

Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) Lawyers Question Legality of Saudi Arms Ship Due to Dock in UK

By [CAAT - Campaign Against Arms Trade](#)

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Lawyers from Leigh Day, representing Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), have written to the Government Legal Department seeking clarification as to the licence under which a Saudi vessel will be allowed to enter and subsequently leave the UK following its expected arrival today.

The Bahri Yanbu ship is [scheduled to arrive in Tilbury, England. Campaigners fear it could be loaded with military equipment for Saudi Arabia. The ship owners have acknowledged](#) that it is carrying military equipment. The ship is owned by the Bahri company, the [national shipping company](#) of Saudi Arabia, and is the “[exclusive logistics provider](#)” for the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Defence.

The letter from Leigh Day, published below, argues that any controlled goods on the ship must require a licence from the UK, and is seeking clarification from the government that any such licence is consistent with a Court of Appeal ruling from June 2019 against arms exports to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen.

In June 2019, following a legal action taken by CAAT, the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government acted unlawfully when it licensed the sale of UK-made arms to Saudi forces for use in Yemen without making an assessment as to whether or not past incidents amounted to breaches of International Humanitarian Law. The Government was ordered not to approve any new licences and to retake the decisions on extant licences in a lawful manner.

The ship has already visited ports in the USA and Canada. It is now in Europe; on Monday it left Bremerhaven to head to the UK. It will also be visiting France and Italy before travelling on to the Middle East. It was meant to stop at Antwerp, but was stopped by protesters. It is also expected to be met with protests in France and Italy. This morning, a group of CAAT supporters protested outside Tilbury port.

According to [Amnesty International](#), on its previous voyage visiting multiple European ports in May 2019, the Bahri Yanbu was carrying US \$47 million worth of US-manufactured military components and equipment, much of it linked to military aircraft.

Since the bombing of Yemen began in March 2015, the UK has licensed £5.3 billion worth of arms to the Saudi regime, including:

- £2.7 billion worth of ML10 licences (Aircraft, helicopters, drones)
- £2.5 billion worth of ML4 licences (Grenades, bombs, missiles, countermeasures)

In reality the figures are likely to be a great deal higher, with most bombs and missiles being licensed via the opaque and secretive Open Licence system.

Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade said:

The weapons transported by this ship could be used in human rights abuses in Yemen and beyond: it should not be allowed to use UK ports. Arms-dealing governments like the one in the UK have played a central role in strengthening the Saudi dictatorship and fuelling the devastating war in Yemen. If they want to do the right thing for people in Yemen then they must end all arms exports to the Saudi regime and cease all support for this devastating war.

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