

Letter to Prime Minister of CANADA

2017-08-04

Respected Prime Minister Trudeau,

Canada has long been recognized for its peace-keeping role around the world. Canadian values of freedom, respect for human rights and cultural differences and a commitment to social justice has developed this country to a welcoming and inclusive nation.

However, a recent elevated violent crackdown on civilians in an eastern province of the Saudi kingdom using Canadian-made arms has raised concerns regarding upholding Canadian values at international level.

At least eight people have been killed, tens arrested, and many wounded in the eastern Saudi town of Awamiya as government forces conduct an operation against pro-democracy Shia minority. Hundreds of people have reportedly been displaced, and Saudi government forces have been firing indiscriminately on local homes and businesses as it lays siege to the town.

According to the Globe report, images shared on social media show Saudi forces employing Gurkha RPVs, made by Terradyne Armored Vehicles near Toronto, and Canadian-made armored vehicles.

In 2014c Ottawa first announced a CAD \$15-billion arms export contract with the kingdom under Prime Minister Stephen Harper and your government has since put its support behind the deal as well.

As a human rights activist and on behalf of the Shia Rights Watch (SRW), I am writing to ask you to suspend arm deals with Kingdom as Saudi authorities are misusing Canadian-made military equipment to oppress its citizen.

Usage of such equipment on civilians in addition to limiting their access to medical resources, sieging the city and raiding homes and businesses are some serious human rights violations, and Canada should not be part of such action.

SRW urges you to stand up for human values and conduct an investigation in that regards. Also, we invite you to stand up for human rights and dignity by suspending any arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

As human rights defenders, we at SRW believe your call on the Saudi authorities sends a powerful message to all leaders and presents Canadian values of putting human rights first.

Sincerely

Mustafa Akhwand

Director of Shia Rights Watch

Response:

Dear Mr. Akhwand:

On behalf of the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, I would like to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence regarding arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Please be assured that your comments, offered on behalf of Shia Rights Watch, have been carefully reviewed. I have taken the liberty of forwarding your email to the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs. While the Prime Minister appreciates being made aware of your concerns, he will leave the issue to be considered by Minister Freeland.

Thank you for writing to the Prime Minister.

Our Heart Goes out to Afghanistan

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We, at Shia Rights Watch, are deeply saddened by the ruthless targeting of Afghan Shia by two suicide bombers attacked a Shia mosque in the western Afghan city of Herat on August 1, 2017. The attack was reported to have killed as many as 29 individuals and wounded up to 64.

Afghan Shia have been attacked and killed for decades and such attacks have elevated since the beginning of 2017. In the month of July, 30 Shia were killed and 42 wounded in a suicide car-bomb in heavily populated Shia district of Kabul. More than 1,700 civilians have been killed in attacks in Afghanistan so far this year, many of which belong to the minority Shia community.

As we condemn all killing and acts of violence, SRW emphasizes the need for minority rights advocacy as most human rights violations in the world are inflicted upon minority groups.

We also urge the Afghan government to take immediate action to protect Shia populated areas to prevent further attacks.

Our heart goes out to families and community members of all victims of terror, and we invite international committees to stand up for minority rights.

Letter to President Trump Calling for Immediate Intervention in

Saudi Arabia

Letter to President Trump calling for immediate intervention in Al-Awamiyah, Saudi Arabia.

Respected President Trump,

Representing the United States of America as its president means standing up for American values, values that are based on democracy, freedom, dignity and human rights.

As a human rights activist and on behalf of the Shia Rights Watch (SRW), I am writing to highlight the need for your immediate intervention in Saudi Arabia.

Although Saudi Shia have been historically marginalized, discriminated and violated in their own land, recently the oppression and discrimination towards them has increased in the form of the largest military campaign in the history of this country.

Al Awamiyah, the main Shia area, has been under siege. Many homes and businesses have been destroyed; children and women have lost their husbands and fathers.

As it is open to all, Saudi authorities have been raiding the Shia populated areas of the country, arresting pro-democracy activists and charging them with brutal punishments. Instead of focusing on combating ISIS, Saudis have been attacking their own citizens to distract international attention from ISIS. This kingdom has not sentenced a single ISIS fighter but is constantly beheading Shia protestors. In fact, 14 more Shia were sentenced to death recently.

Lack of democracy, no access to medical resources and education, rising number of arrests and killings, economic disaster, and extreme change to the social structure of the Shia populated areas of the Saudi Arabia is concerning and requires your attention.

SRW urges you to stand up for human values and contact King Salman asking him to stop ongoing oppression of its people. We would like to highlight the fact that as the US President you have the power and influence to end Saudi's oppression and bring their focus back to combating ISIS.

As American citizens and human rights defenders, SRW believes your call on the Saudi King sends a powerful message to all leaders and presents American values of putting human rights first and fighting real terrorists and a common enemy, ISIS.

Sincerely,

Shia Rights Watch

Eid Letter to the Embassies Around the World

As end of the Ramadhan and Eid approaches, Shia Rights Watch sent Happy Eid letters to embassies in Washington DC inviting countries around the world to keep minorities and their rights in mind. This NGO called for more protection for Shia population around the world and highlighted the importance of peacekeeping as an international effort.

Read the letter bellow:

Dear Honorable Ambassador....

Shia Rights Watch congratulates you on the auspicious occasion of Eid al- Fitr. Eid marks the end of Ramadhan but the start of a new year, with Muslims empowered and recharged in values and faith.

The Muslim world congregates in unison on this day as a display of solidarity against intolerance and injustice. Let this day serve as a reminder that we are all one global community, either brothers in blood or sisters in humanity.

As a Human Rights NGO, Shia Rights Watch, whose primary goal is maintaining and promoting peace in the world, invites you to take steps towards ending minority and Shia rights violations. Shia Muslims remain the largest minority population in most Islamic nation yet most affected by the attack of extremism.

Your protection of this minority allows for stabilization and promotion of diversity and religious expression further strengthens peace endeavors and limits the growth of extremism.

Shia Rights Watch offers its full support and services in accommodating an environment of fertile communication amongst your leadership and constituents.

We wish you the utmost prosperity on this Eid.

Sincerely,

Shia Rights Watch

June 2017

SRW's Letter to the G7 Leaders- Addressing Arm Sale and Peace Building Plans

Respected leaders and members of the G7,

I am writing to you on behalf of Shia Rights Watch, a not-for-profit research entity and advocacy group headquartered in Washington D.C. U.S.A. Shia Rights Watch holds a 501(c) status, as well as a Special Consultation Status (ECOSOC) with the United Nations.

With conflicts such that of opposing regional hegemonies, tensions run high in the Eastern hemisphere. As harbors of democracy, the responsibility of establishing world peace is in the hands of governances like yours. Your actions are accepted as the epitome of the democratic free world. Thus, we write to you inquiring of your next steps in the establishment of peace endeavors in the Middle East and North Africa, specifically in relation to arms sales your nation has.

Arms deals by Western nations, although create revenue, have extreme repercussions on the rest of the world. With the 43rd annual Group of 7 meeting, we encourage you to take the following into account.

Arms sales to nations such that of Saudi Arabia fuels sectarian strife within the region.

Sales of arms to Saudi Arabia, in addition to increasing religious based conflicts, augments already existing targeting of minority groups through the promotion of radicalism and extremist education. For years, Saudi Arabia has been promoting the discriminatory ideals of Wahhabism. One such minority group is that of Shia Muslims. Saudi Arabia elicits violence upon this group as means of pressuring Iran based on a falsified association of these two entities.

Both domestically and on foreign grounds does Saudi Arabia target Shia Muslims

in addition to other minorities. Whether it be the siege of Awamiya or the funding of terror organizations and schools worldwide, arms sold to Saudi Arabia are used to incite terror.

As we understand the economic benefit of arms sales, we invite you to prioritize your humanitarian values as well. In addition, we encourage international collaborations that would increase peaceful coexistence and promote the rights of minorities all over the world.

Sincerely

Shia Rights Watch

SRW's Ramadan Letter to all Embassies in USA

Dear Ambassador,

This Ramadan, Shia Rights Watch invites you to join the thousands if not millions of Shia Muslim in your nation by renewing your commitment to promoting unity among the masses.

We ask that you be mindful of your Muslim constituents in this month as they hold fasts. Ramadan holds within itself the spirit of devotion to reconciliation for self and community. Muslims use this month as an opportunity to build united front against extremism and hate by promoting love and commitment.

This year SRW encourages establishing mutual understanding and brotherhood among not only Muslims but constituents of all faiths. Let us join as one global community with the same rights and authority for self-care and communal advancement.

Together with your help, we can take the necessary steps to establish the building blocks of a year of prosperous peace. Join us in creating a resolution by which all minority populations especially that of the Shia population are treated as equals in the eye of the law and even social constructs such that targeting a group is no longer feasible economically, politically, or socially. Join us in using the essence of justice and charity, both prominent principles for this holy month, in educating not only ourselves, but others in basic human rights and encourage their implementation in our surroundings.

We entrust this message of peace to you in hopes that your actions and words will acts as advocates of peace in both your home nation and the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Shia Rights Watch

Letter to Embassies for Muharram 2016: “Make Brotherhood and Non-Violence your New Year’s Resolutions”

As Muharram is approaching, Shia Rights Watch writes to embassies to ask for protection of Shia Muslims during their Ashura gatherings. Muharram is the first month of Islamic year when many celebrate New Year and many others postpone their celebrations in order to commemorate the death of a peacekeeper, Husain.

The letter is as follows:

Dear Honorable Ambassador,

On the occasion of the Hijra New Year, it's our honor to extend to you our greetings and sincere wishes. We at Shia Rights Watch hope for this year to be prosperous for you and the people of your country.

As you are celebrating the New Year, Shia Muslims in your community are commemorating the death of a man who stood for justice and the rights of others, Husain. Husain ibn Ali is the Prophet Muhammad's grandson. During this important time, it is important to model the spirit of acceptance and respect by taking actions to prevent any violations and hatred towards this minority. During past years, Shia minority faced forms of violation and pressure during the month of Muharram, and it would add to the sincerity of the government to protect Shia Muslims this year, so they perform their rituals under the safety provided by their government.

We encourage you to make respect, brotherhood and non-violence part of your New Year's resolutions.

At SRW we believe that respect and protection of religious freedom are the keys to peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. We call upon all governments to respect the rights of their citizens and protect their lives and property. Please keep in mind that Muharram rituals are not the political movement, but rather religious and spiritual gathering that advocate for peace and brotherhood.

Sincerely,

Mustafa Akhwand

Director of SRW

SRW's "Thank you" Statement to

Father Emmanuel Yousaf Mani

Shia Rights Watch, June 15th, 2016 SRW would like to issue an official thank you to Father Emmanuel Yousaf Mani, the National Director of the Pakistani Catholic Bishop's National Commission for Justice and Peace, for his statements regarding religious freedom for Shia Muslims. According to UCA news, Mani stated that the Pakistani government "must take notice of Shia killings" and that "Nobody has the right to force their beliefs upon others." Father Emmanuel also urged leaders to speak out and say Pakistan "is meant for all sects." Shia Rights Watch stands with his sentiments and desires a Pakistan with religious freedom not only for its Shia Muslims but for Christians as well.

The Shia community currently makes up 20 percent of the Muslim community in Pakistan and should be allowed to peacefully practice their religion. Shia Rights Watch reaffirms Mr. Emmanuel Yousaf Mani's statement that "The state must protect all religious minorities."

Sincerely,

Letter to President Obama to advocate for human rights in his meeting with leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council in Saudi Arabia

Letter to President Obama to advocate for human rights in his

meeting with leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council in Saudi Arabia

*Mr. Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500*

Dear President Obama;

On behalf of the Shia Rights Watch (SRW), we respectfully urge you to use your upcoming meeting with the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh on April 21, 2016 to emphasize on the importance of improvement on human rights in mentioned countries.

As you are aware, Gulf leaders use the national security as a mean to oppress pro-democracy activists, minorities, journalist and human rights defenders. Saudi Arabia's Terrorism Law Template, for example, defines terrorist as a person who "insults the reputation, of the state or its position". Based on this definition anyone who critiques the corruption or violation carried by the government is punished as terrorist. As the result human rights defenders face judicial harassment and other reprisals for their domestic human rights advocacy, engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, or engagement with the international human rights community. Also, similar law enabled all six Gulf states to harass, detain, put on trial, and imprison political activists and human rights defenders.

Beside human rights defenders, minority groups, such as Shia Muslims, face serious threat by their governments in Gulf area. Destruction of historical Shia sites and imprisonment of Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia, deportation of this minority from Kuwait and United Arab Emirates, and ongoing Shia oppression including minor imprisonment in Bahrain, targeted killings in Syria and Yemen are only some examples of the human rights violations in GCC countries.

Compared to other GCC counties Saudi Arabia as the most human rights violations. Execution of the most influential Shia cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nime, sentencing his nephew, Ali Nimr, beheading of at least 151 people in 2015 leaving their children and women unprotected, ongoing support of terrorists, extreme ban on Shia religious practices and, are issues that we urge you to keep in mind when visiting this country.

We urge you to advocate for the freedom of the prisoners who are detained because of expressing their religion, rights or opinion.

As American citizens and human rights defenders, we hope to see more freedom of religion and expression in Gulf countries after your meeting on April 21, 2016.

You putting human rights at the heart of your agenda at your meeting with the leaders of the GCC will send powerful message to all leaders and presents our American values.

Sincerely
Mustafa Akhwand
Director of Shia Rights Watch

Letter to President Francois Hollande

President Francois Hollande

Palais de L'Élysée

55 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré

75008 Paris, France

Dear President Hollande,

We at Shia Rights Watch are writing you to urge you to use your attendance at the Gulf Cooperation Council meeting to address human rights abuses committed by the Saudi government. Your attendance at this meeting marks a significant moment in France's relations with the Gulf. The growing security and economic cooperation between your country and the GCC is making France a major player in the Middle East. With this comes responsibility and Shia Rights Watch hopes that you use this influence to serve as a voice for the millions of people whose

lives are affected by the Human Rights abuses committed by the Saudi government.

The Saudi- led Operation Decisive Story and Operation Restore Hope have created a humanitarian crisis within Yemen. Saudi airstrikes have killed hundreds of civilians and have left millions without food and electricity. A Saudi blockade of Yemen's ports, and subsequent attacks on vehicles delivering aid have stopped the delivery of essential goods to those who need them most in Yemen.

In addition to Saudi Arabia's foreign involvement, domestically, Saudi Arabia has displayed repressive actions against its own citizens. Shia Muslims in Saudi's eastern province have been systematically denied adequate social services and has faced widespread employment discrimination. Attempts by Shia who are affected by this to speak up are met with violence by Saudi security forces. Sheikh Nimr, a prominent peaceful advocate of Saudi's Shia population, was arrested and sentenced to death under unsubstantiated charges of inciting violence. A country with such a long list of human rights abuses cannot be an effective partner in either security or economic matters.

Your attendance at this GCC meeting is of enormous importance, but it is how you use your attendance that will make the greatest difference. Your voice can be yet another voice that supports the status quo, or your voice can aid those who have been rendered helpless through years of continued violence and discrimination. Shia Rights Watch urges you to choose the latter and we hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Shia Rights Watch