



## Israel's weapons of mass destruction

Israel isn't a party to any of the three "weapons of mass destruction" treaties:

- the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) [\[1\]](#),
- the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) [\[2\]](#) and
- the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) [\[3\]](#)

It is the only state in the Middle East that isn't a party to any of them.

Most states in the Middle East (including Iran) are party to all three, the exceptions being:

- NPT                Israel
- BWC              Israel, Egypt, Syria
- CWC              Israel, Egypt

What is more, Israel is the only state in the world (apart from South Sudan, which only came into existence in 2011) that isn't a party to any of these treaties. Since it also holds the world record for violating Security Council resolutions that require action by it and it alone (over 30 in all dating back to 1967), unkind people might say that it deserves to be called a "rogue" state.

(North Korea isn't party to either the BWC or the CWC. Having joined the NPT as a 'non-nuclear-weapon' state in 1985, it withdrew in 2003, but its withdrawal has not been formally accepted and the UN still lists it as a party [\[1\]](#).)

### Israel has an arsenal of nuclear weapons

Nobody doubts that Israel has an arsenal of nuclear weapons, perhaps as many as 400 of them, though it refuses to confirm or deny this. See, for example, *Israel's Weapons of Mass Destruction: An Overview* (2008) by Professor Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic & International Studies [\[4\]](#).

Generally speaking, serving or retired politicians who are in a position to know also refuse to confirm or deny that Israel has nuclear weapons. An exception is Avraham Burg, a Labour member of the Knesset, who retired in 2004: in December 2013, he openly declared that "Israel has nuclear and chemical weapons" [\[5\]](#). As a former member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, he would have had direct knowledge of Israel's weapons programmes.

Israel has a variety of delivery systems for its nuclear weapons: land-based aircraft and ballistic missiles and submarine-based cruise missiles, using submarines supplied at knockdown prices by Germany in recent years. The latter gives Israel a "second strike" capability so that, even if its land-based launch platforms were destroyed by nuclear attack, it would still have an ability to retaliate from its submarines (see *Israel's Deployment of Nuclear Missiles on Subs from Germany*, Spiegel Online, 4 June 2012, [\[6\]](#)).

Israel is therefore in a position to wipe off the map every capital in the Middle East (and probably much further afield). It is guilty of nuclear proliferation on a grand scale. What is more, it is continually enhancing its nuclear weapons systems, most recently by acquiring submarine launch capability, thanks to Germany.

### **Has Israel got chemical and biological weapons too?**

Israel also refuses to confirm or deny that it possesses chemical or biological weapons.

As we have seen, Avraham Burg has said Israel does possess chemical weapons today.

And in the 1980s, the CIA also thought so. In September 2013, Foreign Policy magazine published an article entitled *Does Israel Have Chemical Weapons Too?* [\[7\]](#). This quoted from a 1983 CIA intelligence estimate which said that Israel had a "probable chemical weapon nerve agent production facility and a storage facility... at the Dimona Sensitive Storage Area in the Negev Desert". It continued:

"several indicators lead us to believe that they have available to them at least persistent and nonpersistent nerve agents, a mustard agent, and several riot-control agents, matched with suitable delivery systems."

So, it is almost certain that Israel has chemical weapons. While it may also have biological weapons, there is little hard evidence for this. But, its refusal to become a party to any of the three "weapons of mass destruction" treaties means that there is a real possibility that it possesses all three forms of "weapons of mass destruction".

### **Monumental double standard**

For more than two decades, Israeli political leaders have claimed that Iran is developing nuclear weapons and demanded that the world put a stop to it, otherwise Israel would have to take military action to do so. As long ago as 1992, the present Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, predicted that Iran was 3 to 5 years from being able to produce a nuclear weapon – and that the threat had to be "uprooted by an international front headed by the US" [\[8\]](#).

While insisting that Iran must not have nuclear weapons, Israel has continued to enhance its own nuclear weapons systems. This is a double standard of monumental proportions. But, in all this time, attention has rarely been drawn by Israel's allies (or by the mainstream media) to the fact that it has a nuclear arsenal, or challenged its leaders to justify the application of this double standard.

### **1969 Nixon/Meir deal**

The US, for example, simply doesn't mention that Israel has nuclear weapons. It took a vow of silence on this issue over 40 years ago: to be precise, on 26 September 1969, when President Nixon made a secret, unwritten, agreement with Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, in a one-to-one meeting in the Oval Office in the White House. Since then, the phrase "Israel's nuclear weapons" has rarely if ever come out of the mouth of a US spokesperson.

Under the Nixon/Meir deal, the US agreed not to acknowledge publicly that Israel possessed nuclear weapons, while knowing full well that it did. In return, Israel undertook to maintain a low profile about its nuclear weapons: there was to be no acknowledgment of their existence, and no testing which would reveal their existence. That way, the US would not be forced to take a public position for or against Israel's possession of nuclear weapons.

(For the fascinating story of how this came to be US policy, see *Israel crosses the threshold* by Avner Cohen and William Burr, published in the May-June 2006 issue of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* [\[9\]](#)).

In accordance with the Nixon/Meir deal, the US has refused ever since to acknowledge that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. This leads to the absurd situation in which US discussion of nuclear matters, for instance, the creation of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East, has to proceed without Israel's nuclear weapons being mentioned.

### **Israel stood outside the international non-proliferation regime**

Iran was one of the original signatories to the NPT on 1 July 1968 as a 'non-nuclear-weapon' state, forbidden under Article II of the Treaty to acquire nuclear weapons. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, when the Islamic Republic reviewed all its international treaty commitments, the new rulers continued its adherence to the Treaty.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a continuous stream of accusations from Israel, the US and others that Iran was engaged in nuclear weapons development, contrary to its NPT commitments, but there has been little in the way of hard evidence to that effect. Even its detractors agree that it hasn't got any nuclear weapons today, let alone an operational nuclear weapons system.

Unlike Iran, for more than 40 years, Israel has stood outside the international non-proliferation regime, refusing to join the NPT so that it would be free to develop nuclear weapons. It is guilty of nuclear proliferation on a grand scale. It introduced nuclear weapons into the Middle East. Without this, the Middle East would be a nuclear weapons free zone today.

Unlike Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel's are shrouded in secrecy and not subject to IAEA inspection (apart from a 5MW reactor supplied by the US in 1955, located at Nahal Soreq, which has been under IAEA safeguards since the early 60s, at the insistence of the US). This remains the case despite the fact that as long ago as 1981, the UN Security Council called "upon Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards" in resolution 487 [\[10\]](#). However, Israel has ignored the resolution and the Security Council has taken no action to compel Israel to comply.

Yet, Iran, not Israel, has been treated as a pariah state and subjected to fierce economic sanctions by the US/EU and their allies, while Israel is showered with largesse by the US/EU. It receives over \$3bn a year in military aid from the US, more than any other state in the world, even though its GDP per capita is on a par with that of the EU. And, since 2000, it has enjoyed privileged access to the EU market for its exports. Not only that, Germany has subsidised the enhancement of Israel nuclear weapons systems by supplying it with submarines at knockdown prices.

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### References

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