

## **“Operation Armoured Rights”**

### **The Authorization to Export Armoured Vehicles to Saudi Arabia is Illegal**

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Support for the sale of light armoured vehicles (LAV) by General Dynamics Land Systems Canada to the Saudis by the new government has done more than raise eyebrows. One could have expected the new Trudeau government, a “government of real change,” to cancel the decision of its predecessor to issue the export licenses required for this purpose. On its face, the idea that military equipment made in Canada could contribute to human rights violations against civilians in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries is immoral. But we also believe that the authorization to export armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia is illegal.

Proof that Saudi Arabia violates fundamental human rights is overwhelming. The history of such violations is well known. The list is long. There is talk of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, particularly in the imposition of the death penalty; total disregard for gender equality; of arbitrary executions and detentions; of infringement of freedom of religion and freedom of expression; the denial of human rights defenders, and infringement of the freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial.

Since the beginning of 2016, 58 executions have taken place and human rights defenders have been imprisoned. Sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes, blogger Raif Badawi, as well as his lawyer Waleed Abulkhair, are incarcerated in violation of their most fundamental rights. A UN report confirms that Saudi Arabia bombed schools in Yemen. An Amnesty International report recalls the constant violations by the Saudi government of the human rights of its population. In short, the abuses committed by Saudi Arabia are not isolated acts. They are serious and repeated violations of human rights.

If the Canadian government refuses to show consistency between the ideals of human rights and its decisions on military exports, it is nevertheless required to comply with the law. The government must abide by the rule of law, a constitutional principle, and ensure respect for legislation as a whole.

Are there any standards prohibiting the export of military equipment to countries that systematically breach the human rights of its citizens and those of neighbouring countries? Guidelines adopted by the cabinet in 1986 state that “Canada closely controls the export of

military goods and technology to countries [...] whose governments have a persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable risk that the goods might be used against the civilian population.” Saudi Arabia has committed and continues to commit such serious violations and there is a real risk that the light armoured vehicles manufactured by General Dynamics will be used to commit abuses against the civilian population of Saudi Arabia and its neighbouring countries. Moreover, the decision to allow the sale of military goods to Saudi Arabia may violate some of Canada’s international commitments relating to human rights and export controls for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.

Mindful of the legal issues raised by the export of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, we have decided to initiate ‘Operation Armoured Rights.’ We intend to contest, by all legal means at our disposal, the legality of exporting such military equipment. We invite all citizens to support our group in writing ([info@armouredrights.org](mailto:info@armouredrights.org)) and to visit our forthcoming Facebook page (Operation Armoured Rights) and website ([www.armouredrights.org](http://www.armouredrights.org)).