



Foreign &  
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Office



Department  
for International  
Development

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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

*Re George,*

Thank you for your email of 21 September to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Yemen and Saudi Arabia. I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East.

I share your constituents' 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 the Prime Minister and she discussed this during her visit to Saudi Arabia on 4-5 April with King Salman and the then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It is also the subject of regular Ministerial-level conversations with our regional and international partners.

We take alleged violations of IHL very seriously and where there are concerns raised, we insist that these are properly investigated. Where allegations of IHL 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 and conclusive investigations. It will also allow the country to really understand what went wrong and apply the lessons learnt in the best possible way. This is the standard we set ourselves and our allies. The Saudi-led Coalition Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) has published 36 reports, with the most recent published on 12 September.

The UK Government 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 and continue to monitor it closely. We welcome the divisional court's judgment dismissing the claim by the Campaign Against Arms Trade for a judicial review of decisions regarding arms exports to Saudi Arabia for possible use in the conflict in Yemen.

In 2017/18 we are committing £139 million in aid to Yemen, making us 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, urging all parties to the conflict to ensure rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and securing funds for the international humanitarian response to the crisis.

As pen-holder at the UN, the UK proposed and coordinated a UNSC Presidential Statement (PRST) which was agreed on 15 June. The PRST expresses deep concern about the humanitarian situation in Yemen, exacerbated by the rapid spread of cholera. The statement calls for an end to the fighting; a return to UN-led peace talks; recognition of the importance of unhindered humanitarian access. We will now work with our partners to convert words into action. We call on all parties to respect these unified and clear demands from the international community

The UK has played a central role in diplomatic efforts to try and find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen. Resuming peace talks is the top priority. We welcome and fully support the work of UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in trying to achieve a political settlement and commend his efforts to date. We are providing over £1 million to the UN Special Envoy's office to bolster the UN's capacity to facilitate the peace process. We continue to encourage all parties to engage seriously with the UN's peace proposals.

We will remain at the forefront of efforts to find a political solution to the conflict and are committed to using our resources to address the humanitarian crisis.

*John*  
*Alistair*

**THE RT HON ALISTAIR BURT MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**