

14 October 2016

Stephen Twigg MP
Chair, International Development Committee

Chris White MP
Chair, Committees on Arms Export Controls

House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA



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Secretary of State

Dear Stephen, dear Chris,

Thank you for your letter of 21 September regarding Yemen and the Human Rights Council, in relation to the Report published by the Business, Innovation and Skills and International Development Committees on *The use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen*.

I'm grateful for your Report. I am considering the recommendations it made alongside those of the Foreign Affairs Committee on this matter, and will be issuing a formal response to these in due course.

At the UN Human Rights Council in September the UK supported a strong resolution which includes a commitment to increase the number of international human rights experts in the Yemen Office of the UN High Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR) operation, making clear the independent mandate for OHCHR to conduct their own investigations. The resolution also maintains the technical cooperation programme for OHCHR to strengthen the National Commission in Yemen, which we believe will make a difference on the ground. We look forward to reports from the OHCHR next year.


In respect to independent international investigations into alleged IHL violations it is important that Saudi Arabia in the first instance conducts thorough and conclusive investigations into incidents where it is alleged that IHL has been breached. 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 whether anything went wrong, if it did, and apply the lessons learnt in the best possible way. In the same way, when allegations have been made against us in Afghanistan and Iraq we investigated these claims.

I am deeply concerned by reports of an airstrike hitting a funeral hall in the Yemeni capital Sana'a on 8 October. The scenes from the site are shocking. I raised my concerns with the Saudi Foreign Minister on 9 October. The Coalition have announced that they will immediately investigate this incident. There can be no military solution to this conflict.

The Government's top priority in Yemen is the resumption of peace talks. A political solution is the best way to bring long-term stability to Yemen and end the conflict. The Government continues to strongly support the work of UN Special Envoy, Ismail

Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and his tireless efforts in working with all parties to bring about peace in Yemen. We deeply regret the failure of the parties to reach an agreement in Kuwait and we urge them to find the compromises that will end the current conflict. It is critical that all parties to the conflict renew their commitment to the Cessation of Hostilities for the sake of the people of Yemen. All parties must engage constructively with the De-escalation and Coordination Committee so that when incidents of concern are raised they can be effectively addressed to reduce the likelihood of escalation.

I hosted an event in the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 September at which a communiqué was agreed with the Foreign Ministers of the United States of America, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Yemen and alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed attended the meeting and briefed on the latest developments and challenges in the peace process. We will continue to work with international partners to advance this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boris Johnson', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP