

SALC SEEKS SUSPENSION OF ARMS TRADE PERMITS, CITING THE UNITED STATES AS THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

On 3 June 2026, the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) filed an application in the Pretoria High Court seeking the suspension of permits facilitating the export of arms from South Africa (SA) to the United States of America (US). The application argues that the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) ought to have suspended or cancelled permits facilitating these exports. In 2025, South Africa exported arms with a total value of amounting to a total amount of just over R279 million in 2025 to the US.

US conduct

January 2025

US Support to Israel

President Trump lifted a halt of arms exports to Israel on 25 January 2025. Arms shipments with a total value of more than 9 billion USD are granted to be exported to Israel, including MK-84 (2,000-pound bomb), which have reportedly been used in the genocide in Gaza. In February 2025, the Trump Administration revoked Security Memorandum 20, which ties US security assistance to human rights.

June 2026

Military Attack on Iran

On 13 June 2025, the United States and Israel launched a series of coordinated military attacks against Iranian nuclear facilities, including the Isfahan complex, the Fordow uranium enrichment plant, and the Natanz nuclear site. These attacks were conducted over a period of 12 days.

January 2026

Maduro Capture

On 3 January 2026, US forces conducted a military operation in Venezuela aimed at capturing President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. Both were taken into US custody. The unilateral military action taken by the US constituted yet another violation of the cardinal principle of the UN Charter prohibiting the threat or use of force.

February 2026

War on Iran

On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched large-scale military attacks against Iran. This triggered a series of retaliatory actions – against Israel, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE. The US/Israel military attacks targeted Iranian military assets, high-value strategic installations, and parts of the Iran's senior leadership.

SA position

"We believe that peace is the only option to bring about peace between Israel and Palestine. To achieve this, steps must be taken now. **We therefore call on all parties to exercise restraint and on all state actors to desist from providing weapons to either of the sides to the conflict.**"
[President Cyril Ramaphosa, Cairo Summit, 23/10/23](#)

"President Cyril Ramaphosa and the South African government have noted with a **great deal of anxiety the entry by the United States of America** into the Israel-Iran war."
[Presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya, 22/6/25](#)

"**In the face of rising tensions with unpredictable consequences for international peace and security**, as well as for the world economy, we underscore the urgent need to break the cycle of violence and restore peace."
[BRICS Joint Statement, 24/6/25](#)

"The stability of the international system depends not only on the respect but on the consistent application of these established legal norms. We all benefit from a rules-based international order based on international law. **When we break these norms, we invite anarchy and an environment where might make right, ignoring the complexity of interrelations and interdependence in our modern world.**"
[UN Acting Deputy Permanent Representative for South Africa, 5/1/26](#)

"**These developments pose a serious threat to regional and international peace and security**, with far-reaching humanitarian, diplomatic and economic consequences."
[President Ramaphosa, 24/6/25](#)

"So again, for us, it's not about the politics of relations between states. It's about what is right [and] what is wrong, what we accept. **If we accept that certain states can breach international law because of what they perceive to be their political preference, then we are all at risk.**"
[Zane Dangor, 3/3/26](#)

International reaction

"The Commission **concludes on reasonable grounds that the Israeli authorities and Israeli security forces have committed and are continuing to commit the following actus reus of genocide** against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."
[UN Commission of Inquiry Report, 16/9/25](#)

"The overwhelming nature and scale of the Israeli assault on Gaza and the destructive conditions of life it has inflicted **reveal an intent to physically destroy Palestinians as a group.**"
[UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, Anatomy of a Genocide, 1/4/24](#)

"The responsible **US political and military leaders may also be liable for the international crime of aggression.**"
[UN Experts, Joint Statement, 26/6/25](#)

"The Special Rapporteur **condemns the unlawful attacks carried out by Israel and the United States on the Islamic Republic of Iran in violation of the principles of international law, including the prohibition on the use of force, the prohibition on aggression and the duty of non-intervention.**"
[UN Special Rapporteur Mai Sato, 26/8/25](#)

"We express our deep concern and rejection of the military actions carried out unilaterally on Venezuelan territory, which contravene fundamental principles of international law, particularly the prohibition of the use and threat of force, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. **These actions constitute an extremely dangerous precedent for peace and regional security and endanger the civilian population.**"
[Joint Statement Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay and Spain, 12/1/26](#)

"**Unprovoked attacks by the US and Israel** – launched amid diplomatic negotiations and without authorisation from the Security Council – violate the fundamental prohibition on the use of force, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and the duty to peacefully settle disputes under Article 2 of the UN Charter."
[UN Experts Joint Statement, 4/3/26](#)

"The conflict risks engulfing the wider region in catastrophic armed violence and threatens to set yet another precedent of total impunity for some of the world's strongest military powers (...) **the unprovoked attack by the United States and Israel on Iran (...) is entirely illegal under international law and constitutes an act of aggression.**"
[UN Experts Joint Statement, 12/3/26](#)

THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Legislation

Under section 14(3)(a) of the NCAC Act, the NCACC must "cancel, amend or suspend the permit if it is in the interest of maintaining and promoting international peace or avoiding repression and terrorism."

SALC's argument

SALC argues that, by continuing to authorise arms exports to the US in the face of overwhelming evidence of its aggression and systematic international law violations, the NCACC acted unlawfully and in breach of its statutory obligation to suspend or cancel such permits.