

# CORRUPTION WATCH

## Statement on Court of Appeal Decision on British Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia

Corruption Watch welcomes today's decision by the Appeal Court to declare British sales of weapons to Saudi Arabia unlawful.

This is an important victory for all those working to rein in the out-of-control global arms trade. Even more importantly, it is a crucial victory for the people of Yemen who have suffered the deadly consequences of the billions of pounds of UK weapons sold to Saudi Arabia.

The judges concluded that the government had made its assessment of whether there was a 'clear risk' of UK military equipment being used in serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) without attempting to assess whether there had been violations of IHL in the past. The government instead relied on their 'close engagement' with the Saudis on targeting procedures, and the Saudis' 'attitude' to civilian casualties. The government 'took account' of the myriad reports of IHL violations from various organizations, but did not meaningfully engage with this evidence or attempt to come to a conclusion about it.

The government will have to now review all their previous decisions, as well as any future export licensing decisions, based on a rational, lawful procedure.

### ***Suspend Arms Sales Immediately***

Corruption Watch calls on the government to suspend all arms sales not only to Saudi Arabia but to all members of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

In addition, on the basis of the past, and continuing, violations of IHL, the government should revoke all of the previously granted, still open licences for the export of weapons to Saudi Arabia and all other members of the coalition.

## ***The Failure of the UK's Arms Export Control Regime and Parliament***

This judgement clearly illustrates that the UK's arms export controls regime is not fit for purpose.

But it is not only the executive process that has failed. The Parliamentary oversight of arms exports has also been revealed as wholly inadequate. The Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) has failed in its responsibilities to meaningfully hold the arms export control process to account. The comments of CAEC's Chairperson dismissing the Saudi-led coalition's culpability in violations of IHL in Yemen, and his baseless, vituperative attack on those organisations collecting crucial information on these violations – information that has been referenced in the judgement – raise serious questions about his suitability to chair this crucial committee.

### ***Strengthen Parliamentary Oversight Now***

Corruption Watch calls on Parliament to create a full Standing Committee on Arms Export Controls, with an appropriate and competent chairperson elected by Parliament. This Committee should ensure greater transparency and accountability in, and publicly reveal any failures of, the control regime.

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Please contact our Executive Director Andrew Feinstein at the details below for further comment.

The full judgement can be read here: <https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/the-queen-on-the-application-of-campaign-against-arms-trade-v-secretary-of-state-for-international-trade-and-others/>