

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
3 Whitehall Place, Westminster,  
London SW1A 2HP

10th July 2020

Dear Liz,

For the second time in three weeks, we are writing to you concerning the export of arms to Saudi Arabia for use in the war in Yemen.

On this occasion, we are writing about your decision – announced on Tuesday – to resume the licensing of those exports, and your accompanying assertion that any violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Yemen have been ‘isolated incidents’, not indications of any lack of intent or capacity to comply with IHL on the part of the Saudi-led coalition.

For all of us in Parliament who have debated the conflict in Yemen over the last five years, and Britain’s role in it as a supplier of arms to the Saudi-led coalition, this was a hugely significant and controversial announcement, and one that we would expect to have been made via an oral statement to the House, rather than through a written ministerial statement.

That would have given Members on all sides an opportunity to seek detailed explanations of the process that you have gone through in order to reach your decision, and the rationale you have applied in making it. It would also have allowed Members to question apparent inconsistencies between the conclusion you have now reached and previous statements by the government.

To take just one example, we have repeatedly been told by ministers since 2015 that it is not possible for the UK to assess whether individual incidents in Yemen represent violations of IHL, because we are not a party to the conflict. Indeed, four years ago, ministers went out of their way to trawl the parliamentary record and correct six written questions where they had previously implied that such assessments had been – or could be – carried out.

Your written statement on Tuesday entirely did away with that argument, but offered no detailed explanation of the ‘revised methodology’ that has now been used to carry out these assessments and come to the conclusions that you announced, nor any specific examples of the incidents in respect of which these assessments have been carried out.

We would therefore all be extremely grateful if you would agree to make an oral statement to the House on Monday (13th July) so that we can try and secure answers to these and many other questions, and ensure that an announcement of this significance receives the proper parliamentary

scrutiny that the public would expect, and which has been the hallmark of our previous debates on the war in Yemen over the past five years.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

**Emily Thornberry MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade**

**Stewart Hosie MP, Scottish National Party Spokesperson on International Trade**

**Sarah Olney MP, Liberal Democrat Party Spokesperson on International Trade**

**Hywel Williams MP, Plaid Cymru Spokesperson on International Trade**

**Caroline Lucas MP, Green Party Spokesperson on International Trade**