



## Israel's military spending surges more than 100 percent amid war on Gaza

### Description

**WORLD : Military spending in the Middle East rose almost 10 percent to \$200bn in 2023, with Israel powering the arms splurge amid its war on Gaza.**

Spending on arms and military gear grew at the highest level in 10 years, according to a new report published on Monday by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Israel led the way with spending rising 24 percent to reach \$27.5bn. The war on Gaza has been the main driver of Israel's spending. Its expenditure increased more than 200 percent from \$1.8bn in the month before 7 October to \$4.7bn in December 2023, according to the report.

In total, Israel's military spending has increased 44 percent from 2014 through 2023.

The war in Gaza erupted after the 7 October Hamas-led attack on southern Israel killed about 1,200 people and saw more than 200 hostages taken to Gaza. In retaliation, Israel launched a ferocious assault on the besieged enclave, killing more than 34,000 Palestinians, mainly women and children.

On Saturday, the US House of Representatives passed a major spending bill that will allocate an additional \$26bn for Israel and Palestine, with \$4bn set to replenish Israel's missile defence system and roughly \$9bn slated for humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza.

According to Sipri, Israel was followed by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, the next biggest spenders on arms in the region.

Saudi Arabia was the world's fifth biggest military spender globally in 2023.

According to the report, the roughly four percent growth in its military spending in 2023 "was partly financed on the back of increased demand for non-Russian oil and rising oil prices following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine".

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter of crude oil.

Despite Saudi Arabia continuing to splash big on arms sales, its total military spending has actually decreased 18 percent in the last decade. In a pivot away from earlier interventions, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has tried to extricate Saudi Arabia from costly military forays, like the war in Yemen, as he focuses on diversifying the kingdom's oil-dependent economy.

Turkey on the other hand, saw military spending rise 59 percent in the last decade.

According to Sipri, Turkey spent \$15.8bn on arms in 2023, a 37 percent year-on-year increase.

Turkey has used the war in Ukraine and other local conflicts from Libya to Nagorno-Karabakh to market its own domestic arms industry, including Bayraktar drones. Turkey is also in the process of developing its own national fighter jet. In the meantime, it has secured a deal for F-16 fighter jets from the US.

**By MEE staff**

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