



The Right Honourable Theresa May
10 Downing Street, London, SW1A 2AA
Email: mayt@parliament.uk

Brussels, August 31, 2016

Re: Letter to The Prime Minister on the Situation in Yemen and UK-Saudi Arms Deals

Dear Prime Minister May,

Pax Christi International and Pax Christi UK wish to express their profound concerns about the continuing conflict in Yemen between the government—supported by the Saudi-led coalition—and the Houthis, as well as the UK's involvement with arms exports to Saudi Arabia. According to last week's report of the United Nations Human Rights Office, between March 2015 and 23 August 2016, an estimated 3,799 civilians have been killed and 6,711 injured. At least 7.6 million people—including 3 million women and children—are currently suffering from malnutrition, and at least 3 million people have been forced to flee their homes.¹

Two weeks ago Doctors Without Borders (MSF) was forced to pull out its staff from hospitals due to indiscriminate bombing and unreliable reassurances from the Saudi-led coalition force.² Our movement strongly condemns the attacking of hospitals and medical personnel as they are protected under international human rights and humanitarian law. We are increasingly concerned that this is an example of how the bombing campaign of the Saudi-led coalition has further intensified and how it has impacted civilians following the suspension of the peace talks.

Considering the above, Pax Christi International finds it unacceptable that the UK has been exporting arms to Saudi Arabia, especially as the coalition led by the country has been targeting civilians.³ At the second annual Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which took place from the 22nd through the 26th of August, the continued arming of Saudi Arabia via arms deals with the UK was a matter of serious discussion. According to article 7 of the aforementioned

¹ United Nations High Human Rights Office, 'Zeid urges accountability for violations in Yemen', August 25th 2016, online available at: <http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20411&LangID=E>

² Doctor without Borders, 'MSF Evacuates Staff from Six Hospitals in Northern Yemen', August 18th 2016, online available at: <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/msf-evacuates-staff-six-hospitals-northern-yemen>

³ The Guardian, 'UN report into Saudi-led strikes in Yemen raises questions over UK role, January 27th 2016, online available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/27/un-report-into-saudi-led-strikes-in-yemen-raises-questions-over-uk-role>

treaty—which the UK has signed—arms should not be exported when there is an overriding risk that they would undermine peace and security and facilitate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.⁴

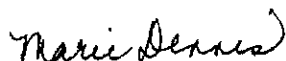
We urge the UK government to stop arms deals with Saudi Arabia, as it has enabled the Saudi-led coalition to further intensify the bombing campaign in Yemen which is victimising civilians. The export of arms, such as last year's transfer of 58 aircraft and 2400 missiles⁵, should end immediately; it is not only devastating for Yemen, but it will also undermine the security of the Arabian peninsula and feed global terrorism networks. Instead we urge your government to contribute to the restoration of peace talks and to deepen your engagement in support of locally- and civilian-led conflict prevention, mitigation, peacebuilding and good governance.

Yours sincerely,



Pat Gaffney

Secretary General Pax Christi British Section



Marie Dennis

Co-president Pax Christi International



Bishop Kevin Dowling, C.S.S.R.

Co-President Pax Christi International

⁴ The text of the Treaty is available on this website: <https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/English7.pdf>

⁵ Amnesty International, 'Arms to Saudi Arabia: Five giant missiles delivered to Downing Street one year since start of Yemen conflict, March 18th 2016, online available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/arms-saudi-arabia-five-giant-missiles-delivered-downing-street-one-year-start-yemen>