



The Grayston Centre
28 Charles Square
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Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

3 September 2019

Dear Secretary of State for International Trade,

As healthcare workers, we are writing to add our voice to the movement challenging the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) at the ExCeL Exhibition Centre in London this September - a trade fair that fuels global conflict and insecurity. Despite years of opposition to this event, it continues to take place.

In line with the recent judgement in the Court of Appeal regarding the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia - we call on you to end all arms sales to governments and regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, who are responsible for mass human rights abuses. You can begin firstly by not hosting future arms fairs in the UK.

DSEI represents an industry that profits from war and the perpetuation of violence. Past fairs have seen the exhibition of weapons and arms such as sniper rifles, tanks, warships and combat aircraft - with participants from around the world, including representatives of governments and militaries involved in human rights abuses and humanitarian crises.

As healthcare workers, we are concerned by the long-term physical and mental health outcomes of populations subjected to war and conflict. In these situations, hospitals are either starved of life-saving resources or are targets for attack themselves. Healthcare workers are often the first to respond to the devastation caused by these same weapons that will be displayed in London in September. The war in Yemen has led to the deaths of around 100,000 people,^[1] an epidemic of cholera,^[2] and mass famine.^[3] Weapons and technology also sold to Israel have been used in the 2009/10 and 2014 attacks on Gaza^[4] - killing in total around 3,500 Palestinians,^[5] and we see ongoing human rights abuses in countries like Egypt and Turkey.

We see our colleagues in hospitals in Yemen working in unsafe conditions, often attacked by Saudi-led coalition strikes - with reports that over 70 health facilities have faced violence since 2015.^[6] Some of the weapons and technology used in these attacks will be displayed during DSEI.

Companies who 'exhibit' their products during the fair include BAE Systems, Thales and General Dynamics. These companies, and many others, have sold weapons and their parts to repressive regimes in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Egypt and Turkey - with destructive and inhumane consequences across the world.^[7] The UK government has licenced arms sales worth

upwards of £4.7 billion to Saudi Arabia since 2015 - some of these sales have now been deemed unlawful by the UK Court of Appeal.

And whilst the DIT continues to licence the sale of arms, UK aid donations through the Department for International Development (DfID) and DEC Appeals are sent to countries such as Yemen to attempt to repair the damage caused by armed conflict.

It is time to end this cycle and for the DIT to stop fuelling wars through granting licences for the sale of arms to violent and repressive regimes, and through arms fairs such as DSEI.

Yours sincerely,

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Professor James Friend

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Dr. Des Cohen, Former Director HIV/AIDS Program UNDP

Dr. Rebecca Smith, GP

Dr. Amit Mukherjee, SpR

Dr. Davina Darmanin

Dr. Don Gillett

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Mrs. Sheena Holden, District Nursing Sister (Retired)

Dr. Richard Horton, Editor, The Lancet

Dr. Ruth Telfer, Clinical Psychologist

Dr. Paul Nickson, Retired GP

Dr. Timothy Rittman, Neurology Consultant

Ms. Kate Shethwood, Public Health Registrar

Jo Markham, Nurse

Dr. David Kirby, General Medical Practitioner (Retired)

Professor Shirley Hodgson

Dr. Abdelwahab Babiker, Consultant Physician

Ms. Andrea Hill, Midwife

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Professor Sir Andrew Haines, Professor of Environmental Change and Public Health

Professor Amy Hagopian, Professor, University of Washington School of Public Health

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Dr. Judith McDonald, Retired GP
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Helen Green, Midwife
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Professor Martin Pippard, Emeritus Professor of Haematology
Ms. Mavis Zutshi, Former Co-ordinator, Bristol Inner City Health Project

[1]

[https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jun/20/uk-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-for-use-in-yemen-declared-unlawfu](https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jun/20/uk-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-for-use-in-yemen-declared-unlawful)

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[2] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6278080/>

[3] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035501>

[4] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/27/british-arms-exports-israel-new-record>

[5] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-28439404> and <https://imeu.org/article/operation-cast-lead>

[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/16/world/middleeast/yemen-doctors-without-borders-hospital-bombing.html>

[7] <https://www.caat.org.uk/issues/arms-fairs/dsei/delegations>