

UK halts new arms licenses to Saudi Arabia after court ruling



London, July 1 (RHC)-- The British government has temporarily suspended granting new permits for export of arms to Saudi Arabia after a top UK court ruled them unlawful because they are used by Riyadh against civilians in Yemen.

Liam Fox, who serves as UK's international trade secretary, told reporters that while the government was trying to have the Court of Appeal ruling reversed, it had halted issuing new licenses for sales of arms to Saudis and their allies. "We are carefully considering the implications of the judgment for decision-making," said Fox while addressing members of the British parliament.

Fox said: "While we do this, we will not grant any new licenses for exports to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners which might be used in the conflict in Yemen." The decision came after the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) won a lawsuit against the British government.

The group had argued in the lawsuit that the UK had been violating international law by providing fighter jets and bombs to Saudis and allies that are being used to kill civilians in Yemen.

The ruling came despite an earlier decision by Britain's High Court which had exonerated the British government from responsibility in the Yemen war. The previous ruling, issued in 2017, had argued that Saudi Arabia and its allies "were not deliberately targeting civilians" in Yemen.

England's Court of Appeal had earlier said the government broke the law by failing to assess properly whether the arms it sells to Riyadh violated its human rights commitments. "The question whether there was an historic pattern of breaches of international humanitarian law on the part of the [Saudi-led] coalition required to be faced," said judges in their ruling.

Recurrent reports published in the British media have shown that London has been a main contributor to the four-year plight of the Yemenis as it has supported Saudi Arabia and allies with everything they need to bomb the people.

A report by the Guardian newspaper showed that Britain has in fact been "doing much of the killing in Yemen" by providing British fighter jets and training pilots that drop the British bombs on the Yemenis.

The country, the poorest in the Arab world, has suffered badly from the campaign as hundreds of thousands remain internally displaced and many more are in dire need of humanitarian aid.

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