



American Friends Service Committee

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Berit Reiss-Andersen
Norwegian Nobel Committee
The Norwegian Nobel Institute
Henrik Ibsens Gate 51
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Dear Berit Reiss-Andersen,

Dear members of the Oslo Nobel Peace Prize Committee The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) are proposing Mwatana for Human Rights and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade for the Nobel Peace Prize, 2021. The timing of this nomination is intended to draw attention to the Judicial Review being conducted in the UK about arms trading in Saudi Arabia, to support protests in the US about renewed arms sales to the UAE, and to highlight the misery and suffering of the Yemeni people in the proxy war being conducted in their country. The pairing of the two organizations is intended to hold up collaborations between local organizations and activism with initiatives by civil society to engage policy and law making through legal and diplomatic channels.

Mwatana for Human Rights is a grassroots organization working in Yemen to defend human rights in the conflict, reporting on health care, detention, and the impact of the conflict on education. Established in 2007, they were able to expand their work when they were granted a government permit to operate in 2013. One of their projects, co-authored with Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) in August of 2019, identifies and authenticates evidence of the involvement of foreign governments in the violence causing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. At great personal risk, individuals travel into combat zones and document casualties and other impacts of US and UK military and arms engagement in the region. These reports have demanded accountability which is not yet forthcoming from either the US Defense Department or the UK government. Department of Defense reports undercount and fail to describe the human impact of warmaking in this region. In contrast, workers and volunteers working with Mwatana for Human Rights visit with families and hear the stories of death, loss and deprivation. While official reports represent civilian deaths as rare and unfortunate, these reports provide evidence that such deaths are as routine as they are devastating for the families and communities which endure them. Researchers have noticed three-fold injustices suffered by Yemeni people, errors in targeting by drone strikes, the struggle to sustain life in a war zone where they are caught in the crossfire between extremist groups and Government and US militaries, and the poverty and hunger experienced as resources and services dry up and supplies fail to arrive where they are needed. Mwatana for Human Rights collects the stories of families, humanizing the dead, and giving voice to victims' survivors. One such

story told in a report given by Adulrasheed Al-Faiqih, Executive Director of Mwatana and his colleague Kristine Beckerle in May 2020 serves to illustrate the point.¹

In late January 2019, Saleh al-Qaisi, a 55-year-old Yemeni man who worked as a wall painter in Saudi Arabia, was visiting his family in al-Bayda governorate. The village is in an extremely remote area of Yemen, and services like water and electricity are limited to non-existent. He dropped his wife and three children off at a family member's house, then chatted for a bit with another relative in the village. The relative said, "I had been on my bike when I met uncle Saleh... he reminded me of some funny anecdotes while we were working in Saudi Arabia. Then he continued on his way... Suddenly, I heard an aircraft hitting his car." An apparent U.S. strike hit al-Qaisi's car. He was near the local health center. After the first strike, a witness said, people in the area wanted to reach him to help, but the aircraft remained visible in the sky. They feared another strike. When al-Qaisi tried to get out of his car, a second strike killed him.

No evidence was ever found that al-Qaisi was linked to any insurgency or extremist group. "People described al-Qaisi as beloved, with good manners, and known as a person who did not involve himself in political or military affairs. His community organized a protest after the attack that killed him. 'If we keep silent about this crime, the number of similar strikes against innocent people will increase.'"

In addition to documenting human losses in communities and families, Mwatana for Human Rights has also documented damage to cultural sites and national treasures, some of which are so ancient and important that they are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Listed buildings and cities.² In the US, the Friends Committee on National Legislation has been able to use these reports and others like them to lobby Congress to reduce US engagement in the conflict and step up humanitarian assistance. On 30 November 2020, FCNL and AFSC were co-signatories, along with Mwatana for Human Rights, of a call to halt a proposed US arms sale to the United Arab Emirates, a member of the Saudi-led coalition.³ These reports have also contributed to the UN position on the Yemeni conflict as "a catastrophic humanitarian situation" in their call for a cessation of hostilities and increased momentum in peace negotiations. Mwatana for Human Rights carries out a vital peace educational function through official reports of investigations and evidence gathering and also short films of its efforts to document the loss of antiquities and ancient sites.

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK has leveraged local information, such as that provided by Mwatana for Human Rights, in a legal case brought against the

¹ Abdulrasheed Al-Faiqih and Kristine Beckerle, "U.S. Fails to Acknowledge Killing Yemeni Civilians," Just Security, May 15, 2020, <https://www.justsecurity.org/70151/u-s-fails-to-acknowledge-killing-yemeni-civilians/>.

² Mwatana for Human Rights, *Razed to The Ground*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWHDCg0h2lY>.

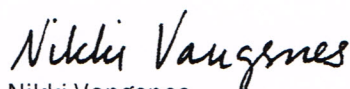
³ "International Coalition of NGOs Calls on the United States to Immediately Halt Proposed Arms Sales to the UAE," Project on Middle East Democracy, November 30, 2020, <https://pomed.org/international-coalition-of-ngos-call-onthe-united-states-to-immediately-halt-proposed-arms-sales-to-the-uae/>.

UK government, winning a significant victory in 2019 in bringing about the cessation of arms trading to Saudi Arabia for a period of several months. The UK government won a legal appeal and overturned the decision. The case remains active with the CAAT's filing of a new Judicial Review Application on 26th October, 2020 to examine the legality of the UK government's decision to renew arms sales to Saudi Arabia.⁴ CAAT's strategies map our criteria of nonviolence by its determination to use the rule of law in its campaign. CAAT has campaigned effectively to expose and challenge the arms trade since 1974. As an organization it tries to live out its values – it has a non-hierarchical staffing structure and all permanent members of staff are members of its executive Board. In addition, CAAT supports switching jobs in the arms industry to working in renewables as part of a Green New Deal. Its most recent publication is *Fighting the wrong battles: how obsession with military power diverts resources from the climate crisis* (2020).⁵ CAAT also produces public information films and runs educational reading groups bringing people together to educate and inform them as well as to deepen their commitment to nonviolence.⁶

The impact of the arms trade is global and the arms industry crosses international borders. CAAT also campaigns against the arms fairs which promote weapons sales and supports local action to resist them. This nomination is made mindful of the importance to Quakers of the pursuit of truth through meticulous and faithful witness. These two organizations in concert, chosen to represent the importance of local immediate efforts partnered with legal advocacy and policy implementation, aim to disrupt official attempts to rewrite history by confrontation with truth telling. In addition, the humanization of the evidence, adding texture and a sense of the human loss, disaggregates the typical military accounting of “collateral damage”, raising up the essential integrity, dignity, and importance of each individual human life in the way of Quakers. Together the two organizations represent a vital and intensive commitment to nonviolent interruption of the prevailing narrative that says violence can achieve peace, and also shows critical collaboration between people from euro-centric countries with those directly impacted by colonialism and imperialism.



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General Secretary
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⁴ Jessica Murray, “UK Faces New Legal Challenge over Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia,” *The Guardian*, October 27, 2020, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/oct/27/uk-faces-new-legal-challenge-over-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia>.

⁵ Sam Perlo-Freeman, “Fighting the Wrong Battles” (Campaign Against the Arms Trade, February 2020), <https://caat.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/fighting-the-wrong-battles-feb2020.pdf>.

⁶ Campaign Against Arms Trade, Stop DSEI 2019, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fi3Z22K3KI>.