

Government must show caution and concern about the way the Saudi campaign is being conducted – Thornberry

Emily Thornberry, Shadow Foreign Secretary, responding to today's revelations regarding arms exports to Saudi Arabia, said:

"We have discovered today that, even after the bombing of the funeral hall in Sana'a and the concerns of Liam Fox's department about the risk that British weapons were being used in breach of International Humanitarian Law, Boris Johnson gave his personal reassurance that the Saudi-led coalition was improving its targeting processes and ensuring that any incidents where non-military targets had been bombed were being properly investigated.

"According to the independent Yemen Data Project, in the 55 days between Boris Johnson writing his letter and the end of 2016, Saudi forces bombed 60 residential sites in Yemen, including houses, markets and refugee camps. At this time of heightening humanitarian crisis, they bombed 46 sites of economic infrastructure, including farms, water tanks and food trucks, and 48 sites of physical infrastructure, including roads, bridges and ports. They also managed to bomb three schools and a university. Not a single one of these 160 incidents has yet been investigated by the Saudi authorities. If this is what Boris Johnson calls the Saudis 'improving processes and...taking action to address failures', then I would sorely hate to see the opposite.

"It should not be left to the courts to rule whether the export licences for these arms sales should have been granted. It should be for this Government to show some long-overdue caution and concern about the way the Saudi campaign is being conducted, the devastating humanitarian crisis that campaign is helping to cause, and the blatant failure to ensure any proper, independent investigation of these alleged crimes against international law."

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