

MEPs vote to ban arms sales to Saudi Arabia while the UK hosts its delegates at the world's largest arms fair



Green Party

14 September 2017

Today cross-party MEPs voted in favour of a Greens/EFA resolution to place arms embargoes against all countries that fail to uphold international humanitarian law. This includes banning the sale of military equipment to states that abuse human rights. The vote sends a strong message to the European Commission – it's time to take action against irresponsible arms deals [1].

This resolution coincides with the Defence and Security Equipment International Exhibition (DSEI) arms fair in London, which is this week hosting 1,600 exhibitors from 54 countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Bahrain [2].

Jean Lambert, London's Green MEP, said:

“The world's largest arms fair is currently underway in my constituency, London. As I write, UK ministers and civil servants are facilitating the sale of weapons to 56 countries, including many with records of using them to commit appalling human rights abuses – Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bahrain and more.

“However, while the British Government has been busy promoting the global arms trade, Members of the European Parliament today voted in favour of a resolution asking Member States to take responsibility for the dreadful consequences of these deals.

“In an ideal world, we'd stop the sale of weapons altogether. However, if that's not feasible we are morally and legally obliged to ensure they do as little harm as possible. We need to know where the arms we sell are going, who is using them, and why. If countries fail to uphold international humanitarian law, we should stop providing them with military equipment. If Member States don't comply with this rule, they must face real consequences.

“It’s time for the UK Government to recognise this direction of travel, and shut down the DSEI festival of violence for good. The event sends a clear message to the EU and the rest of the world that the UK is moving backwards – prioritising lucrative arms deals over defending human rights. For as long as this is allowed to continue, innocent people will pay with their lives.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170911IPR83507/eu-arms-export-control-needs-a-face-lift>
2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dsei-2017-arms-fair-liam-fox-weapons-exports-defence-industry-protests-minister-saudi-arabia-yemen-a7943301.html>

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