



By: TA | AP Insight

Israel left without German weapons because of the announcement that it will take over Gaza City



The second largest supplier of weapons to Israel, Germany, has stopped exports in response to the Netanyahu government's announcement that it will take over Gaza City.

The government of Friedrich Merz, one of Israel's biggest supporters, is thus joining European pressure on Israel to suspend military operations and allow humanitarian supplies to reach the population of Gaza.

Germany won't authorize any exports of military equipment to Israel that could be used in Gaza "until further notice," Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Friday, in a strikingly quick response by one of Israel's strongest international backers to a **decision** by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet to take over Gaza City.

The move by Germany, which has previously stopped short of tougher lines against Israel's government taken by some of its European Union allies, appeared likely to further isolate Israel in the wake of the military takeover plan that has been decried by the United Nations, aid and human rights groups, and supporters of Israeli **hostages** still held in Gaza, among others.

Germany, along with the United States and Italy, is among the top foreign suppliers of equipment used by Israel's military.

The pause in German military supplies adds to **action** taken by European countries — including economic, military and diplomatic measures — against Israel in recent months out of concern over its government's conduct in the nearly two-year war in Gaza.

Merz said in a statement that Israel "has the right to defend itself against Hamas' terror" and that the release of Israeli hostages and purposeful negotiations toward a ceasefire are "our top priority." He said that Hamas mustn't have a role in the future of Gaza.

"The even harsher military action by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, approved by the Israeli Cabinet last night, makes it increasingly difficult for the German government to see

how these goals will be achieved," he said. "Under these circumstances, the German government will not authorize any exports of military equipment that could be used in the Gaza Strip until further notice."

It wasn't immediately clear which military equipment from Germany would be affected. Asked by The Associated Press for details about which military hardware would be affected, the German government declined to comment.

Weight of responsibility

The German government remains deeply concerned about the suffering of civilians in Gaza, Merz said.

"With the planned offensive, the Israeli government bears even greater responsibility than before for providing for their needs," he said.

Merz called on Israel to allow comprehensive access for aid deliveries — including for U.N. organizations and other nongovernmental organizations — and said that Israel "must continue to comprehensively and sustainably address the humanitarian situation in Gaza."

The move has particular weight because Germany has been seen as one of Israel's strongest supporters — arguably surpassed only by the United States.

Germany has maintained a strongly pro-Israel stance for decades largely because of its historical responsibility for the Holocaust, which has shaped its postwar foreign policy around ensuring Israel's security and combating antisemitism.

Merz's government didn't join **announcements** by French President Emmanuel Macron and U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer that their governments plan to formally recognize a Palestinian state in September.

Merz called on Israel's government not to take any further steps toward annexing the West Bank

The reluctance so far of Germany, the EU's biggest economic power, to take a tougher line on the actions of Netanyahu's government clouded the prospects that international pressure might have an impact on Israel's decisions.

Israel's air and ground war has already killed tens of thousands of people in Gaza, displaced most of the population, **destroyed** vast areas and pushed the territory toward famine.

The campaign was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and abducting 251 people.

Merz also called on Israel's government "not to take any further steps toward annexing the West Bank."

A 'big deal' but not decisive

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, last year, Germany was the No. 2 supplier of arms to Israel after the United States.

German companies provide 30% of Israel's defense imports, mostly naval armaments, according to data analyzed by Zain Hussain, an arms transfers researcher at SIPRI.

He suggested the pullback by Germany — which has deep political support for and strong defense ties with Israel — would be temporary.

I don't think this alone will stop Israel's operations in Gaza, and Israel still has the USA as a committed arms supplier - Zain Hussain

"This is going to be a limited measure," Hussain said. "Germany has been committed to providing Israel with arms, especially with ships."

"It is a big deal I suppose in the sense that Germany — which has been committed to Israel's security and has stood firmly with it — is openly admitting that it is uncomfortable with Israel's actions and limiting some arms transfers, and for Germany this is a huge deal," he said. "However, I don't think this alone will stop Israel's operations in Gaza, and Israel still has the USA as a committed arms supplier."

German-made engines can be fitted in Israeli Merkava tanks and Namer armored personnel carriers, which are actively deployed in Gaza.

Sa'ar corvettes — small warships festooned with sophisticated radar equipment and cannons — from Germany have been used to shell targets in Gaza during the war, Hussain said.

Other European officials express concern

In a post on X, European Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen said Israel's extension of military operations in Gaza "must be reconsidered," in her strongest criticism yet during the war. She also made yet another call for Israel to let in more aid.

The foreign ministers of the Netherlands and Denmark called Israel's decision to intensify the operation "wrong" and expressed concerns for civilians and the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Last week, even before the Gaza City takeover plan, Slovenia **announced** that it would ban the import, export and transit of all weapons to and from Israel in response to the country's actions in Gaza — saying it was the first EU member country to do so.



Outrage over Israel's actions in Gaza has grown in Europe as images of suffering Palestinians have driven protests in London, Berlin, Brussels and other capitals

Last month, two dozen mostly European countries condemned Israel's restrictions on aid shipments into Gaza and the killings of hundreds of Palestinians trying to reach food.

Last year, the U.K. **suspended** exports of some weapons to Israel over concerns they could be used to break international law, but it was a move with limited military impact.

The decision related to about 30 of 350 existing export licenses for equipment that could be used in Gaza, including parts for military planes, helicopters and drones.

Outrage over Israel's actions in Gaza has grown in Europe as images of suffering Palestinians have driven protests in London, Berlin, Brussels and other capitals.

More recently, almost-daily **killings** of Palestinians while seeking aid have tested the EU's friendly relationship with Israel like never before.

The Israeli decision, taken after a late-night meeting of top officials, came despite mounting international calls to end the war and protests by many in Israel who fear for the remaining hostages held by Hamas.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians are bracing to once again be forced from their homes, while families of the hostages fear their loved ones won't return.

Most of the hostages have been released in

ceasefires or other deals but 50 remain inside Gaza. Israel believes around 20 of them to be alive.

The timing of another major Israeli ground operation remains unclear since it will likely hinge on mobilizing thousands of troops and forcibly evacuating civilians, almost certainly exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe.