



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Response to UK's relationship with Saudi Arabia (EDM 136)

Thank you for contacting me about Saudi Arabia.

The UK is firmly opposed to the use of the death penalty as a matter of principle in all circumstances and all countries. The UK's close relationship with Saudi Arabia does not mean that the Government shies away from raising legitimate human rights concerns. Ministers and officials frequently discuss these concerns in public and in private with the Saudi authorities.

A strong relationship with Saudi Arabia matters. For example, our collaboration has resulted in the foiling of al-Qaeda terrorist attacks that would have caused substantial destruction and loss of life. Saudi Arabia has an important and growing role in the region - it is essential to solving the crises in Syria and Yemen.

The UK takes very seriously any allegations of violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and regularly raises the importance of compliance with the Saudi Government and other members of the military coalition. The UK Government has been clear that all allegations of such violations should be investigated.

The UK operates one of the most rigorous export control regimes. All UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia are scrutinised in detail through established processes and against the EU and national consolidated criteria. A licence will not be issued if to do so would be inconsistent with any provision of the Criteria, including if there is a clear risk that it might be used in the commission of a serious violation of IHL.

Saudi Arabia is a priority country in the Foreign Office's 2015 Human Rights and Democracy Report and the human rights situation is monitored closely. The UK actively engages with the Saudi Government and civil society groups in the country on a variety of issues including by supporting reforms to the criminal justice system, encouraging the rule of law and promoting freedom and fairness.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Kind regards,

Edward Timpson MP

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