

The Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

December 13 2021

Re: Ongoing Weapons Exports to Saudi Arabia

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

The undersigned, representing a cross-section of Canadian labour, arms controls, antiwar, human rights, international security, and other civil society organizations, are writing to reiterate our continued opposition to your government's issuance of arms exports permits for weapons destined to Saudi Arabia. We write today adding to the letters of March 2019, August 2019, April 2020 and September 2020 in which several of our organizations raised concerns about the serious ethical, legal, human rights and humanitarian implications of Canada's ongoing transfer of weapons to Saudi Arabia. We regret that, to date, we have received no response to these concerns from you or the relevant Cabinet ministers on the matter. Critically, we regret that Canada finds itself in violation of its international arms control agreements.

Since the beginning of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen in early 2015, Canada has exported approximately \$7.8-billion in arms to Saudi Arabia. A significant proportion of these transfers have occurred after Canada's September 2019 accession to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Exhaustive analysis by Canadian civil society organizations has credibly shown these transfers constitute a breach of Canada's obligations under the ATT, given well-documented instances of Saudi abuses against its own citizens and the people of Yemen. Still, Saudi Arabia remains Canada's largest non-US destination for weapons exports by a wide margin. To its shame, Canada has twice been named by the UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen as one of several states helping to perpetuate the conflict by continuing to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which Canada endorsed in 2011, makes it clear that States should take steps to ensure that current policies, legislation, regulations, and enforcement measures are effective in addressing the risk of business involvement in gross human rights abuses and that action is taken to ensure that business enterprises operating in conflict affected areas identify, prevent and mitigate the human-rights risks of their activities and business relationships. The UNGPs urge States to pay particular attention to the potential risks of companies contributing to gender and sexual violence.

Canada has indicated its intention to publish a paper outlining its feminist foreign policy, to complement its existing feminist foreign assistance policy and its work to advance gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Arms transfers to Saudi Arabia

sorely undermines these efforts and is fundamentally incompatible with a feminist foreign policy. The government of Canada has spoken openly about how women and other vulnerable or minority groups are systematically oppressed in Saudi Arabia and are disproportionately impacted by the conflict in Yemen. Direct support of militarism and oppression, through the provision of arms, is the exact opposite of a feminist approach to foreign policy.

We recognize that the end of Canadian arms exports to Saudi Arabia will impact workers in the arms industry. We therefore urge the government to work with trade unions representing workers in the arms industry to develop a plan that secures the livelihoods of those who would be impacted by the cessation of arms exports to Saudi Arabia. Importantly, this presents an opportunity to consider an economic conversion strategy to decrease Canada's reliance on arms exports, in particular when there is a clear and present risk of misuse, as is the case with Saudi Arabia.

Several states have implemented varying restrictions on weapons exports to Saudi Arabia, including Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Norway and Denmark have fully stopped supplying arms to the Saudi government. Despite Canada claiming to have some of the strongest arms controls in the world, the facts show otherwise.

We are further disappointed that your government has not released any information with respect to the arms-length advisory panel of experts that was announced by Ministers Champagne and Morneau almost one year and a half ago. Despite multiple overtures to help shape this process – which could constitute a positive step towards improved compliance with the ATT – civil society organizations have remained outside of the process. Similarly, we have seen no further details about the Ministers' announcement that Canada will spearhead multilateral discussions to strengthen compliance with the ATT towards the establishment of an international inspection regime.

Prime Minister, arms transfers to Saudi Arabia undermine Canada's discourse on human rights. They are contrary to Canada's international legal obligations. They pose a substantial risk of being used in the perpetration of serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, to facilitate serious instances of gender-based violence, or other abuses, in Saudi Arabia or in the context of the conflict in Yemen. Canada must exercise its sovereign authority and end the transfer of light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia immediately.

Sincerely,

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Canada

Amnesty International Canada (English Branch)

Amnistie internationale Canada francophone

Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)

Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières et pour l'Action Citoyenne (ATTAC- Québec)

BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)

Canadian Foreign Policy Institute

Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

Canadian Labour Congress - Congrès du travail du Canada (CLC-CTC)

Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union - Syndicat canadien des employées et employés professionnels et de bureau (COPE-SEPB)

Canadian Pugwash Group

Canadian Union of Postal Workers – Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes (CUPW-STTP)

Canadian Union of Public Employees – Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (CUPE-SCFP)

CUPE Ontario

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

Centre d'éducation et d'action des femmes de Montréal (CÉAF)

Centre justice et foi (CJF)

Collectif Échec à la guerre

Collective des femmes chrétiennes et féministes L'autre Parole

Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières

Commission sur l'altermondialisation et la solidarité internationale de Québec solidaire

Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)

Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain — CSN

The Council of Canadians

Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN) Femmes en mouvement, Bonaventure, Québec

Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU)

Global Sunrise Project

Green Left-Gauche verte

Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group – Coalition pour la surveillance internationale des libertés civiles (ICLMG/CSILC)

Just Peace Committee-BC

Labour Against the Arms Trade
Les AmiEs de la Terre de Québec
Les Artistes pour la paix
Ligue des droits et libertés (LDL)
L’R des centres de femmes du Québec
Médecins du Monde Canada
National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
Oxfam Canada
Oxfam Québec
Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Ottawa Quaker Meeting
People for Peace, London
Project Ploughshares
Public Service Alliance of Canada - Alliance de la Fonction publique de Canada (PSAC-
AFPC)
Québec solidaire (QS)
Religions pour la Paix – Québec
Rideau Institute
Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste
Sœurs Auxiliatrices
Sœurs du Bon-Conseil de Montréal
Solidarité Laurentides Amérique centrale (SLAM)
Solidarité populaire Estrie (SPE)
Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l’Université Laval (SCCCUL)
United Steelworkers union (USW) - Syndicat des Metallos
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Canada
World BEYOND War

cc: Hon. Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business
and Economic Development
Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Hon. Erin O’Toole, Leader of the Official Opposition

Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada

Michael Chong, Conservative Party of Canada Foreign Affairs Critic

Stéphane Bergeron, Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs Critic

Heather McPherson, New Democratic Party of Canada Foreign Affairs Critic