



Ministry  
of Defence

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES

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Received 18-9

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2015, following the written answer I gave on 21 July 2015. You asked for more details on the assurances we have received from the Saudis about international humanitarian law compliance, as well as the use of British-exported arms and equipment in operations over Yemen.

During the current coalition military campaign, both the Defence Secretary and the Foreign Secretary have discussed humanitarian law with Saudi ministers, and our officials in Saudi Arabia have spoken frequently with their contacts in the Saudi government and military. In addition to our long-standing Defence presence in the country, we also have a small number of UK military liaison officers in several Saudi headquarters and operations centres. These liaison officers provide us with additional insight into coalition operations, as does our existing military presence across the Gulf, including in other multinational headquarters.

We know the Royal Saudi Air Force is operating British-supplied equipment across the country as part of its campaign but the release of information on the specific use of aircraft and weapons is a matter for the Saudi authorities.

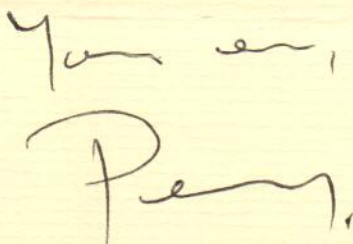
More broadly, the humanitarian situation in Yemen is of great concern to the Government, and we have not been idle in responding. DFID has allocated £55 million – through UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs – to support Yemenis affected by the crisis, including those forced to flee their homes, with emergency shelter, healthcare, water and food assistance, as well as supporting UN work to co-ordinate the humanitarian response.

The UK has previously lobbied the Yemeni Government - both bilaterally and through the UN Human Rights Council – on a wide range of human rights issues. We have also funded human rights projects in Yemen. However, the conflict in Yemen and temporary suspension of Embassy operations in Sana'a has hampered our ability to pursue human rights work. We continue to press all parties for an end to the conflict and a sustainable political process and will use the September session of the Human Rights Council to further raise international awareness of these issues.

Caroline Lucas MP  
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We continue to raise the importance with all parties of their obligations to comply with IHL and human rights law. This includes contact with the Houthis to encourage them to engage constructively in the UN-led political process, as well as to raise the importance of their obligations to comply with IHL and international human rights law. You have probably seen reporting of alleged IHL violations by Houthi and Houthi-affiliated forces, including attacks on civilians in Aden and Taiz; intimidation of UN ships attempting to dock at Aden; the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes; the continued recruitment of child soldiers; and use of children as scouts, guards, runners, and fighters in the conflict. This all emphasises the need for an urgent end to the fighting.

I hope this answers your questions, demonstrates that the UK Government has been active in trying to move all parties towards a negotiated settlement and as clearly indicated above we do not rely solely on assurances from the Saudi authorities on their compliance with IHL obligations.

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

**PENNY MORDAUNT MP**