



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office



Department  
for International  
Development

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Our reference: MIN-33395-2018

Jo Swinson MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

*Re: Jo,*

Thank you for your email of 11 December to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Saudi Arabia and Israel. I am replying as the Minister responsible for our relations with the Middle East and North Africa.

The UK and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have a long history of defence cooperation. The UK's arms exports to Saudi Arabia are made under pre-existing and long-standing government to government arrangements.

The UK takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, taking account of all relevant factors at the time of the application. We keep our defence exports under careful review to ensure they meet the rigorous standards of the Criteria.

The British Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel and Gaza, and if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Criteria, those licences will be revoked. Since the start of the recent difficulties in Gaza we have looked at all extant licences in relation to Israel. We have no information to suggest that UK-supplied equipment has been used against protestors

Our export licensing system allows us to respond quickly to changed circumstances, with options to suspend or revoke licences if necessary. We have suspended or revoked licences when the level of risk changes and we constantly review local situations. In the last few years we have suspended or revoked licences for Russia,

Ukraine, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. This shows how seriously we take the guiding principle of responsible export controls.

Risks around human rights violations are a key part of our assessment against the Consolidated Criteria. We do not export equipment where we assess there is a clear risk that it might be used for internal repression, or would provoke or prolong conflict within a country, or where we assess there is a clear risk that the intended recipient would use the items aggressively against another country. Export licensing requires us to consider how the equipment will be used by the end-user. This is done by reference to all currently available and relevant information at the time of application. A licence will not be issued, for any country, if to do so would be inconsistent with any provision of the mandatory Criteria, including where we assess there is a clear risk that it might be used in the commission of a serious violation of International Human Law.

We will continue to defend the decisions being challenged and remain confident that the UK operates one of the most robust export control regimes in the world.

*In case*

*A.B.*

**THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**