

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

17 September 2020

Re: Ongoing Weapons Exports to Saudi Arabia

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Today marks the one-year anniversary of Canada's accession to the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT).

The undersigned, representing a cross-section of Canadian labour, arms controls, 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 to Saudi Arabia. We write today adding to the letters of March 2019, August 2019, and April 2020 in which several of our organizations raised concerns about the serious ethical, legal, human rights and humanitarian implications of Canada's ongoing exports 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.

In the same year that Canada acceded to the ATT, its arms exports to Saudi Arabia more than doubled, increasing from almost \$1.3 billion in 2018, to almost \$2.9 billion in 2019. Stuningly, arms exports to Saudi Arabia now account for over 75% of Canada's non-US military exports.

Canada has indicated its intention to publish a white paper on a feminist foreign policy in 2020, to complement its existing feminist foreign assistance policy and its work to advance gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The Saudi arms deal sorely undermines these efforts and is fundamentally incompatible with a feminist foreign policy. Women and other vulnerable or minority groups are systemically 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.

Further, 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.

Finally, 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 suspension of arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

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 over five months 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. We are similarly disappointed that there appear to be 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, the decision to resume arms transfers in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and only days after endorsing the UN Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire undermines Canada’s professed commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy. We again reiterate our call for Canada to exercise its sovereign authority and suspend the transfer of light armoured vehicles and other weapons which risk being used in the perpetration of serious violations of international humanitarian or international human rights law in Saudi Arabia or in the context of the conflict in Yemen.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International Canada (English branch)
Amnistie internationale Canada francophone
BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)
Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
Centre des femmes de Laval
Collectif Échec à la guerre
Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières
CUPE Ontario
Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec
Food4Humanity
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
International Civil Society Action Network
Labour Against the Arms Trade
Les Artistes pour la Paix
Libyan Women Forum
Ligue des droits et libertés
MADRE

Médecins du Monde Canada
Nobel Women's Initiative
Oxfam Canada
Oxfam-Québec
Peace Track Initiative
People for Peace London
Project Ploughshares
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Quebec Movement for Peace
Rideau Institute
Sisters Trust Canada
Soeurs Auxiliatrices du Québec
Solidarité populaire Estrie – Groupe de défense collective des droits
The Council of Canadians
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Workers United Canada Council
World BEYOND War

cc: Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade

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

Elizabeth May, Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Michael Chong, Conservative Party of Canada Foreign Affairs Critic

Stéphane Bergeron, Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs Critic

Jack Harris, New Democratic Party of Canada Foreign Affairs Critic

Sai Rajagopal, Green Party of Canada Foreign Affairs Critic