

Made in India

Amnesty's latest report targets India-Israel arms trade, but its own data underscores the growing strategic partnership



INDIA AFFAIRS
• By ALEX WINSTON

For decades, the basic equation in Israeli-Indian defense relations was straightforward. Israel had the military technology, expertise, and weapons that India wanted, and India had one of the world's largest defense markets.

In 2026, however, this equation is changing.

A recent 42-page investigation by Amnesty International, "Made in India: The supply of weapons and ammunition to Israel," argued that Indian weapon exports to Israel could expose New Delhi and Indian companies to responsibility for alleged violations of international law in Gaza.

However, within its shipment records, corporate structures, and descriptions of artillery parts, machine-gun components, and drone warheads, there is also a detailed picture of how far the bilateral defense relationship has come.

India is increasingly manufacturing for Israel, supplying Israeli companies, jointly developing systems with them, and embedding Indian factories within international defense supply chains. A relationship once dominated by Israeli exports to Israel has become significantly more reciprocal.

For Dr. Oshrit Birvadker, a senior national security expert, the director of the South and East Asia Center at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, and the CEO of Indivade, this is a strategic shift that Israel itself was slow to understand.

"I have severe reservations regarding the validity of this report," Birvadker told *The Jerusalem Post*. "Even Amnesty acknowledges the limits of its own findings, admitting an inability to verify the end-use of the shipments in question."

"From my perspective, the empirical data presented here demonstrates only one clear reality – Israel and India maintain a legitimate defense and commercial partnership between two democracies," she said.

That partnership, however, is changing in character.

"For years, defense contractors and policymakers favored maintaining the status quo, treating India primarily as a buyer," Birvadker stated.

While Israeli companies entered joint ventures in India, she said, much of that process was driven by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" policy rather than by any Israeli vision of India as a future supply base.

Notably, October 7 and the subsequent years of war and international pressure that followed changed matters, according to Birvadker.

"It took an event of apocalyptic proportions, coupled with growing international isolation, arms embargoes, and shipment delays from Israel's closest ally, for the Israeli defense establishment to fully recognize India's strategic weight," Birvadker said.

"Two years later, that shift is underway. The defense establishment now signs major MoUs and recognizes India as an essential pillar of Israel's security doctrine, realizing that 'Make in India' provides the necessary scale and rapid delivery pipelines required for Israel's long-term security."

What Amnesty International found

Amnesty's investigation is substantial in scale. Using commercially available shipment-level trade data, researchers examined exports between October 7, 2023, and November 30, 2025, under customs categories covering weapons, ammunition, and armored vehicles. In total, Amnesty identified 2,596 shipments from India to Israel.

The organization said those shipments included at least 390,516 parts for military-grade small arms, 564,970 parts of explosive ordnance – including artillery-shell components and drone warheads – and 298 military-vehicle components.

Amnesty described those numbers as conservative. It deliberately excluded shipments for which it could not distinguish civilian from military use and removed products that appeared likely to be destined for anti-missile defense systems.

Of the 2,596 shipments examined, Amnesty said it could determine that at least 788 contained items with military uses, excluding equipment intended solely for air defense.

Another 1,838 shipments fell within a customs category for pistol and handgun parts, where civilian and military applications can overlap.

Of 354 shipments classified specifically as parts for military weapons, 39 involved interceptor components for Rafael's missile-defense systems, which Amnesty excluded from its offensive-weapons count.

The organization also acknowledged that shipment-level data cannot, in every case, establish the final end-user or prove that an item was transferred directly to the IDF rather than to an Israeli defense company or subsequently reexported.



A NEW 42-page investigation by Amnesty International argues that Indian weapon exports to Israel could expose New Delhi and Indian companies to responsibility for alleged violations of international law in Gaza. Here, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu greets his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, in Jerusalem in February. (Gil Cohen-Magen/Pool/AFP via Getty Images)

Birvadker argued that this distinction is crucial when evaluating the conclusions Amnesty draws from the data.

"The report presents no evidence of intent or official policy by India to facilitate unlawful combat operations or human rights violations," she told the *Post*. "Deducting complicity in genocide from routine maritime shipping logs represents an unfounded analytical leap, suggesting a predetermined agenda."

Amnesty, however, said the nature of some of the products and their recipients established a much clearer military connection.

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Its report named PLR Systems, a joint venture between India's Adani Group and Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), as an exporter of components for IWI's Negev machine gun.

Amnesty identified 10,571 feeding-tray components and 33,033 bolt carriers and related assemblies exported by PLR to IWI during the period examined.

The report says manufacturer Indo-MIM exported more than 59,600 automatic sears – components enabling automatic fire – to IWI, with two additional shipments measured by weight rather than by individual units.

It recorded 1,273 Indo-MIM shipments of weapons parts to Israel after October 7, although Amnesty classified only 54 as demonstrably military because many components can serve both civilian and military weapons.

Further up the weapons chain, Kalyani Strategic Systems, part of the Bharat Forge group, allegedly exported 9,600 bodies for 155mm artillery rounds, while the state-owned Munitions India Limited sent a shipment of 1,000 finished 155mm high-explosive shells to Elbit Sys-

tems, according to the trade data Amnesty reviewed.

Amnesty also identified a December 2025 shipment by Alpha Elsec Defense & Aerospace Systems – a joint venture involving Elbit – of 122 five-kilogram warhead assemblies.

The organization linked that specification to Elbit's SkyStriker loitering munition, parts of which have been identified among debris in Gaza.

These are the transactions on which Amnesty builds its accusation that Indian companies have become part of the supply infrastructure supporting Israeli military operations. They also illustrate precisely why the relationship is so important to both countries.

The 'Make in India' influence

India and Israel only established full diplomatic relations in 1992, and defense ties initially followed the conventional exporter-client model. Israel became particularly important to India after the 1999 Kargil War with Pakistan.

Over time, however, New Delhi began insisting that foreign defense companies do more inside India itself.

With the expansion of the "Make in India" policy introduced in 2014 under Modi, domestic production, joint ventures, and technology transfer accelerated.

The Adani-Elbit partnership established what Amnesty described as India's first private military-drone manufacturing factory, while perhaps the most prominent example of bilateral development is the Barak 8 air defense system, jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation.

This transformation forms part of a much wider Indian strategy. New Delhi has set 2047, what it calls "the centenary of independence," as the horizon for its ambition to become a developed, substantially more self-reliant global power, with domestic manufacturing, technological capability, and exports central to that project. Defense is increasingly being treated as part of the same national effort.

Indian defense exports reached \$4 billion (390b. rupees) in the financial year 2025, while New Delhi is increasingly seeking future weapons procurements on terms that include technology transfer and greater Indian control over avionics, elec-

tronics and guidance systems.

The *Post* was even invited to visit India this year to witness its defense sector in action firsthand.

Yet the country's defense production and modernization remain uneven, with continued dependence on foreign technology in important areas and the persistent strategic challenge of preparing for possible conflict with both Pakistan and China.

That combination, rapidly growing industrial capability alongside continuing technological requirements, is where Israel becomes particularly valuable.

Birvadker said India has moved beyond manufacturing solely for its own armed forces and is explicitly seeking a place among the world's leading defense exporters.

"This sharp trajectory reflects growing global acceptance of Indian manufactured defense systems and the country's seamless integration into international supply chains," Birvadker explained.

"Over the years, New Delhi has aggressively pursued the production of everything from small arms and drones to fighter jets and submarines, either independently or through strategic foreign partnerships," she continued.

"This partnership with Israel is particularly vital," Birvadker stated. "Unlike traditional defense suppliers who resist technology transfer, Israeli companies demonstrate a high willingness to invest in joint research and development, a factor critical to India's defense sector growth, as best exemplified by the Barak 8 air defense system."

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"Furthermore, Israeli firms are increasingly outsourcing the production of sub-components to Indian suppliers, elevating industrial standards across the broader Indian market."

There is another benefit that is harder to quantify.

"Ultimately, having the IDF, which is widely regarded as one of the world's most technologically advanced militaries, deploy Indian-manufactured systems serves as a powerful seal of quality that boosts global market confidence," Birvadker said.

"In the context of active combat, real-time operational deployment also provides invaluable field-tested feedback to refine and validate these capabilities."

For Israel, meanwhile, Indian production offers cost advantages and, increasingly, supply-chain resilience.

Western governments have become more politically divided over defense exports to Israel. Amnesty's report itself cited restrictions or suspensions imposed in parts of Europe and argued that India continued expanding cooperation during that same period.

Birvadker believes that this makes India an increasingly valuable alternate manufacturing base.

"Serving as a critical alternative to Europe in manufacturing and ammunition, especially amid export restrictions and overt or quiet arms embargoes by European nations, India has emerged as an essential industrial fallback," she said.

There are limits, however. India cannot replace Washington in areas such as fighter aircraft, heavy precision-guided munitions or direct strategic military assistance, she stressed.

That aside, the growing two-way flow of weapons, components, technology, and capital means the relationship is increasingly one of "mutual interdependence

rather than unilateral dependence," Birvadker said.

Report calls on India to cease weapons transfers to Israel

Amnesty is asking New Delhi to go considerably further than imposing additional export checks.

It called for an immediate halt to arms transfers to Israel and a comprehensive embargo covering weapons, components, technologies, technical assistance and training.

It also recommended that Indian companies terminate business relationships, including joint research and development, with Elbit Systems, Rafael, and Israel Aerospace Industries.

"Israeli systems currently form the technological backbone of India's security architecture along its sensitive borders with China and Pakistan," Birvadker told the *Post* in relation to what possible consequences implementation would have for India's own military.

"Companies like Elbit, Rafael, and IAI are not standard import suppliers," she said. "They are India's premier partners in building a domestic defense industry."

Birvadker went further, arguing that severing the relationship could set back India's objective of technological self-reliance "by decades."

"India would once again find itself dependent on other global powers – a resurgence of defense colonialism," Birvadker stated. "Who benefits from such an outcome?"

The legal argument

Amnesty's challenge is also directed at India's export-control system itself.

India is not a party to the Arms Trade Treaty, although it is a party to the Geneva Conventions and Genocide Convention. Amnesty argued that those existing obligations are sufficient to require India to halt transfers where there is a clear risk that weapons could contribute to serious violations.

Indian arms exports are not unregulated. Military and dual-use goods are controlled through the SCOMET system and require authorization from India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

Applications are reviewed through an inter-ministerial process involving the Foreign, Defense, and Home Ministries, and official guidelines require consideration of the end user, declared end use, chain of transmission, and whether an export could conflict with Indian national security or foreign policy.

The controversy, according to Amnesty, lies in what is not publicly visible.

Simply put, the inter-ministerial deliberations are confidential, leaving no public record showing whether international humanitarian law or India's treaty obligations were specifically assessed when licenses for exports to Israel were approved.

Amnesty filed a Right to Information request seeking details of specific export licenses and any human rights assessments undertaken by the government, but said it had received no reply before publication.

Birvadker's position is that New Delhi should resist external pressure rather than allow NGOs to determine its strategic relationships.

"New Delhi must categorically reject the pressure to suspend defense exports, fiercely guarding its principle of strategic autonomy and its sovereign right to conduct relations in alignment with its national interests," she said.

"Yielding to Amnesty's demands would severely undermine India's credibility as a reliable defense partner on the global stage," she told the *Post*.

India's concept of strategic autonomy predates the Israel controversy. It was visible, for example, when New Delhi resisted Western pressure over Russian oil purchases following the invasion of Ukraine, prioritizing energy security and its freedom to maintain relationships across competing geopolitical blocs.

The relationship with Israel increasingly fits into that same model. India remains a major purchaser of Israeli technology while becoming a supplier in its own right.

Israeli companies gain an enormous manufacturing base and access to the Indian defense industry; India acquires technology, domestic production, and exposure to global defense markets. The greater the integration, the harder it becomes to describe the partnership simply as one country selling weapons to another.

That is another revealing aspect of Amnesty's report. Its authors regarded the hundreds of thousands of Indian-made components flowing to Israeli companies as evidence that the relationship should be curtailed. Birvadker cited the same supply chains as evidence that the relationship has become strategically indispensable.

The argument over Gaza will remain bitter and unresolved, particularly when the charge of genocide is treated as settled despite the substantial legal arguments against it. The industrial shift beneath that debate, however, is already taking shape.

India is no longer merely buying Israeli weapons. Increasingly, some of Israel's weapons begin their journey in India.



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