

British Government Refuses to Give MPs Vote on Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia



London, September 15 (RHC)-- In a leaked draft report, the Committee on Arms Exports Control echoed both the European Parliament and the Commons International Development Select Committee in calling for arms sales to the Saudi Arabian monarchy to end.

If the report is finalized, the MPs on that committee would add their names to recommendations by the House of Commons International Development Committee who have also urged an end to the weapons sales. However, there have been reports of political maneuvering in the parliament in order to prevent lawmakers from blocking arms sales to Saudis.

The Guardian reported that MPs are seeking to water down the committees on arms export controls draft report and so preserve the current strong UK relations with Saudi Arabia. Green party leader Caroline Lucas is among those who believes British MPs should be given a say on the issue.

"Britain's continued arming of Saudi Arabia is a stain on our reputation on the world stage. While they continue to breach international law in Yemen, we are aiding and abetting their wrongdoing by supplying them with military equipment. MPs should be given a chance to debate and vote on our continued arms

sales to this brutal regime," she told The Independent.

The government's resistance to end Saudi arms sales adds strength to Britain's seemingly untouchable relationship with the House of Saud. Last week, Prime Minister Theresa May staunchly defended selling arms to the kingdom despite facing criticism for being supportive of a human rights violator.

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has called on May to halt the arms sales because of the "humanitarian devastation" caused by the aggressive war on Yemen. Britain is now the second biggest arms dealer in the world and since 2010, two-thirds of weapons have reportedly gone to the Middle East.

Britain signed off a contract worth £3.3 billion of arms exports to Saudi Arabia in the first year of the country's bombardment of Yemen, which included drones, helicopters, and other aircraft.

Saudi Arabia has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015, with the UN putting the death toll from the military aggression at about 10,000.

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