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April 2018

Our reference: MIN/118240/2018

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Secretary of State

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your letter of 26 March about Yemen. It is encouraging to see such strong interest in Yemen from people of all ages across the country.

I share their concern about the effects of the conflict on Yemeni civilians. I am acutely aware that during armed conflict, civilians often pay a heavy price. Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is a key priority for me – I discussed this with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia during his recent visit to the UK on 9 March. We agreed there on the importance of reaching a political solution to the crisis and resolved to work closely together, alongside partners including the UN Special Envoy for Yemen to achieve this.

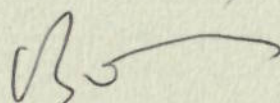
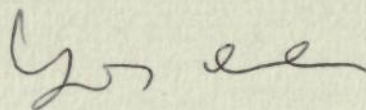
In 2017/18 the Government is committing £205 million in aid to Yemen, making the UK the third largest humanitarian donor to Yemen, and the second largest to the UN appeal. We are prioritising life-saving interventions including food and nutrition support to 1.7 million people, and clean water and sanitation for an expected 1.2 million people. The UK has also taken the lead in lobbying across the international community. The UK has been clear on the importance of continued humanitarian and commercial access, including through Yemen's ports, through which 80% of Yemen's import needs are met. From the Prime Minister down, the UK has been engaged closely with our regional and international partners on this issue.

The UK takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, taking account of all relevant factors at the time of the application. We have kept the situation under careful review throughout the conflict in Yemen. We welcome the Divisional Court's judgment dismissing the claim by the Campaign Against Arms Trade for a judicial review of decisions on arms exports to Saudi Arabia for possible use in the conflict in Yemen.

When allegations of International Humanitarian Law breaches have been made against Saudi Arabia, it is important that the Saudis, in the first instance, conduct conclusive investigations. They have the best insight into their own military procedures and will be able to conduct the most thorough investigations. This will also allow the Saudis to understand what went wrong and apply the lessons learnt in the best possible way. This is the standard that we set ourselves and our allies. The Saudi-led Coalition Joint Incidents Assessment Team has published 55 reports into particular incidents of concern, with the most recent published on 5 March 2018.

The UK strongly supported the UN Human Rights Council Resolution on the human rights situation in Yemen in September 2017. The resolution mandates that a group of eminent international and regional experts conduct an independent investigation into the human rights situation in Yemen. We will work tirelessly at the highest levels to ensure that the resolution is fully implemented.

Rest assured the British Government will remain at the forefront of efforts to find a political solution to the conflict and respect humanitarian needs. I am committed to using the Foreign Office's resources and strength to address the crisis.



THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP