

Campaign Against Arms Trade
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Submission from the Campaign Against Arms Trade to the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's human rights work

1. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK is working to end the arms trade. The trade has a devastating impact on human rights and security, and damages economic development. CAAT believes that large scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems.
2. This short submission to the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry seeks to draw attention to the way the UK government's advocacy of human rights is undermined by the promotion of arms exports. The latter policy is invariably prioritised, while lip service is paid to the former.
3. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the case of Saudi Arabia. It is the UK's main arms customer. The major deals are covered by Government-to-Government contracts, with BAE Systems as the main contractor for these. BAE has 6,100 employees in Saudi Arabia. UK-supplied military aircraft, bombs and missiles are being used by Saudi Arabia in the deadly catastrophe that is the war in Yemen. Since the war started in March 2015, Saudi Arabia has been accused of numerous serious violations of International Humanitarian Law by reputable bodies including the UN Panel of Experts.
4. The destruction wrought in Yemen has not stopped the UK government's active promotion of the sale of more Eurofighter Typhoon. On 25 October 2017, Michael Fallon, then Defence Secretary, went so far as to tell the Commons' Defence Committee that criticism of the Saudi regime was a hindrance to arms sales. As part of an update he gave on negotiations to sell more Eurofighter Typhoon jets to the Saudi Air Force [he said](#), answering Question 39: "I have to repeat sadly, to this committee, that obviously other criticism of Saudi Arabia, in this Parliament, is not helpful and ...I'll leave it there, but we need to do everything possible to encourage Saudi Arabia towards batch two. I believe they will commit to batch two and we need to work away on the timing."
5. Prime Minister Theresa May welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the UK in March 2018. After an itinerary which included meetings with the Royal Family and a visit to Chequers, the Crown Prince did sign a letter of intent to buy 48 more Eurofighter Typhoons. ([Reuters, 9.3.18](#)) The fulsome welcome and encouragement to buy the military aircraft totally undermines any concern the UK government might voice over the deaths and destruction being wrought in Yemen or the use of the death penalty within Saudi Arabia.
6. As your Committee will know, CAAT has mounted a legal challenge to the UK government's decision to continue to licence the export of military equipment to Saudi Arabia. This is on the grounds that Criterion 2c of the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria says that licences should not be granted if there is a clear risk the equipment might be used in a serious violation of IHL. The High Court found in the Government's favour, but CAAT has been granted permission to appeal. The Court of Appeal is likely to take place between October and December 2018. All the court documents in the public domain can be found [here](#).
7. The contradiction in policy between promoting arms sales and advocating for human rights is not limited to Saudi Arabia. Bahrain and Colombia also feature both in the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Annual Report as Human Rights Priority Countries and in the Department for International Trade Defence and Security Organisation (DIT DSO) 2017-18 list of core markets. ([Written Answer 8329, 7.9.17](#))

8. While not listed as a Human Rights Priority Country, Turkey is a DIT DSO core market. The UK-Turkey military relationship is highlighted by BAE designing its TF-X fighter aircraft. This arms link is despite growing human rights abuses by President Erdoğan's government within Turkey and the bombing of Afrin in Syria. Foreign Office Minister Mark Field has said that the UK is a "candid friend" of Turkey on these issues. ([Hansard, 7.6.18](#)) There is, however, no reason to suppose that, when the UK government's priority is arms sales and trade after Brexit, human rights concerns will prevail.

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