largest weapons manufacturer, in the colonisation and occupation of Palestine.”

Since 2012, it noted, Elbit has won 25 public contracts in Britain totaling more than \$446 million, adding that the loss of the latest contract “marks a significant shift in this sordid ‘strategic alliance.’”

Commitment to direct action

It said the most valuable win of the hunger strike has been the surge in commitment to direct action.

“Our prisoners’ hunger strike will be remembered as a landmark moment of pure defiance; an embarrassment for the British state,” the group stated. “It exposed to the world Britain has political prisoners in service of a foreign genocidal regime, and has seen hundreds of people commit to take direct action in the prisoners’ footsteps.”

Palestine Action was proscribed in July 2024 under the Terrorism Act, resulting in the arrests of hundreds of people during protest action in support of the banned movement across Britain. Several detainees went on a hunger strike in November in protest at their detention.

Established in 2020 as a direct action movement committed to ending global complicity in Israel’s “genocidal and apartheid regime,” according to its now-banned website, Palestine Action’s key target has been the British factories of Elbit Systems.

Elbit ‘living on stolen time’

Prisoners for Palestine also said in its statement that in addition “to this key demand

being met,” various “victories” were achieved across the duration of the hunger strike, including 500 people having signed up in the past few weeks along, “to take direct action against the genocidal military-industrial complex, more than the amount of people who took action with Palestine Action over its five-year campaign.”

The group said during the five-year campaign, four Israeli weapons factories were shut down.

“Elbit Systems is living on stolen time – we will see it shut down for good, not because of the government, but because of the people,” the group emphasized.

British history made

In addition, the group said, the national heads of prison healthcare have met with the hunger strikers at the behest of the Ministry of Justice, despite “the cruel and constant medical neglect of the hunger strikers.” This included not logging food refusal, refusal of ambulances in life-threatening emergencies and degrading treatment in the hospital.

“In pursuit of a fair trial, the hunger strikers demanded disclosure of export licenses for the last five years from Elbit Systems. After repeated requests, this information was disclosed to an independent researcher by the Department of Trade during the hunger strike,” the group stated.

It stressed that the hunger strikers have made British history by participating in the largest coordinated and longest hunger strike in Britain, having lasted a total of 73 days, “with Heba Muraishi ending at 73 days.”

The hunger strikers “have allowed those of us who were fearful of state repression to be brave – to go out once again onto the streets and fight for justice,” the group said. “Cowardly banning one group cannot stop a belief, a movement, a people.”

Growing fears for activists' welfare

There had been growing fears for the welfare of the hunger strikers in the past weeks, with Muraisi nearing 73 days of refusing food, Ahmed reportedly nearing day 66 and Chiaramello nearing day 46 of the protest action.

The group noted that efforts and attention are now turned to Umer Khalid, the last remaining hunger striker of eight in total, "who continues to use his body as a weapon against the state in pursuit of justice."

The death toll in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched a genocidal military operation in October 2023 has risen to 71,441 killed and 171,329 injured, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. This is despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire which took effect in October 2024.

Source: [*The Palestine Chronicle*](#)

