



## DEBATE PACK

CDP 2019-0187 (2019) | 12 July 2019

# Human Rights in Saudi Arabia and the detention of opponents of the regime

Westminster Hall

Thursday 18 July 2019

1.30pm

Backbench Business Committee

debate led by Mr Alistair Carmichael MP

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

# 1. Background

In 2016 Saudi Arabia launched 'Vision 2030', a package of economic and social reforms intended to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil, diversify the economy and develop public service sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, recreation and tourism. The implication of this vision was a degree of social liberalisation, with an emphasis upon increasing the role of women in society.

Vision 2030 did not, however, address human rights reform directly, and while progress has been made in the last few years on women's human rights, the country continues to be widely criticised over its human and political rights record.

In mid-2018 the Saudi authorities arrested prominent women's rights defenders, a number of whom remain in detention and who, according to Amnesty International, have been subject to mistreatment and torture. The arrest of political dissidents, prominent clerics, journalists and academics has also continued. The murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 has drawn international condemnation.

In its recently published [Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report for 2018](#), the Foreign office lists Saudi Arabia as a "human rights priority country". The report concluded:

The positive trajectory of social reform in Saudi Arabia continued in 2018, particularly the increased participation of women in society. However, the observance of civil and political rights in Saudi Arabia continued to deteriorate. The reduced political and civil space resulted in the mass arrests of journalists, activists, clerics, and opposition figures, increased use of terrorist courts to prosecute activists, and the murder and harassment of dissidents overseas. We continued to have concerns about the implementation of the death penalty and the treatment of migrant workers.

The UK Government has, however, been accused of muting its criticisms on human rights because of the country's importance as an ally and trading partner, particularly in terms of arms exports. The Saudi armed forces are currently using UK built and licensed arms in their military operation in Yemen, in which they have been accused of committing violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

## 2. Press Articles

### [Saudi Arabia to 'ease' male guardianship law restricting women's travel](#)

Telegraph  
Josie Ensor  
11 July 2019

### [Media watchdog visits Saudi Arabia to free journalists](#)

Al Jazeera  
10 July 2019

### [So much for moderation... Saudi Arabia executions DOUBLE in 2019 with 122 people – including kids – put to death this year already](#)

The Sun  
Alahna Kindred  
9 July 2019

### [King Salman meets British finance minister Philip Hammond](#)

Arab News  
7 July 2019

### [The Saudi minor facing the death penalty is not alone. There have been many others](#)

Washington Post  
Maya Foa  
14 June 2019

### [G20 urged to reconsider holding meeting in Riyadh to protest Khashoggi murder](#)

Middle East Monitor  
3 July 2019

### ['What they did to me was so horrific': brutal silencing of a Saudi feminist](#)

Guardian  
Ruth Michaelson  
24 May 2019

### [UK condemns Saudi Arabia over 'repulsive' mass executions](#)

The Guardian  
Patrick Wintour  
24 April 2019

### [This chart shows how Saudi Arabia is on course to behead more people than ever before in 2019](#)

Insider  
Bill Bostock and Shayanne Gal  
24 March 2019

[\*\*Saudi Arabia puts women's rights activists on trial\*\*](#)

BBC News  
13 March 2019

[\*\*Saudi women take to the roads after ban lifts, without the feminist pioneers who drove reforms\*\*](#)

Telegraph  
Josie Ensor  
24 June 2018

### 3. Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**[UN Human Rights Council 41: clustered dialogue on executions and the right to education](#)**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**26 June 2019**

[...]

The United Kingdom supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and thanks her for her work on the report into the killing of Jamal Khashoggi.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the killing of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last October. We remain clear that anyone found responsible – following a credible judicial process – must be held to account. The UK has urged the authorities of Saudi Arabia to provide a credible and transparent explanation of events. Key questions remain unanswered. We reiterate our calls on Saudi Arabia to ensure that such a terrible event cannot – and must not – ever happen again.

We note the findings and recommendations of the report. We urge all parties to share relevant information. We are concerned by reported restrictions regarding the investigative process. We advise Saudi Arabia to do all it can to ensure transparency of the judicial process.

We thank the Special Rapporteur's for her report's recommendations for strengthening international action to protect journalists and for new measures to act on the issue of impunity. We look forward to discussing these issues with partners in London at the Global Conference for Media Freedom.

**[Human Rights Council 40: Saudi Arabia](#)**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**14 March 2019**

The UK welcomes Saudi Arabia's continued engagement with the UPR process.

We welcome Saudi Arabia's acceptance of our recommendation on the investigation into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. We note the beginning of the judicial process in Saudi Arabia and continue to watch the process closely and expect the continuing investigation and trial to proceed in line with internationally recognised legal standards. We call for those responsible for to be held to account.

We are disappointed that Saudi Arabia did not fully accept our recommendation on the use of the Specialised Criminal Court and we ask for further clarification. We are concerned that diplomats remain unable to observe trials at the Specialised Criminal Court, including the

recent hearings of women's rights defenders. We would remind Saudi Arabia that preventing diplomatic observation of trials is not in line with the Vienna Convention or with Saudi Arabia's own previous assurances to this Council.

We welcome Saudi Arabia's acceptance of our recommendation to strengthen and properly implement protection for migrant workers by prosecuting employers who confiscate passports and ensuring there are options for legal redress for victims of trafficking.

The UK remains concerned by Saudi Arabia's overall human rights record. In particular: the limits on freedom of religion or belief, especially for minorities; the limits on freedom of expression, including the mass arrests of activists, journalists and academics; the increased use of terrorist courts for political dissidents; and the continued use of the death penalty. We are also particularly concerned by the detention of women's rights defenders and allegations of torture and mistreatment.

### **PM meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman: 30 November 2018**

**Prime Minister's Office  
3 December 2018**

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman today (30 November) during the G20 summit in Buenos Aires.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of ensuring that those responsible for the appalling murder of Jamal Khashoggi are held to account, and that Saudi Arabia takes action to build confidence that such a deplorable incident could not happen again.

Noting the steps taken by the Saudi investigation since the Foreign Secretary had met with the Crown Prince and King Salman on 12 November, she encouraged the Crown Prince to ensure that Saudi Arabia co-operated fully with the Turkish authorities and worked to bring both investigations to an acceptable close. To ensure full accountability there needed to be full transparency about exactly what had happened and who was responsible, in line with the commitments made by King Salman when she spoke to him on 24 October.

On Yemen the Prime Minister set out the urgent need to bring an end to the conflict and bring relief to millions threatened by famine. She urged concrete Saudi support for UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and for progress at the upcoming Stockholm talks.

The Prime Minister stressed that the humanitarian situation remained dire and reaffirmed UK commitment to making progress on improving the situation, including through a UN Security Council Resolution. The Prime Minister reiterated UK support for Saudi Arabia's security, including the very real threats posed by Iranian interference in Yemen.

**UK response to Saudi Arabia announcement of charges following the death of Jamal Khashoggi**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
15 November 2018**

A Foreign Office spokesperson said:

The UK has been clear that we need to see accountability for the horrific murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi. As the Foreign Secretary reiterated to His Majesty King Salman, Crown Prince Bin Salman and other senior figures in the Saudi government this week, we expect Saudi Arabia to take action to ensure such violations of international and national laws cannot happen again.

The beginning of a judicial process should be a step towards accountability but we are watching closely and expect the continuing investigation to proceed in line with internationally recognised legal standards. It is the longstanding position of the UK Government to oppose capital sentences in all circumstances and countries.

## 4. PQs

### [Jamal Khashoggi](#)

09 Jul 2019 | HL16657

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings in the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Investigation into the unlawful death of Mr. Jamal Khashoggi, published on 19 June, that (1) Jamal Khashoggi was the victim of a premeditated extrajudicial execution, for which the State of Saudi Arabia is responsible, (2) there is "credible evidence, warranting further investigation of high-level Saudi officials' individual liability, including that of the Crown Prince's", (3) the Human Rights Council, the Security Council or the UN Secretary-General should conduct an international follow-up criminal investigation for the purpose of determining individual liability and identifying options towards judicial accountability, and (4) there have been few effective international responses, whether legal, political or diplomatic, to date.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The United Kingdom condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the killing of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last October. We made this clear in our statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 26 June. We remain clear that anyone found responsible – following a credible judicial process – must be held to account. We urge all parties to share relevant information. We are concerned by reported restrictions regarding the investigative process. We advise Saudi Arabia to do all it can to ensure transparency of the judicial process.

### [Saudi Arabia: Military Alliances](#)

08 Jul 2019 | 272884

**Asked by: Angela Crawley**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment she has made of the future of the UK-Saudi defence relationship.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

Saudi Arabia is a key ally in a strategically important region. It is an important partner in trade and investment, education, counter terrorism, defence, and energy security. We are committed to maintaining and developing the relationship.

### [Saudi Arabia: Overseas Trade](#)

04 Jul 2019 | 271522

**Asked by: Paul Sweeney**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he plans to review the trade relationship with Saudi Arabia as a result of the detention of political detainees and female activists in that country.

**Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK and Saudi Arabia have a longstanding bilateral relationship based on a number of pillars including defence; security; trade and investment; shared concerns about regional issues and energy security.

We are concerned by the detention of political detainees in Saudi Arabia. We raise concerns regularly and freely, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Ambassador and Embassy team in Riyadh.

No aspect of our commercial relationship with Saudi Arabia prevents us from speaking frankly and openly about human rights. We will not pursue trade to the exclusion of human rights. They can and should be complementary.

**[Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners](#)**

**04 Jul 2019 | 270701**

**Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will review the UK's strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia as a result of that country's use of detention as a means of political repression.

**Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK and Saudi Arabia have a longstanding bilateral relationship based on a number of pillars including defence; security; trade and investment; shared concerns about regional issues and energy security.

We are concerned by use of detention as a means of political repression in Saudi Arabia. We raise concerns regularly and freely, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Ambassador and Embassy team in Riyadh.

**[Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia](#)**

**02 Jul 2019 | 269654**

**Asked by: Kevin Brennan**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the implications of the Court of Appeal ruling on 20 June 2019 in R (on the application of Campaign Against Arms Trade) v. The Secretary of State for International Trade are for his Department's policy on existing licences to export arms to Saudi Arabia.

**Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department for International Trade**

The Government is carefully considering the implications of the Court of Appeal judgment of 20 June for decision making. While we do this, we will not grant any new licences for exports to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners (UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Egypt) for possible use in

the conflict in Yemen. We disagree with the judgment and are seeking permission to appeal.

Extant licences are not immediately affected by this judgment but decisions about these licences are remitted to the Government to reconsider in the light of the judgment. The Campaign Against Arms Trade did not seek an Order to suspend licences and the Court has not ordered their suspension. The Court expressly clarified that the outcome of the reconsideration was not a foregone conclusion.

### **[Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment](#)**

**27 Jun 2019 | 266713**

#### **Asked by: Lyn Brown**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's diplomatic representations to the Government of Saudi Arabia on trends in the number of planned executions in that country in each of the last five years.

#### **Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We regularly raise our views on the use of the death penalty with the Saudi authorities. We make clear that the British Government opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Saudi Arabia, especially for crimes other than the most serious and for juveniles. This is in line with the minimum standards set out in the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty of 2008 and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

### **[Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners](#)**

**18 Jun 2019 | HL16014**

#### **Asked by: Lord Judd**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 May (HL15767), when they will assess the number of political detainees in Saudi Arabia; and what plans they have to review their policy of declining to intervene with the government of Saudi Arabia on allowing access to such detainees by independent monitors.

#### **Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We closely monitor political detainees in Saudi Arabia, including women's rights defenders. We raise concerns regularly and freely, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Ambassador and Embassy team in Riyadh. The Foreign Secretary raised the detention of women's rights defenders during his visit to Saudi Arabia in March. The British Government cannot intervene in independent monitoring or investigation.

**[Murtaja Qureiris](#)**

**18 Jun 2019 | 262325**

**Asked by: Lyn Brown**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the compliance with international law of the reported plan by the Government of Saudi Arabia to execute Murtaja Qureiris at the age of 18 for alleged offences committed when he was 10 years old.

**Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We are closely monitoring this case. The Embassy team in Riyadh have raised the issue of the execution of minors in Saudi Arabia four times in the last month. We will raise our concerns regarding Mr Qureiris's case with the Saudi authorities. The Embassy team have applied for permission to attend any further trial sessions.

It is a longstanding practice of the British Government to oppose the death penalty, in all circumstances, as a matter of principle, in every country, including Saudi Arabia. This is in line with the minimum standards set out in the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty of 2008 and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

**[Topical Questions](#)**

**01 May 2019 | 659 c195**

**Asked by: Patricia Gibson**

The medieval guardianship system, whereby a woman is owned by her closest male relative, means women in Saudi Arabia cannot travel, play sports or do a whole range of things we take for granted without permission from their male "owners". Given that women who seek any level of gender equality and human rights face unprecedented danger and abuse in Saudi Arabia, will the Secretary of State condemn Saudi Arabia for treating women as mere chattels?

**Answered by: Penny Mordaunt | International Development**

It is absolutely right that we call out behaviour that does not support or empower women or enable them to make the choices they want to in their lives. I am proud of the work that not only my Department but other Departments have done on that, and we will continue it. I call on all nations to make sure that at every opportunity we ensure women's rights are in summit communiqués and absolutely everything else, and are a core part of every activity we do.

**[Diplomatic Relations: Saudi Arabia](#)**

**02 Apr 2019 | 657 c922**

**Asked by: Dr Paul Williams**

Leaked medical reports published in The Guardian last weekend showed that Saudi political prisoners have been subjected to torture, some are

malnourished and others have been denied access to medical care. Are the Government silent on this?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Absolutely not. I raised the issue of detained women campaigners when I was recently in Saudi Arabia, and the Prime Minister has raised the case of Raif Badawi, the blogger who was sentenced to 1,000 lashes. The interesting thing about the report, if it is true, is that it was commissioned by the King, who wants to understand what is going on in the prisons, to ensure that they meet international standards of humanitarian justice.

**[Saudi Arabia: Detainees](#)**

**01 Apr 2019 | 237573**

**Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether departmental officials will attend court hearings in Riyadh for detained women's rights activists.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK attends trials of international importance in all countries where permitted. The UK, along with other embassies in Saudi Arabia, requested and were denied access to the trials of women's rights defenders that took place on 13 and 27 March.

**[Saudi Arabia: Females](#)**

**28 Mar 2019 | HL14561**

**Asked by: Baroness Helic**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions the Foreign Secretary has had with (1) United States, and (2) European counterparts about making joint diplomatic representations to the government of Saudi Arabia to demand the release of imprisoned women human rights defenders in that country.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We maintain an open and regular dialogue with our European and American counterparts about a range of issues, including human rights and the detention of human rights defenders. The UK was signatory to the joint statement on 7 March at the UNHCR which raised significant concerns about reports of continuing arrests and arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, including women's rights activists.

**[Saudi Arabia: Females](#)**  
**28 Mar 2019 | HL14560**

**Asked by: Baroness Helic**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of torture, sexual harassment and mistreatment of women human rights defenders in detention in Saudi Arabia; and what representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia about such reports.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We regularly raise our concerns with the Saudi authorities about the alleged mistreatment of women's rights activists in detention. We consistently and unreservedly condemn torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and it is a priority for us to combat it wherever and whenever it occurs. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary raised these concerns with his Saudi counterparts on 2 March.

**[Saudi Arabia: Females](#)**  
**28 Mar 2019 | HL14559**

**Asked by: Baroness Helic**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia at ministerial level following that government's decision to prosecute Loujain al-Hathloul and other women human rights defenders; and what further action they plan to take in that regard.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We are closely following the case of Loujain al-Hathloul and other women's rights defenders. We continue to raise our concerns with the Saudi authorities about the alleged mistreatment of women's rights activists in detention. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary raised these concerns with his Saudi counterparts on 2 March.

**[Saudi Arabia: Human Rights](#)**  
**28 Mar 2019 | 236339**

**Asked by: Emily Thornberry**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of alleged human rights abuses committed in (a) Saudi Arabia and (b) other countries by the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Saudi Arabia remains a [Foreign & Commonwealth Office human rights priority country](#). The UK's recent [Universal Periodic Review statement](#) sets out clearly the UK's position on human rights in Saudi Arabia. We raise our concerns with the Saudi Arabian authorities using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels of communication.

**[Saudi Arabia: Prisons](#)**  
**18 Mar 2019 | 231902**

**Asked by: Jim Cunningham**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has held with his Saudi Arabian counterpart on conditions in Saudi Arabian prisons for women's rights activists.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We regularly raise our concerns with the Saudi authorities about the women's rights activists in detention. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary raised these concerns with his Saudi counterparts on 2 March. We consistently and unreservedly condemn torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and it is a priority for us to combat it wherever and whenever it occurs.

**[Overseas Trade: Saudi Arabia](#)**  
**12 Mar 2019 | 227994**

**Asked by: Jim Shannon**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment he has made of Saudi Arabia's record on the maintenance of human rights in determining his policy on future trade with Saudi Arabia.

**Answering member: George Hollingbery | Department for International Trade**

This Government frequently discusses human rights and raises concerns with the Saudi Arabian Government. No aspect of our commercial relationship with Saudi Arabia prevents us from speaking frankly and openly about human rights and we use our engagement to encourage reform. We do not pursue trade to the exclusion of human rights.

**[Saudi Arabia: Prisoners' Release](#)**  
**08 Mar 2019 | 226717**

**Asked by: Catherine West**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps he has taken to help secure the release of (a) human rights activists, (b) political opponents and (c) other people detained illegally in Saudi Arabia.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign & Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty, women's rights and restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. We frequently raise our concerns on human rights with Saudi Arabia, including at Ministerial level, most recently in February.

**Arms Trade: Trade Fairs**

**04 Mar 2019 | 226638**

**Asked by: Lyn Brown**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2019 to Question 220155, which countries from the human rights priority list were invited to and attended Defence and Security Equipment International 2017 as official delegations.

**Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department for International Trade**

The six countries which were invited and attended Defence and Security Equipment International 2017 as official delegations were:

Bahrain

Bangladesh

Colombia

Egypt

Pakistan

**Saudi Arabia**

**Saudi Arabia: Human Rights and Rule of Law**

**05 Feb 2019 | 213882**

**Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government provides to Saudi Arabian civil society to help them uphold the rule of law and fundamental human rights in the country.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty, women's rights and restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. We raise our concerns with the Saudi Arabian authorities using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels of communication, including our Ambassador and the Embassy team in Riyadh.

**Sanctions: Saudi Arabia**

**04 Feb 2019 | 213883**

**Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effectiveness of imposing trade sanctions on Saudi Arabia to tackle human rights abuses in that country.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty, women's rights and restrictions on freedom of expression,

freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. We raise our concerns with the Saudi Arabian authorities using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels of communication, including our Ambassador and the Embassy team in Riyadh.

**[Saudi Arabia: Human Rights](#)**

**21 Nov 2018 |794 cc236-238**

**Asked by: Lord Hoyle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the outcome of their recent talks with the government of Saudi Arabia about human rights in that country.

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

My Lords, the UK regularly discusses human rights with the Government of Saudi Arabia, including individual cases. Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, as detailed in the annual Human Rights & Democracy Foreign and Commonwealth Office report. The Foreign Secretary travelled to Saudi Arabia to discuss a range of issues, including the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and we work with international partners to raise issues through the international system.

**Asked by: Lord Hoyle**

I thank the Minister for that reply, but Saudi Arabia continues to detain people without charge for indefinite periods and—as she said, Khashoggi was murdered in the consulate in Turkey—in addition to that, it continues to oppress people in every sense of the word. Why do we continue to dither and pussyfoot about with this aristocratic, reactionary and despicable regime? Why do we not impose sanctions on it?

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

My Lords, I can understand there is a range of passionately felt views about Saudi Arabia. Certainly, the United Kingdom has always regarded that country as an important ally for reasons that I know the noble Lord will understand. Equally, as with a relationship with any ally or friend, we feel able to express frankly our concerns. The Foreign Secretary, on his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, made very clear his concerns across a range of issues, not least the very distressing situation of Mr Khashoggi's murder. We regularly raise with Saudi Arabia our concerns about human rights, and the noble Lord will be aware that the recent United Nations universal periodic review of Saudi Arabia took place on 5 November. He will know that a very strongly worded letter went from the UK permanent representative with a number of recommendations, all of which had at their heart respect for and implementation of human rights.

**Asked by: Lord Lamont of Lerwick**

My Lords, will the Minister confirm that the Government, like the United States Government and the French Government, have actually received the tapes of the recording of Mr Khashoggi's murder in the consulate?

What conclusions have they come to about those tapes? Is the Minister aware that the Saudi authorities have named the people whom they think were responsible for Mr Khashoggi's murder? Will the Government monitor the trial of those people to make sure that it is fully transparent and that those people are not executed as a cover-up for somebody else?

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

In relation to my noble friend's first question, we do not comment on intelligence matters, as I think he will understand. Given the recent disclosures by Saudi Arabia in relation to the court proceedings against 11 people, the United Kingdom Government will monitor carefully how that trial proceeds. It is a sovereign, independent country with an independent justice system, but we will watch carefully what takes place. The noble Lord will be aware that we have said repeatedly that we are totally opposed to the use of the death penalty in any circumstances.

**Asked by: Lord Singh of Wimbledon**

My Lords, as revealed in this morning's news, President Trump has made it clear that, as far as he is concerned, considerations of trade are more important than human rights in Saudi Arabia. Can the Minister confirm that our Government do not share the same callous view?

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

If the noble Lord is suggesting that, for some reason, the UK would prioritise trade over human rights, that would absolutely not happen. The relationships that we build with countries, including Saudi Arabia, through trade and security links and through bringing together institutions such as educational research establishments allow us to make greater progress with those countries on the issue of human rights.

**Asked by: Baroness Northover**

My Lords, following that question, is the Minister as sickened as I am by President Trump's position that jobs would be at stake if he held Saudi Arabia to account? Does she see a read-across to the case that we have heard about today of Matthew Hedges, who was jailed for life after a five-minute trial in the UAE? Does she agree that human rights must be defended whatever our apparent economic interest?

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Human rights must always be defended, and I have already made clear both in my initial response to the noble Lord, Lord Hoyle, and in my subsequent answers the huge importance that we attach to human rights. This is not just a token importance but an importance underpinned by the actions that we take and the discussions that we have and the things that we attempt to do. We are regarded as being a very prominent global player in that respect. It is absolutely vital that we are proud of what the United Kingdom does in that field. We endeavour, whenever possible, to raise these issues and to do so in a constructive fashion.

**Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury**

My Lords, yesterday Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch highlighted the torture of human rights activists in prison in Saudi Arabia. Last night, I met representatives from Reprieve, which announced that the death penalties on 12 human rights activists—people standing up for their human rights—have been confirmed. Will the Minister tell us today that the United Kingdom Government will make a public statement condemning those death penalties, which I understand could take place today or tomorrow?

**Answering Member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We have been clear about our concern regarding these 12 men; we are extremely concerned about reports that these executions may be imminent. We have raised these concerns with the Saudi authorities as recently as 20 November. As I say, the UK opposes the death penalty in all respects. The other issue that the noble Lord raises is a very distressing one; I think he is referring to the allegations of torture of female activists. Of course we are concerned about these allegations. It is a horrible situation, and we consistently and unreservedly condemn torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. We have raised these concerns and these cases at ministerial level with the Saudi authorities a number of times, and we will continue to do so following these allegations.

**[Saudi Arabia: Human Rights](#)  
30 Oct 2018 | 648 cc763-764**

**Asked by: Gill Furniss**

What recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Saudi Arabia on the protection of human rights in that country.

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I regularly discuss human rights concerns with my Saudi Arabian counterpart Foreign Minister al-Jubeir, most recently on 27 September and 20 October.

**Asked by: Gill Furniss**

Media reports have surfaced this weekend suggesting that UK intelligence services were aware of the Saudi plan to abduct the journalist Jamal Khashoggi and take him back to Riyadh, and of the deployment of the hit squad to Istanbul for that purpose. May I give the Foreign Secretary the opportunity to tell the House today that those reports are categorically untrue?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I hope the hon. Lady will understand that I do not comment on intelligence matters, but, if this reassures her, I had absolutely no prior knowledge myself of the terrible Khashoggi murder and was as shocked as I think everyone else was.

**Asked by: Peter Grant**

It has been reported today that 17 Filipino women are being held in custody in Saudi Arabia for the heinous crime of attending a Halloween

party. How much more oppressive does the Saudi regime have to get before it loses its esteemed place as Britain's greatest friend in the middle east?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Saudi Arabia is a human rights country of concern for the Foreign Office. We have regular discussions with the Saudis about our concerns—the guardianship system, freedom of expression, the death penalty and a range of other issues—but it is because we have a relationship with them that we are able to raise these concerns both privately and in public, and the hon. Gentleman should rest assured that that is exactly what we do.

**Asked by: Sir Desmond Swayne**

Do we have any regret about seeking the election of Saudi Arabia to the Human Rights Council?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

All sorts of issues with respect to Saudi Arabia's human rights record are in sharp relief at the moment, but I think I have spoken more clearly than perhaps any other western Foreign Minister in saying that if the Khashoggi stories turn out to be true, that will be inconsistent with our values.

**Asked by: Emily Thornberry**

I was going to ask a question about Yemen, but I am afraid I have to follow up on the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss), because if the allegations in this weekend's report are true they are extremely serious. It was reported that in early September our intelligence services became aware of the Saudi plan to abduct Jamal Khashoggi, and on 1 October they knew that a Saudi team had been dispatched to Istanbul for that purpose. I hear what the Foreign Secretary says that he did not know, but did the intelligence services know, and has he asked them?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I have to repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss), and I am sure the right hon. Lady will understand that it is not possible for a Foreign Secretary, or indeed any Minister, to comment on intelligence matters, for very obvious reasons, but I did not know about this attack. It is very important that the right hon. Lady and the House understand that. We are as shocked as everyone else is about what happened.

**Asked by: Emily Thornberry**

I understand what the Foreign Secretary is saying, but he must understand that these allegations are extremely serious, and I am afraid it will not do to hide behind a blanket refusal to discuss intelligence matters. So will he, first, agree to attend an emergency session of the Intelligence and Security Committee to answer these questions behind closed doors, and, secondly, if he is not prepared as a point of principle to say what the intelligence services knew, at least reassure us that something will be done about this and that Ministers will find out what the intelligence services knew at the time?

**Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

If I am invited before the Intelligence and Security Committee, I will of course consider that invitation, but the right hon. Lady must know that her desire for me to release important intelligence information to the House or anywhere else is totally inappropriate. I do not think for a moment that she would be doing that if she were Foreign Secretary. I respect and understand her concern about the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, but I wish that she would show the same concern for what is happening in Venezuela and Russia, and indeed with antisemitism. There seems to be a blind spot when it comes to countries that share Labour's anti-western world view.

**Engagements**

**24 Oct 2018 | 648 cc271-272**

**Asked by: Ian Blackford**

The kidnapping, killing and mutilation of the respected Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has rightly shocked the world. The killing has all the hallmarks of being a premeditated murder. Angela Merkel has announced that her Government will no longer approve new arms sales exports to the Saudi kingdom—that is moral leadership. The UK Government must take decisive action; words of condemnation will not do. Will the Prime Minister finally commit to ending the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia?

**Answered by: Theresa May | Prime Minister**

It might be helpful if I take this opportunity to update the House on this particular issue. As I told the House on Monday, we condemn the killing of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the strongest possible terms. After his disappearance, we made it clear that Saudi Arabia must co-operate with Turkey and conduct a full and credible investigation. The claim that Mr Khashoggi died in a fight does not amount to a credible explanation, so there remains an urgent need to establish exactly what happened.

The Foreign Secretary, other Foreign Ministers and our ambassador have been making our position very clear to the Saudi Arabians, and I expect to speak to King Salman later today. I can tell the House that no Minister or official is attending the investment conference in Saudi Arabia, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is taking action against all suspects to prevent them from entering the UK. If these individuals currently have visas, those visas will be revoked today.

**Asked by: Ian Blackford**

I am afraid that the Prime Minister said nothing about arms sales. Condemnation will not do; it is action that is required.

The Saudi Arabian regime is responsible for multiple human rights violations: critics face death by crucifixion; teenagers are tortured; and women are imprisoned for campaigning for their human rights. The brutal bombardment of Yemen is pushing that country to the brink of famine, and now we have the state-sponsored murder of Jamal Khashoggi. What more evidence of criminality does the Prime Minister need before she fully commits to ending the sale of arms to the brutal regime in Saudi Arabia?

**Answered by: Theresa May | Prime Minister**

We are concerned about the humanitarian issues in Yemen. We are actually the third largest humanitarian donor to Yemen, where we have provided significant support to millions of men, women and children. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, yes, we do support the Saudi-led coalition's military intervention in Yemen, which has been recognised by the United Nations Security Council and came at the request of the legitimate President Hadi.

On defence exports, the procedures we follow are among the strictest in the world. They were introduced in 2000 by the late Robin Cook, and they were updated in 2014 by the Conservative-led coalition Government to reflect our obligations under the arms trade treaty. A licence will not be issued to Saudi Arabia or any other destination if to do so would be inconsistent with any provision of the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria. In July 2017 the High Court ruled that our sales to Saudi Arabia were compliant with those regulations, but of course we keep things under review.

## 5. Other Parliamentary material

### 5.1 Statements

[Export Licences: High Court Judgment](#)

20 June 2019 | 662 cc373-383

[Death of Jamal Khashoggi](#)

22 October 2018 | 648 cc78-95

### 5.2 Urgent Questions

[Saudi Arabia: Mass Executions](#)

24 April 2019 | 658 cc748-757

[UK Relations: Saudi Arabia](#)

07 March 2018 | 637 cc312-325

[Saudi Arabia: Anticipated Executions](#)

17 July 2017 | 627 cc554-562

### 5.3 Early Day Motions

[UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia](#)

EDM 2556 (session 2017-19)

Jonathan Edwards

27 June 2019

That this House recognises the decision by the Court of Appeal to rule UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia as unlawful; regrets that the UK has licenced nearly £5 billion of arms exports to Saudi Arabia since the start of the Yemen war, in which Saudi Arabia has been leading a coalition of airstrikes; further regrets the bombing in Yemen has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, which, according to the UN, has seen at least 7,070 civilians being killed and 11,205 injured, with 65 per cent of deaths attributed to Saudi-led coalition air strikes; and urges the UK Government to comply with the court ruling to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia and all other repressive regimes.

[Seventh anniversary of the detention of Raif Badawi and human rights in Saudi Arabia](#)

EDM 2487 (session 2017-19)

Tom Brake

17 June 2019

That this House condemns the continued unjust detention of blogger Raif Badawi in Saudi Arabia and calls for his immediate and

unconditional release; notes that 17 June 2019 marks seven years since the arrest of Raif Badawi; recalls that Badawi is serving a 10-year prison sentence on charges of insulting Islam and apostasy, that he was sentenced to 1,000 lashes, of which 50 were administered in January 2015, and that he faces a 10-year travel ban on his release from prison; is alarmed by the Reporters Without Borders report that at least 28 journalists and citizen journalists are currently unjustly detained in the country in connection with their work, in addition to two others who continue to face charges but have been temporarily released; calls for the immediate and unconditional release of those 28 journalists; is concerned by the continued lack of justice in relation to the horrific murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul in October 2018; further notes that Saudi Arabia has one of the world's worst records on press freedom, with a ranking of 172 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 2019 World Press Freedom Index; and urges the UK Government and the international community to increase efforts to secure the release of the jailed journalists and citizen journalists, achieve full justice for Jamal Khashoggi and hold Saudi Arabia to account for its international human rights obligations.

### **EXECUTIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **EDM 2341 (session 2017-19)**

**Wes Streeting**

**30 April 2019**

That this House notes with alarm reports of the execution of 37 men in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's largest mass execution to date; further notes reports that many of those men were subject to brutal torture; observes that three of those executed were juveniles; further observes that five of those men were reportedly executed after one of their number allegedly confessed to having sexual relations with the four others; highlights that the United Nations has condemned the executions and questioned the validity of the convictions; shares the outrage expressed by human rights groups worldwide at these executions; believes that this latest example of brutality and the flagrant abuse of international law by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia requires a robust response from the international community; calls on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to end the torture and executions of its people; and further calls on the Government to make the strongest possible representations to the Saudi authorities.

### **DETENTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **EDM 2068 (session 2017-19)**

**Ann Clwyd**

**12 February 2019**

That this House is very concerned about the continuing detention of Saudi women's rights activists, including Loujain al-Hathloul, Aziza al-Yousef, Eman al-Nafjan and Samar Badawi, many months after their arrests in 2018; is extremely alarmed by allegations that some activists have been subjected to sexual harassment, torture and ill-treatment, including electric shocks, floggings and beatings on the feet, during pre-

trial detention, as reported by human rights organisations Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and ALQST (Justice), and which may be on-going; notes the recent creation of the cross-party Detention Review Panel which seeks to review the activists' detention conditions, and Saudi Arabia's failure to allow that body access to the detainees; recognises the vital role of civil society and human rights defenders in that country and the need for their protection; urges the Saudi Government to release the women activists immediately and unconditionally, along with all those detained for the peaceful expression of their opinions or their human rights work, and to allow prompt and impartial investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment to ensure those responsible are held to account; and calls on the Government to make a public statement immediately calling for the release of the detained women activists by the Saudi Government.

### **Political Detainees In Saudi Arabia**

**EDM 2032 (session 2017-19)**

**Tom Brake**

**29 January 2019**

That this House is concerned about Saudi Arabia's use of illegal detention to silence female activists pushing for greater freedoms within the country and Saudi Arabia's illegal detention of other political prisoners, including but not limited to Turki bin Abdullah Al Saud, Khalid bin Talal Al Saud, Abdulaziz bin Fahd Al Saud, Adel Fakeih, Mohammed Alamoudi, Faisal Al Jarba, Fawaz Al Aida, Amr Al Dabbah and Bakr bin Laden, in an apparent attempt to consolidate power and silence political opposition, illegal under international law; considers that the Government should do more to put pressure on the Saudi Government to release all detainees unless formal, legitimate charges are pressed, unfreeze assets of those held illegally, and support fundamental Human Rights within Saudi Arabia; and calls on the Government to support the cross-party Detention Review Panel that is seeking access to some of those unlawfully detained and subjected to torture and other forms of abuse.

### **SAUDI ARABIA AND VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW**

**EDM 1726 (session 2017-19)**

**Ann Clwyd**

**18 October 2018**

That this House is concerned about Saudi Arabia's on-going violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law; acknowledges that serious and systematic violations are being committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen; notes with alarm that since 2015 the Saudi-led coalition has reportedly undertaken 18,000 airstrikes, one-third of which have hit non-military targets, including a school bus in August 2018, and allegedly caused almost two-thirds of reported civilian deaths and almost two-thirds of damaged or destroyed civilian public buildings; is appalled that up to 13 million Yemenis are facing starvation because of the war, referred to by both the UN and EU as the worst humanitarian crisis on earth, including as a result of the offensive by the Saudi-led coalition to take the port city of Hodeidah from Houthi rebels;

notes with concern that in Saudi Arabia activists and critics are being silenced with increasing brutality, illustrated by the arrest and detention of more than 60 of its perceived opponents in September 2017, the subsequent arrest of women's rights activists and, most recently, the alleged murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Ankara; and calls on the Government to condemn Saudi Arabia for these violations, and to suspend all arms sales and military support to that country immediately.

## 6. Further reading

[Human Rights and Democracy: The 2018 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report](#), June 2019

[Saudi Arabia 2018](#), Amnesty International

[Saudi Arabia](#) (Amnesty International webpage)

[Reporters Without Borders: Saudi Arabia](#) (webpage)

[Human Rights Watch: Saudi Arabia](#) (webpage)

[UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia: Q&A](#), Commons Briefing papers CBP-8425, 10 July 2019

[Women Human Rights Defenders](#), Commons Debate packs CDP-2019-0112, 3 May 2019

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