

28 January 2016

Your reference: ZA72086

Our reference: MIN/91941/2016

Tom Brake MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dear Tom,'.

Thank you for your email of 4 January about the recent executions in Saudi Arabia and regional stability.

I share your concern at the recent escalation in tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The British Government has urged all parties to show restraint and responsibility, and to continue to work towards resolving these tensions. We continue to encourage all countries in the region to work towards peaceful solutions in Syria and Yemen.

The British Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Saudi Arabia. We make our position known very clearly in public and in private. We expressed our concerns to the Saudi authorities, following the execution of 47 people, on the 2 January; I did so most recently during my visit to the Kingdom on 25 January. It is firmly committed to advancing the global abolition of the death penalty.

May I take the opportunity to refer you to my statement made to the House of Commons on 5 January on Saudi Arabia, which reinforces, the UK's opposition to the death penalty, which can be found here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160105/debtext/160105-0003.htm#16010526000282>

With regards to the issue of arms sales and the situation in Yemen, this Government is satisfied that extant licences for Saudi Arabia are compliant with the UK's export licensing criteria. We have in place a robust system of licensing and scrutiny. Each licence application is carefully scrutinised to ensure the exports are compatible with our national and international obligations. Risks around human rights violations are a key part of our assessment against the Consolidated Criteria.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tobias Ellwood'.

**TOBIAS ELLWOOD MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State