

29<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

I share your distress regarding the plight of the people of Yemen but I do not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo would resolve the situation.

The Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates one of the most robust export control regimes in the world. All export licence applications, including those for Saudi Arabia are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

These strict criteria take account of all prevailing circumstances at the time of application and includes human rights and international humanitarian law considerations. The Government does not issue export licences where there is a clear risk that the goods might be used for internal repression, in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law, or where the export would provoke or prolong conflict.

I am confident that by adhering to the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, the Government will continue to ensure that UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia are not used for internal repression, violating international humanitarian law, or for provoking or prolonging conflict.

The Court of Appeal has overturned a High Court judgment that arms export licences granted to Saudi Arabia were not unlawful, a decision which the Government does not agree with and will seek to appeal. While the Government considers the implications of this judgment, no new licences for arms exports will be granted to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners that might be used in the conflict in Yemen. It is important to note the judgment was not about whether the Government has made the right or wrong decisions about granting exports licences, but about the process used to reach decisions.

I am encouraged by the strides made over recent weeks during and following the Stockholm peace talks in December. In my view, the Stockholm Agreements are the best chance of securing long term peace in Yemen. I was pleased to see that the UN Security Council unanimously adopted the UK-drafted resolution 2452 which established a special mission to support implementation of the ceasefire agreement reached in Stockholm.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**