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**Arms exports to Saudi Arabia: Canada must take action now**

Today, as Canada formally accedes to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a coalition of Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) are once again calling on the Government of Canada to definitively end the export of Light Armored Vehicles (LAV) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

This request, previously expressed in two open letters addressed to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, asks Canada to honour the spirit and intent of the ATT, which is now legally binding under international law. University de Montréal law professor Daniel Turp has added his voice to those of the coalition’s member organizations, calling on the Government of Canada to terminate these exports to the Saudi Kingdom. If the transfers continue, he intends to personally take legal action. While accession to the ATT is a positive step, it must supported by decisive action.

**WAR CRIMES**

As numerous credible media reports have suggested, Canadian military equipment – including light armoured vehicles – has been used in the war currently ravaging Yemen and decimating its population. The most recent report on this conflict, prepared by the United Nations Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, confirms that over the past five years, this conflict has given rise to a multitude of war crimes. Air strikes, indiscriminate shelling, acts of torture and sexual violence are only some of the many violations suffered by Yemen's civilian population on a daily basis.

In light of these alarming findings, Canada must act rapidly to avoid fuelling, in any way whatsoever, this devastating conflict and prolonging the suffering of the Yemeni people. In this recent report, the UN Experts challenged the international community, warning that States funnelling arms to the parties to the conflict may be held accountable for their role in aiding or abetting the commission of human rights violations.

* *“Amnesty International welcomes Canada’s accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, an important international legal instrument which has the potential to curb the excesses of the unbridled global trade in arms and weapons that has, for too long, devastated civilian populations around the globe. Canada’s continued export of Light Armoured Vehicles to Saudi Arabia is but one area in which its compliance with the treaty already raises serious questions. The spirit and the letter of the ATT make it incumbent upon the Government of Canada to fully examine the risks that Canadian arms exports could be used to commit serious violations of international human rights or international humanitarian law. In light of the conflict in Yemen, the Saudi LAV deal is an obvious place to start.”* - Justin Mohammed, Human Rights Law and Policy Campaigner, Amnesty International Canada.
* *“The war in* *Yemen has set the country’s development back by two decades, and has had a devastating impact on women and children. The notion that Canada is fuelling such a deadly conflict because of economic imperatives is simply intolerable.”* Anne Duhamel, Director of Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam-Québec.
* *“Canada’s accession to the Arms Trade Treaty comes at a time when ever more dire news of the armed conflict in Yemen continues to emerge. Canada must seize this opportunity to break from the status quo, and set the highest requirements regarding the export of arms and military equipment.”* - Thomas Woodley, Executive Director, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.
* *“The incompatibility of Canada's military exports to Saudi Arabia with national and international military export controls has long been apparent; yet Ottawa has dismissed every warning. Accession to the Arms Trade Treaty is a good first step, but it is not enough. With every arms shipment to Saudi Arabia, our country’s humanitarian credentials continue to crumble.” -* Cesar Jaramillo, Executive Director, Project Ploughshares.

**UNDERMINING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY**

It is not just that there is a new legal regime in place with “hard legal limits” on the discretion of the Foreign Minister, obligating her to deny an arms export permit where there is a substantial risk of the weapons being used to cause or to facilitate serious human rights abuses. There is an additional legal obligation at issue.

* “*Now that there is a UN-led peace process underway, that is being actively undermined by the Saudi-led coalition and other parties to the conflict, continued supply of weapons to any of the parties to the conflict not only prolongs the conflict and the suffering of innocent civilians as explicitly observed by the UN Expert Group, but it also unequivocally undermines regional security*.” - Peggy Mason, President of the Rideau Institute.

**ELEVEN MONTHS - WHY?**

Eleven months ago, the Government of Canada announced its decision to review military export permits to Saudi Arabia, during which time no new export permits would be approved. Since then, no news regarding progress on this review has been reported. As a State Party to the ATT and a nation claiming to be respectful of international rights and international treaty obligations, Canada must now assume its responsibilities and make its decision known.

Canada must further contribute to international efforts to end the plight of Yemenis and follow the lead set by the many countries which have elected to suspend their arms exports to Saudi Arabia. For its part, the United States Congress has repeatedly voted in favour of forbidding arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

All Canadians deserve to know their current government’s position on this issue, which is a matter of basic respect for human life. For their part, the Yemeni people want to believe in a future without the looming threat of attacks, starvation as a tactic of war and other unspeakable suffering.

“*Today, as the Arms Trade Treaty comes into force in Canada, I have sent a formal notice to Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs requesting that she cancel permits to export Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV) to Saudi Arabia*,” stated Professor Daniel Turp of Université de Montréal. Should this notice be ignored, Professor Turp intends to go before the courts again; “[***Bill C-47***](https://www.parl.ca/Content/Bills/421/Government/C-47/C-47_4/C-47_4.PDF)*amendments to the*[***Export and Import Permits Act***](https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/fr/42-1/projet-loi/C-47/sanction-royal#frH61)*enabling accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, provides new grounds for a law suit and a reminder that as of today, the Government of Canada must cancel all arms licenses*.”

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