



The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

10 August 2018

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We are writing to express our grave concern at the rapidly deteriorating crisis in Yemen and increasing violence against civilians in recent weeks.

Yesterday's horrifying airstrike on a school bus in the Saada governorate reportedly killed 40 children and left another 56 seriously wounded. Such an act is not only unconscionable and heart-breaking, it appears to be a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law (IHL).

While we recognise the government's ongoing efforts to urge allies to comply with international humanitarian law and welcome the government's support for the UN Special Envoy's peace plan, as a both a world leader on civilian protection and current Chair of the UN Security Council, the lack of an official statement from the UK government on yesterday's attack is deeply discouraging. Currently, parties to the conflict believe they can continue to commit violations of international law with impunity. For Yemeni civilians, the silence is deadly.

We call on the Government to unequivocally condemn the airstrike on the school bus and support calls being made by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to establish an immediate independent investigation into the attack. This is pivotal moment to demonstrate the UK's commitment to the international rules-based system and international norms. The deadly attacks on civilian infrastructure, including a hospital, in the last week also underlines the critical importance of renewing the mandate of the UN's Group of Eminent Experts at September's Human Rights Council, in order to independently investigate violations and hold perpetrators accountable.

The UN Special Envoy has rightly said that parties need to resolve this conflict through negotiation rather than through military means. At a time when parties should be showing restraint, these increasing attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure risk derailing the peace process before it has even begun.

With advisers from the Ministry of Defence providing targeting training and real-time information, advice and intelligence to Saudi forces, we would also like to request further clarity on the UK's involvement in the latest attack on the school bus in Saada. In particular: whether the government were aware of the attack; whether British officials were involved in providing legal advice on the risk of violation of IHL; and whether the government agree with the Saudi-led Coalition's statement that this was a 'legitimate' strike? If it does not agree with this assessment, how will the UK look to review its ongoing relationship with the Coalition?

Given the Government's strong trading and diplomatic relationship with the Saudi-led Coalition, the UK has a vital role to play in preventing the crisis from deteriorating even further. We urge the government to

redouble efforts to urge all parties to commit to an immediate ceasefire to protect civilians, and to return to the negotiating table to work towards peace. We reiterate that in light of further evidence of the clear risk that British arms are being used in violation of international humanitarian law, the UK should immediately suspend all transfers at risk of being used in Yemen.

We would like to request an urgent meeting to discuss this further, and how we can work together to end both the humanitarian and civilian protection crisis in Yemen.

Yours sincerely,

IRC  
NRC  
Mercy Corps  
Oxfam GB  
Saferworld  
Save the Children  
War Child