



Foreign Affairs Committee

Committee Office House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 6106 | Email FAC@parliament.uk
Website www.parliament.uk

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

23 November 2018

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing with regards to the sentencing to death of twelve men in Saudi Arabia for reasons which relate to the exercising of their rights to free association and religion. I have enclosed a note from the organisation Reprieve that sets out their concerns.

I am very concerned by these convictions and I am writing to ask you what efforts are being made by the UK Government to prevent these executions and to protect the right to freedom of religion and belief in Saudi Arabia and beyond. During your recent visit to Saudi Arabia did you raise your concerns about these convictions?

We will be placing this letter and your response in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Tugendhat

P.P. Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair



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Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

11 December 2018

Dear Foreign Secretary,

Further to my letter of 21 November I am writing with regards the sentencing to death of twelve men in Saudi Arabia that relate to their exercising of their rights to free association and religion.

Since I first wrote a decree of execution has now been issued making this an even more urgent issue than it was before. On 4 December you said in the Chamber that *"We continue to make representations on all cases of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia,"* and that you would look into the case in question. However, you then went on state that, *"because it is connected to Sharia law, we think it unlikely that Saudi Arabia will change its policy on the death penalty,"* and that, *"most of the interventions that [the UK] make tend to be in cases where a juvenile has committed the offence, or where we do not think the offence is egregious and where we think we [the UK] will have the best chance of success."*

This statement concerns me, and I am writing to ask you to clarify whether this is now Government policy towards the death penalty? If this is the case then it appears this is a significant change in Government policy, and indeed a step away from the Government promoting UK values abroad. Certainly, I would expect the UK to actively support a case where the fundamental right of freedom of religion appears to have been infringed.

I have yet to receive a response from the letter of 21 November on this issue and request that I receive a response to both these letters urgently and no later than 19 December.

We will be placing this letter and your response in the public domain.

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair

18 December 2018

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
Committee House
House of Commons
London
SW1A 2AH



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Secretary of State

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 11 December about Saudi Arabia.

I am very concerned about the reports that these executions may be imminent and my officials are closely monitoring these cases. Officials from our Embassy in Riyadh raised our concerns with the Saudi authorities on 20 November and 3 December, when we discussed both the substance of the cases and the UK's long standing opposition to the death penalty. The Saudi authorities understand our position. Ministers and officials will continue to raise our concerns about these cases.

Our policy is clear: we oppose the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Saudi Arabia, especially for crimes other than the most serious and for juveniles. This is in line with the minimum standards set out in: the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty of 2008; the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. We reiterate this position to the Saudi authorities regularly.

I should stress that Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign & Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty, as well as their restrictions on women's rights and freedom of expression. Ministers frequently discuss human rights and raise these concerns with the Saudi Arabian government. We also consistently underline the importance of respect for the right to peaceful protest, freedom of speech and the internet, and the rule of law and will continue to do so.

Yours
Jeremy

THE RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP