

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26th November 2018

Jean Comstuent,

RE: UK RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA.


Thank you for contacting me recently about UK diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

Firstly, on arms sales, I know that the Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously, with one of the most robust export control regimes in the world. Export licensing to all destinations is kept under constant review, including in light of military action by the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen, and indeed any implications that arise from the Jamal Khashoggi investigation. The Government will not issue an export licence where it assesses that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law. In July 2017, the High Court ruled that UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia were compliant with those regulations.

The crisis in Yemen is severe. There are no easy solutions and I share your concerns regarding the plight of the Yemeni people who are caught up in the conflict. I am proud that the UK is leading the global response to this crisis in Yemen, as the fourth largest humanitarian donor to the country. In the last year, the UK contributed £170 million to famine relief. The UK also continues to work hard to achieve stability in the region and is playing a leading role in diplomatic efforts, including bringing together key international actors to try to find a peaceful solution. Peace talks and a political process are the UK's priority for the country, and the UK uses its relationship with Saudi Arabia to press for that.

As you will know, we have an important strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, which has saved lives on the streets of Britain. We also have a trading partnership that supports thousands of jobs. However, I would like to assure you that the UK has been active in calling for answers in relation to the murder of the journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, and has condemned it in the strongest terms. The Prime Minister spoke to King Salman on the 24th October and reiterated our desire for a credible explanation following a full investigation. The circumstances around Mr Khashoggi's death do look to be pre-meditated murder, and that has been admitted by the prosecutor in Saudi Arabia. The UK has called for a full investigation, line of responsibility, and accountability. At the end of that, I am assured that the UK will grade its response to what has happened based on the credibility of the explanations, and the confidence the UK has that events cannot, and would not, be repeated.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes 

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE