

# Greens call for end to UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia ahead of G20 summit



20 November 2020

The Green Party of England and Wales and the Scottish Greens have condemned UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia ahead of the G20 leaders' summit hosted by Riyadh this weekend.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, said:

"The UK government is trying to sell itself as 'Global Britain', yet the best it seems to be able to come up with is selling arms to human rights abusers.

"It is a stain on our national conscience that rather than dedicating our resources to solving the world's biggest crises, this government prefers to brag about developing and selling weapons that are used to harm thousands of innocent civilians.

"It is time the UK government stopped its dirty deals with potential war criminals and showed some true leadership on the world stage by properly addressing climate change and the global pandemic."

Earlier this year the UK government announced it was to resume selling arms to Saudi Arabia, despite these exports having been found to be illegal because they were used to commit war crimes in Yemen. [1]

Recent figures from Oxfam suggest the UK licensed \$5.4 billion of arms sales to Saudi Arabia between 2015 and 2020 – more than four times the amount of aid it has given to Yemen in the same period.[2]

Following the UK's announcement of a further £16.5bn in defence spending yesterday [Thursday 19 November], the Greens have warned the move will fail to address the country's biggest security threats and should instead be spent on tackling the climate, health and economic emergencies we are currently facing. [3]

Ross Greer MSP, Scottish Greens international affairs spokesperson, said:

"Compared to the meagre £4bn spent on a speculative climate wish list, the whopping £16.5bn Boris Johnson is throwing at defence spending is absolutely ridiculous in itself, never mind the fact he announced it on the eve of a G20 summit hosted by a regime that uses British-made bombs to kill children.

"This spending imbalance needs to be redressed to tackle the real threat to our survival, the climate emergency. Instead of throwing more money at weapons and arms dealers, why not create quality manufacturing jobs in the industries which actually benefit our country and the world, like the domestic supply chain for the wind farms that will be going up at a rapid

rate off our coasts?”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/britain-arms-sell-saudi-arabia-military-exports-a9605636.html>

2

[https://oxfamapps.org/media/press\\_release/g20-arms-exports-to-saudi-arabia-worth-three-times-aid-to-yemen-since-2015/](https://oxfamapps.org/media/press_release/g20-arms-exports-to-saudi-arabia-worth-three-times-aid-to-yemen-since-2015/)

3

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2020/11/19/greens-warn-defence-budget-increase-fails-to-address-biggest-threats-to-our-security/>

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## Greens call out “rank hypocrisy” of threats to freeze public-sector pay



20 November 2020

The Green Party has accused government ministers of “rank hypocrisy” for threatening to freeze the pay of millions of public sector workers just months after standing on their doorsteps to applaud them.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“During this pandemic the country at large has shown its appreciation for the hard work and dedication of our key workers. It is rank hypocrisy for Tory ministers who were clapping for these heroes of the Covid crisis on their doorsteps to now freeze their pay.

“I agree wholeheartedly with Frances O’Grady in her call for a pay rise as a reward for their service rather than suffering what is, in effect, a pay cut.

“This callous Tory government appears to have learned nothing from the

disaster that ten years of austerity caused both to our vital public services and our regional economies.

“A pay freeze now will further entrench the hardship that people across this country are facing.”

ENDS

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## [Greens welcome right to scrap First Past the Post in Welsh local elections](#)



19 November 2020

The Green Party has welcomed the Senedd's decision to allow councils in Wales to adopt a fairer voting system for next year's local elections.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill [1] gives councils the option to drop the First Past the Post system in favour of the Single Transferable Vote.

Wales Green Party leader Anthony Slaughter said:

“It is great to see Wales finally starting to adopt a fairer voting system. Councils have an enormous impact on the lives of us all and so it is only right that people's votes actually count.

“As in England, there is usually a very low turnout in local elections and a real lack of diversity in the outcome. The changes in this Bill, including votes at 16 and automatic voter registration, could not only increase participation but also provide a much fairer and representative result.

“We would now urge all councils across Wales to take up this option and drop the archaic First Past the Post system, or else risk ending up with a situation where some people have a fair vote and others do not.”

### Notes

1

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=26688>

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## [Greens warn defence budget increase fails to address biggest threats to our security](#)



19 November 2020

- **Amelia Womack: 'We are walking blindfold into a video game dystopia without a public debate'**

The Green Party has criticised the government announcement of a £16.5bn investment in defence which is taking place outside the framework of a full spending review. This represents a 10% increase in the defence budget

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

"Just one day after offering a paltry amount for the climate, and amid talks of slashing the aid budget, the decision to prioritise the defence budget is clearly about posturing on the international stage rather than protecting security at home.

"As we leave the European Union we should establish the role of Global Britain as a peace-maker not warmonger. It should be our role to show leadership on multilateral negotiations to reduce the threats from drones and robots rather than accelerating a digital arms race."

Greens argue that investment in a new space command, cyber force and artificial intelligence agency fail to target the real source of threats to our security.

Womack said:

"This is a massive escalation in the digital arms race but does nothing to address the real threats to our security that come from pandemics [1] and the climate emergency [2], both of which are exacerbated by our inability to live in balance with our planet. We are walking blindfold into a video game dystopia without a public debate.

"To justify this investment on the basis of jobs is both immoral and deceitful. The work that really needs doing to protect our future lies in

making our homes, farms, and transport system fit for the climate crisis.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

RUSI report, [Revamping Crisis Resilience and Security in the Post-Pandemic World](#)

2

The World Economic Forum, [Global Risks Report 2020](#).

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# Greens critical of government procurement process for Covid equipment



18 November 2020

Responding to report from National Audit Office [1], Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“Back in June I wrote to the NAO asking them to look into these contracts, so I welcome their report this morning.

“There has been a very bad smell around the awarding of Covid contracts from the start but I’m horrified to learn this morning that £10.5bn of public money was spent without open competition. From the party that has always boasted of its careful management of the public finances this is also the height of hypocrisy.

“The whole idea of a ‘fast lane’ also opens the risk of corruption. How could people gain access to this fast lane unless they had contacts with the Conservative party? The fact that there was no transparency or documentation explaining how this fast lane could be accessed adds to the sense of a corrupt process and raises serious concerns about conflicts of interest.”

“We now need a much deeper and wider investigation into why billions in public money was wasted on suppliers with limited experience and totally superfluous middle-men.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/government-procurement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

2

Green MP Caroline Lucas is part of a legal action to challenge the opaque award of Covid contracts:

<https://goodlawproject.org/update/unpublished-contracts-permission/>

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