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Ending war in Yemen: Why the UK must ban arms exports to Saudi?

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) again implores the British government to restrict arms sales to Saudi Arabia, in light of the latter regime's leading role in the war in Yemen.

The war began in 2014 as Houthi forces clashed with the Yemeni government. It escalated when Saudi Arabia and a number of Arab states, with support from Britain and the US, began bombing Houthi positions in 2015.

The coalition's indiscriminate bombing of civilians has been widely reported since.

However, last Thursday, in his first major foreign policy statement, US President Joe Biden said, "the war in Yemen must end."

172,000 Yemenis were displaced in 2020 alone due to the conflict, reported the [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) in late December 2020. In October the same year, [it was reported](#) that over 4 million Yemenis have been displaced since 2014.

And, according to a report published by the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) in December 2020, "the war had already caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services and infrastructure".

In his recent speech, Biden said "we are ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales."

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest importer of weapons. The majority are supplied by US-based arms manufacturers.



Yet in the first half of 2019, both houses of Congress voted to end US military assistance for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. Then-President Trump vetoed the decision.

The British state and Britain-based arms manufacturers have played an important role in the conflict, [supplying weapons and training to Saudi-led coalition forces](#).

The Ministry of Defence [has been accused](#) of purposefully under-counting the number of coalition airstrikes that may have breached international humanitarian law (IHL).

With Washington's new direction, and a renewed possibility of peace in Yemen, AOHR UK again calls on the British government to [reverse last July's decision](#) to resume arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)