

Open letter to the members of the German Federal Security Council

Federal Chancellery
Willy-Brandt-Strasse 1
10551 Berlin

Berlin, 18 September 2019

56 development, human rights, humanitarian and peace organisations call for a comprehensive arms export ban for the Yemen military coalition

Dear Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel,

Dear Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance, Olaf Scholz,

Dear Federal Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer,

Dear Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas,

Dear Federal Minister of Economics and Energy, Peter Altmaier,

Dear Federal Minister of Justice, Christine Lamprecht,

Dear Federal Minister of Defence, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer,

Dear Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Dr. Gerd Müller,

Dear Head of the Federal Chancellery, Dr. Helge Braun,

We, the undersigned organizations, welcome that, according to the coalition agreement, the German government no longer aims to export arms to states actively involved in the Yemen war. We also welcome the export moratorium imposed on Saudi Arabia, which has stopped arms exports to Saudi Arabia and has called on German companies not to use already granted export licences. These were important first steps.

The moratorium has already been extended twice and will expire in its current form on 30 September 2019. Despite the coalition agreement, the moratorium is limited to Saudi Arabia and provides exceptions for German component deliveries within European joint projects. In addition, already the coalition agreement allows exceptions for export licenses already granted. As a result, arms exports to states of the Saudi-led military coalition have been continuing.

In view of the flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights by warring parties in Yemen, it is imperative that the German government goes beyond the existing measures. As long as there is a risk that German arms will be used for such violations in Yemen, the moratorium must be converted into a comprehensive and timely unlimited ban on arms exports for the members of the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia. This must not allow any exceptions for component supplies within the framework of European joint projects or export licences already issued.

Over four years ago, the armed conflict in Yemen escalated and has been continuing since. The massive military force, combined with a temporary blockade of sea, air and land by the military coalition currently consisting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Senegal and Sudan, has, according to the United Nations, led to the currently greatest humanitarian catastrophe. 24 million people, including 12.3 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance. 14 million are acutely threatened by famine. Since April 2017, 1.3 million cases of suspected cholera have been registered. Humanitarian organisations are being hindered in gaining access to the population in need. The UN Secretary-General's latest report on Children and Armed Conflict documents 1,700 killed or seriously wounded children in 2018 as a result of air strikes and ground fighting by different conflict parties.

In its latest report, the United Nations Expert Group on Yemen (GEE Yemen) has investigated repeated violations of international humanitarian law and human rights by warring parties - including targeted killings of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and drinking water and sanitation facilities. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, among others, are named as those responsible. The GEE Yemen therefore urges other States to refrain from providing arms that could be used in the conflict.

For Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates alone, the German government approved arms exports worth more than two billion euros between 2015 and 2018. During the same period, export licenses worth three billion euros were granted to other member states of the military coalition. And even in the first half of 2019, the German government approved, despite the extended moratorium, exports of around one billion euros to this group of countries including Saudi Arabia. Reportedly, among other things, German ships off the coasts of Yemen as well as small arms from German production and aircrafts with German parts are being used in Yemen. Therefore, there continues to be a clear risk that German arms might be used to violate human rights and international humanitarian law. Approvals of arms exports to countries of the military coalition in Yemen are thus in blatant contradiction to the self-imposed requirements of the German government as well as national, European and international legal obligations like the EU Common Position and the international Arms Trade Treaty.

In its latest resolution on the implementation of the EU Common Position, the European Parliament accordingly stated that "exports to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other members of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen are non-compliant with at least criterion 2 [respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the EU common position]" and called for an EU arms embargo to be imposed on all members of the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen.

European partners such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy have not only imposed export restrictions on Saudi Arabia, but also on the United Arab Emirates. In addition, in Belgium and Great Britain certain arms sales to Saudi Arabia have been ruled unlawful by courts. The German Government must follow these developments, set a good example and introduce comprehensive measures.

We therefore call on you as members of the German government to

- Impose a comprehensive arms export ban without time limitation on all members of the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen, as long as they are involved in the armed conflict or there is a risk that also German arms might be used to violate human rights and international humanitarian law in Yemen. The export stop must not allow exceptions for component supplies within European joint projects or export licences already granted.
- Follow the resolution of the European Parliament and advocate for an EU arms embargo against all members of the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen.



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German Organisations

- Aktionsbündnis „Aktion Aufschrei - Stoppt den Waffenhandel!“
- Aktion gegen den Hunger
- Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden
- Amnesty International
- Arbeitskreis Gerechtigkeit, Frieden, Bewahrung der Schöpfung der Konföderation evangelischer Kirchen in Niedersachsen
- Ärzte der Welt e.V.
- Brot für die Welt
- Bund für soziale Verteidigung
- CARE Deutschland e.V.
- Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre
- DAHW *Deutsche Lepra- und Tuberkulosehilfe e. V*
- Deutsche Franziskanerprovinz
- Deutscher Caritasverband e.V.
- DFG-VK Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft – Vereinigte Kriegsdienstverweigerer
- ECCHR – European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights
- forum Ziviler Friedensdienst
- Frauen für den Frieden Gießen
- Frauenetzwerk für Frieden e.V
- Friedensfestival Berlin e.V.
- Greenpeace Deutschland e.V.
- HelpAge Deutschland e.V.
- IALANA Deutschland- Vereinigung für Friedensrecht
- Informationsstelle Militarisation e.V.
- IPPNW- Internationale Ärzte für die Verhütung des Atomkrieges, Ärzte in sozialer Verantwortung e. V.
- MISEREOR
- NaturFreunde Deutschlands
- Netzwerk Friedenskooperative
- NRC Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland
- Ohne Rüstung Leben
- Oxfam Deutschland
- pax christi – Deutsche Sektion e.V.
- Plan International Deutschland e.V.
- Pro Ökumene Initiative in Württemberg
- RüstungsInformationsBüro (RIB)
- Save the Children Deutschland e.V.
- Terres des hommes
- urgewald
- Werkstatt für Gewaltfreie Aktion

International Organisations

- ACAT France - ACTION DES CHRÉTIENS POUR L'ABOLITION DE LA TORTURE
- AIDL France - ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE POUR LA DEFENSE DES DROITS ET DES LIBERTES
- Beati i Costruttori di Pace
- CAAT- Campaign Against Arms Trade
- CIVIC (Center for Civilians in Conflict)
- Corruption Watch UK
- Handicap International – Humanity and Inclusion
- IFOR Austria (Internationaler Versöhnungsbund, österreichischer Zweig)
- Movimento Nonviolento
- Noi Siamo Chiesa
- PAX (Pax for Peace Netherlands)
- Rete Italiana per il Disarmo
- SAFERWORLD
- Salam For Yemen
- Un Ponte Per
- War Child
- Yemen Solidarity Network