

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice



A national faith-based organization founded in support of Unitarian values

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

c.c. Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Global Affairs

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ). We laud Minister Freeland's principled stance calling for the release of Raif Badawi, his sister Samar Badawi, and other peaceful human rights activists in Saudi Arabia.

At least a dozen women human rights defenders have been arrested since May. You acted honourably in announcing to the Saudi government, **"We will continue to stand up for Canadian values and universal values and human rights"**. In retaliation, the Saudi regime cut diplomatic and economic ties with Canada. They also ordered thousands of Saudi scholarship students to return home.

This recent diplomatic dispute, the Saudi regime's intensified crackdown on human rights defenders, and the ongoing atrocities in Yemen (the Saudi-led military coalition has killed more than 10,000 people), provide an opportune moment for you, Prime Minister, to take a further principled step--**Cancel the \$15-billion armoured vehicle deal, signed by the previous Conservative government and endorsed by your government!**

If your and Minister Freeland's lofty words supporting human rights, including women's rights around the world, are to be taken seriously, then you must follow up with concrete actions. Our highly-touted feminist foreign policy and Canada's arm-control regulations impel us to end the export of weapons to any country where there is a substantial risk that they will be used to commit human rights violations. The latest United Nations' report calls on the world to stop providing arms that may be used in the conflict in Yemen. Canada could show real leadership in the international community by ending the sale of LAVs (light-armoured vehicles) and weapons to a regime that uses them against unarmed civilians.

The young and powerful Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has enacted some social and economic reforms in recent years, but he is backsliding in light of recent arbitrary arrests, detentions and beheadings of human rights defenders. The Saudi regime's excessive retaliation against Canada for speaking out is a clear indication that Canada and its allies must increase the pressure on the Saudi regime for real human rights reforms. We urge you to take the next bold step and terminate Canada's arms deal with Saudi Arabia. The world is watching.

Sincerely,

Margaret Rao
President, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice