

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

19 July 2017

RULING OUT UK INVOLVEMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA'S UPCOMING EXECUTIONS

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to request your urgent personal intervention on the cases of 14 people due to be executed imminently in Saudi Arabia, including two juveniles (Mujtaba Sweikat and Salman Quraish) and a disabled man who was rendered fully deaf in one ear by torture at the hands of Saudi police (Munir al-Adam).

We understand that these 14 men have been transferred from al-Mabahith prison in Damman, where they had been held, to Riyadh, which is an initial step in implementation of executions in Saudi Arabia. We fear that these executions may happen very soon, and ask that you urge King Salman and Crown Prince Bin Salman to halt them from proceeding.

We also ask that you take urgent steps to confirm that UK assistance played no role in these individuals' conviction under Saudi Arabia's anti-cybercrime law, which the FCO's 2015 human rights report noted "has been used to convict social activists".ⁱ

In April of last year, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) disclosed to the human rights group Reprieve scoping documents for UK funded training of Saudi Arabian police and security bodies in "All aspects of cybersecurity" including "High Tech Crime and IT Digital Forensics training to expert witness level".ⁱⁱ

We are gravely concerned that by training Saudi agents in this way the UK may have directly enabled the arrests of the 14 individuals currently facing execution, who had been charged under the anti-cybercrime law, which prohibits the "production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, through the information network or computers",ⁱⁱⁱ alongside other statutes.

When reviewing this training the UK College of Policing actually accepted there was a risk that "the skills being trained are used to identify individuals who later go on to be tortured or subjected to other human rights abuses"^{iv}, but also noted that if the UK refused to provide such training: "it may be interpreted by the MoI as the UK reducing its traditional partnership with the KSA, with wider risks to UK partnerships and trade".

The document goes on to suggest that these risks could be "mitigated" by, "in conjunction with the FCO, [preparing] a press statement emphasising that the forensics training is part of a wider programme to assist the Saudi authorities move to democratic policing methods." This suggests the commissioners of this training were more concerned with the reputational impact of such risks rather than their genuine impact on human rights.



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If the UK has trained Saudi agents in gathering the kind of evidence which is being used to hand down death sentences, it would call into question the viability of UK training for Saudi Arabian criminal justice bodies. However, a woeful lack of transparency currently prevents Parliament from making these kinds of assessments.

In July 2016, Parliament's Home Affairs Committee described the Government's secretive approach to overseas police training as "*totally unacceptable*", and questioned whether the UK's system for assessing the human rights risks of such training was "*fit for purpose*".^v Clearly, more transparency is needed if we are to preserve the UK's reputation as a defender of human rights overseas.

In light of these concerns, we ask you to urgently:

1. Personally urge Saudi Arabia's King Salman and Crown Prince Bin Salman to halt the 14 upcoming executions;
2. Commit to an urgent review of UK training for Saudi police and criminal justice institutions to ensure UK support did not contribute to the death sentences of these 14 men or any other condemned individuals;
3. Provide a full account to Parliament of any and all UK training for Saudi police and criminal justice institutions, and publish the human rights risk assessments which were conducted before proceeding with such training, so that these may be subject to public and parliamentary scrutiny (subject to appropriate redactions for operationally sensitive material).

I look forward to your response as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

Rt Hon Tom Brake
MP for Carshalton and Wallington

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell
MP for Sutton Coldfield

Rt Hon Ed Miliband
MP for Doncaster North

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/saudi-arabia-country-of-concern--2/saudi-arabia-country-of-concern>

ⁱⁱ see "IPAB" human rights risk assessment appended

ⁱⁱⁱ Royal Decree No. M/17, 26 March 2007, Anti-Cyber Crime Law (translation held on file at Reprive)

^{iv} see "IPAB" human rights risk assessment appended

^v https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/23/2309.htm#_idTextAnchor054