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As UAE's war against Yemen continues, AOHR UK condemns British royal's planned Dubai visit

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](#)) condemns the UK's Prince William's forthcoming visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Announced on Friday 21 January, the trip will coincide with a British government event at the much-publicised Expo 2020 Dubai, and is part of a wider, "special relationship" between Britain and the Gulf state.

Such official visits both represent and reinforce relations between the two countries, which include [massive arms sales](#) – arms used against the civilians of Yemen – and the ignoring of the Gulf state's appalling domestic [human rights record](#).

Visits from British royal family members serve to launder the international image of the profoundly undemocratic Gulf state, with its ongoing war against Yemeni civilians and brutal repression of domestic critics. In response, AOHR UK demands that pressure be put on the British government to cease arms sales to the UAE (and to Saudi Arabia) and to demand that its Gulf partners adopt a minimally rights-based approach to domestic criticism.

In a [press statement](#), the prince's office has said that "the bond between the UK and the UAE is deep and strong and Prince William's visit will highlight and build upon these links as he has the opportunity to engage with young Emiratis, leaders from government and committed conservationists". One link of that "bond" is the British export of arms and ongoing military support to the UAE, which – since 2015 and still now – have been turned against Yemeni civilians.

The UN estimated that by the end of 2021, the Yemeni war had killed 377,000 people; 20 million people require urgent humanitarian relief, according to the UN's World Food Programme. Last October, the World Health Organisation announced that three-quarters of Yemen's children were suffering from malnutrition.



The deaths, [displacement](#) and [hunger](#) in the country are all consequences of the [Saudi-UAE coalition's war](#) – a war that would be impossible without weapons, training, intelligence, and other assistance from Britain, amongst other Western powers.

Another “link” is direct investment.

Yet, internally, the UAE continues to brutally repress critics of the regime. Recently, former U.N. human rights commissioner Mary Robinson was compelled to advocate for the UAE’s most famous human-rights activists, [Ahmed Mansoor](#), who has been detained over four years ago for criticising Emirati authorities.

Mansoor’s mistreatment has also been recognised as such by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In a statement, the Office said that “Mr Mansoor has been kept in solitary confinement, and in conditions of detention that [violate](#) basic international human rights standards and which risk taking an irrevocable toll on Mr Mansoor’s health”.

The purpose of Prince William’s visit is to celebrate and cement relations between the two kingdoms – a relationship that is based on the UAE’s purchase of British arms, which the Gulf state continues to use to terrible effect in [Yemen](#), whilst allegedly “ethical” Britain turns a blind eye to ongoing human rights abuses in the UAE itself.

As well as condemning this [white-washing](#) of the UAE, AOHR UK demands that pressure is put on the British government, and onto those of other Western powers, to adopt properly an “ethical” foreign and trade policy in regards the Gulf autocracies.

AOHR UK calls on Prince William to cancel the visit and not to be involved in whitewashing the regime's poor human rights.

The Royal Family visits should adopt a protocol based on human rights and not take the government's recommendations into consideration as it prioritises business and other interests over [human rights](#).

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