September 9, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by your administration’s decision to sell $1.15 billion in tanks, military vehicles, and related equipment and services to the Government of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and its military coalition have engaged in widespread violations of international humanitarian law in their armed conflict with the Huthi armed group in Yemen. Amnesty International urges you to cancel this arms sale immediately.

There is substantial risk that Saudi Arabia could use new U.S. arms to further devastate civilian communities in Yemen. Amnesty International researchers have already found both unexploded U.S. bombs and identifiable fragments of exploded U.S. bombs among the ruins of Yemeni homes and other civilian objects. Amnesty International has further identified the bomb used in the August 15 bombing of the Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in northwestern Yemen as a Paveway-series bomb of U.S. manufacture.

We know that 64 Members of Congress have recently called on you to postpone this latest arms sale so that the U.S. Congress can properly debate the issue. In addition, four U.S. Senators have just introduced legislation to block this sale outright. We urge you to heed the concerns of the many Members of Congress who are troubled by this dangerous arms sale.
Yemen's Human Rights Crisis

Since the conflict in Yemen began, thousands of civilians have been killed and injured. While all parties to the conflict have committed violations, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition’s pattern of attacks across Yemen raises serious concerns about an apparent disregard for civilian life. This is reflected in a failure to take feasible precautions to spare civilians, as required by international humanitarian law.

The United Nations has reported that Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen were responsible for most of the civilian deaths through the end of July 2015. More recently, the U.N. has reported that between March 2015 and August 23, 2016, an estimated 3,799 civilians were killed and 6,711 injured as a result of the war. The U.N. further reports that at least 7.6 million people are currently suffering from malnutrition, and at least three million people have been forced to flee their homes.iii Yemen is clearly facing a humanitarian crisis.

Amnesty International researchers have conducted multiple research missions in Yemen since March 2015. Our researchers have directly documented human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, by the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition and the Huthi armed group. For example, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition declared the entire Yemeni city of Sa’da a military target, in direct violation of international humanitarian law. When Amnesty International visited in early July 2015, we found that hundreds of airstrikes had destroyed or damaged beyond repair scores of homes, several markets, the entire main shopping street and virtually every public building.

Amnesty International researchers who visited sites bombed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition found both unexploded U.S. bombs and identifiable fragments of exploded U.S. bombs among the ruins of Yemeni homes and other civilian objects. Amnesty International has reviewed photographs of bomb fragments, including a bomb fin, found onsite by locals who live next to and witnessed the bombing of the Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in northwestern Yemen on August 15. Based on two experts’ analysis, Amnesty International has identified the bomb used in this attack as a Paveway-series bomb of U.S. manufacture.
Our researchers have also taken testimony from civilians in Yemen describing the use of tanks by parties on both side of the conflict to threaten or attack civilian communities. There is substantial risk that selling more tanks to Saudi Arabia could contribute to human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

**Cancel the $1.15 Billion U.S. Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia**

In light of the disturbing eyewitness reports and other information gathered by Amnesty International, we urge you to cancel the $1.15 billion tank sale that was notified to the U.S. Congress on August 8, 2016, and publicly announced on August 9. This sale would provide Saudi Arabia with 153 M1A1/A2 Tank structures for conversion to M1A2S Saudi Abrams Main Battle Tanks, along with additional vehicles, weapons, ammunition, training, and support.

The announced arms sale contradicts the guidelines of your own Presidential Policy Directive PPD-27 on United States Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, dated January 15, 2014. Your directive states that all arms transfer will take into account the "likelihood that the recipient would use the arms to commit human rights abuses or serious violations of international humanitarian law." Saudi Arabia has already used U.S.-designed or produced weapons in its attacks on civilian communities in Yemen.

Despite the Government of Saudi Arabia’s record, your administration has persisted in selling it billions of dollars in arms. As a consequence, your administration risks complicity in the Saudi Arabia-led coalition’s serious violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, including war crimes. On behalf of Amnesty International, we urge you to cancel the latest $1.15 billion arms sale immediately. We also urge you to support a comprehensive embargo on arms transfers that could be used by any party to the conflict in Yemen while there remains a substantial risk the arms would be used to commit or facilitate war crimes or other serious violations.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Amnesty International USA
CC: U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter
U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry


Sincerely,

Rana Abdelhamid

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Ali Arab

Matthew Kennis

Donald E. Bierer

Terry Kay Rockefeller

Jan Knippers Black

Adriana Sanford

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