

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

4 March 2019

**Re: Canada's Export of Light Armoured Vehicles to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

The undersigned, representing a cross-section of Canadian civil society organizations focused on arms controls, human rights, international security, humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians in conflict, are writing to reiterate our ongoing concerns about Canada's export of Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In our view, these arms exports risk being used by parties to the conflict in Yemen to commit serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Indeed, credible media reports have already suggested that LAVs have been used in the conflict in Yemen. That is why we are calling on all states to ban the sale or transfer of weapons to any government when there is risk that those weapons might be used in the conflict in Yemen.

In October 2018, you told Canadians that your government was examining the contract concerning the sale of the LAVs, noting that it would be "difficult" to suspend or leave the contract. In November 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland, in her testimony before the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, indicated that it was certainly within the government's authority to "freeze or entirely cancel an export permit." She further affirmed that it was "essential for us as a matter of our national sovereignty to be able to control the movement of these goods out of our country." In December 2018, you told Canadians that your government was trying to see if there is a way of "no longer exporting these vehicles to Saudi Arabia."

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Yemen has continued to deteriorate. According to recent information from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, almost two thirds of the Yemeni population require humanitarian or protection support. 17 million are food insecure. Three million have fled their homes. 14.5 million require access to safe drinking water and sanitation. 14.8 million lack access to healthcare. You are undoubtedly aware that this humanitarian crisis clearly has a disproportionate impact on Yemeni women and girls.

Canada is playing a role in alleviating this dire situation by providing humanitarian assistance, but is in the paradoxical position of doing so while simultaneously arming one of the parties to the conflict. This places Canada outside of the collective efforts to pressure parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and bring an end to the humanitarian suffering; to that end, countries such as

Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Greece and Austria have either suspended or terminated arms transfers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We agree that Canada has the sovereign authority – and responsibility – for the decision to export weapons, and therefore call upon your government to make the decision to immediately cancel the export permits in question. Although we recognize that there may be financial penalties associated with the cancellation of these export permits, Canada’s sovereign authority and responsibilities cannot be subordinated to financial expediency. Moreover, in view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, the efforts of Canadian allied countries to halt arms transfers, and – most importantly – the risks that Canadian exports will be used to perpetrate serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law, we expect that Canada should exercise its sovereign authority and suspend the transfer of LAVs to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Canadians have been waiting for answers for more than three months since you first indicated that your government is looking at this question. More crucially, the people of Yemen have been waiting for that answer, and an assurance that Canada is prepared to act decisively to avoid contributing to war crimes in their country, for those same agonizing three months. It is time, Prime Minister, to assure Canadians and Yemenis that Canadian-made LAVs will not be going to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sincerely,

Action contre la faim Canada  
Amnesty International Canada (English branch)  
Amnistie internationale Canada francophone  
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East  
Group of 78  
Médecins du Monde Canada  
Oxfam Canada  
Oxfam-Québec  
Project Ploughshares  
Rideau Institute  
Save the Children Canada

cc: Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Hon. James Carr, Minister of International Trade Diversification