



The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Email: president@whitehouse.gov

Brussels, August 31, 2016

Re: Letter to President Obama on the Situation in Yemen and U.S.-Saudi Arms Deals

Dear President Obama,

Pax Christi International and Pax Christi USA 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 U.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 August 23, 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 issues, Pax Christi International finds it unacceptable that the United States 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 that took place from the 22nd through the 26th of August, the continued arming of Saudi Arabia through

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>

U.S. arms deals was a matter of serious discussion. According to article 7 of the aforementioned treaty—which the U.S. 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 U.S. government to end arms deals with Saudi Arabia which have enabled the Saudi-led coalition to further intensify the bombing campaign in Yemen which has victimized civilians. The export of arms—such as the \$1.15 billion arms sale that is pending approval by Congress and would include up to 153 tanks, hundreds of machine guns, ammunition and other equipment⁵—should be immediately stopped; it is not only devastating for Yemen, but it will also undermine the security of the entire Arabian Peninsula as well as feeding global terrorism networks. Instead we urge the U.S. government to contribute to restoring peace talks and to deepen engagement in support of locally- and civilian-led conflict prevention, mitigation, peacebuilding and good governance.

Yours sincerely,



Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN
Executive Director Pax Christi USA



Marie Dennis
Co-president Pax Christi International



Bishop Kevin Dowling, C.S.S.R.
Co-President

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 The Hill, 'US arms sale to Saudi Arabia under fire from lawmakers', August 24th 2016, online available at: <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/292492-lawmakers-look-for-support-to-delay-saudi-arms-sale>