

EU must impose an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia



30 November 2017

The Greens/EFA group is calling on the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, to launch an initiative in the Foreign Affairs Council to impose an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia. The European Parliament will hold a debate this afternoon on the situation in Yemen, with a vote on a motion for a resolution tomorrow.

Bodil Valero was rapporteur for the European Parliament's report on Arms Exports, which previously called on High Representative Mogherini to launch an embargo (1). She comments:

"It is a scandal that EU member states continue to provide arms and expertise to Saudi Arabia in the war against Yemen. High Representative Mogherini should urgently launch an initiative to impose an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia. As chairwomen of the Foreign Affairs Council, we urge Mogherini to formally put the item of an embargo on the agenda of their next meeting. EU countries cannot continue to be party to the horrible suffering being caused in Yemen.

"Saudi Arabia should immediately stop the sea, land and air blockade of Yemen and allow full access for humanitarian aid to all parts of Yemen."

The UK is one of the EU countries still exporting high volumes of arms to Saudi Arabia, where Prime Minister Theresa May is currently visiting (2). British MEP Molly Scott Cato adds:

"While Theresa May will no doubt pay lip service to the tragedy facing the people of Yemen during her trip to Saudi Arabia, these words will mean nothing so long as the UK continues to sell billions of euros worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia each year.

“There are signs that war crimes are being committed in Yemen on a grave scale. We support the collection of evidence for the criminal prosecution of those committing such crimes and UN sanctions against individuals obstructing delivery of humanitarian assistance.”

Notes

(1) See our press release from 12 September for more information:

<https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/keine-waffen-nach-saudi-arabien/>

(2) According to figures obtained by The Guardian, UK military sales to Saudi Arabia were over £1.1bn in the first half of 2017:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/24/uk-sales-of-arms-and-military-equipment-to-saudi-arabia-2017>

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MEPs challenge Commission over allegations of Russian influence in referendum campaign



29 November 2017

A cross-Party group of MEPs are raising concerns with the European Commission about Russian interference in the EU referendum in an ‘unprecedented display of unity’. Green, Labour, Lib Dem and Plaid Cymru MEPs together with an ex-Conservative MEP have signed a letter to the Commission about their concerns [1]. They have asked how much the Commission know of Russian influence in the

referendum campaign and of the techniques used; whether they consider such interference was an attempt by the Kremlin to attack and destabilise the EU; and whether they will use EU agencies to investigate the allegations.

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP, said:

"The EU referendum and the decision to leave the EU has been one of the most divisive our nation has ever experienced. But it is also bridging the political divide. In an unprecedented display of unity, MEPs from across the political spectrum, have united to express our deep concerns over allegations of Kremlin meddling in the EU referendum campaign."

"The allegations of Russian influence cast a long shadow over the Brexit result. This makes it even more essential that the British public are provided another opportunity through a ratification referendum to accept the deal negotiated by the government or choose to remain in the EU."

Clare Moody, Labour MEP, said:

"The Electoral Commission's enquiry shows the evidence is mounting of links between British politicians and the Russian government and we now know there were over [156,000 Russian-based Twitter accounts](#) engaged in a concerted campaign to support the Leave side. It is essential we get some answers about the extent to which this interference influenced the referendum result. That's why, as MEPs, we are asking the Commission to tell us what they know and to investigate further."

Catherine Bearder, Lib Dem MEP, said:

"Theresa May has already acknowledged Russian interference in the General Election, now she needs to recognize the same happened in the EU referendum campaign and offer assurances to the British public by delivering a ratification referendum on the final deal. This must be a vote which is fair, regulated and free from interference from foreign organisations and governments."

Notes:

1. Letter to EU Commission:

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2017/11/28/wq-commission-russia-ref/>

Full list of signatories: Molly Scott Cato (Green), Julie Girling (former Conservative), Clare Moody (Labour), Catherine Bearder (Lib Dem), Richard Corbett (Labour), Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru), Jean Lambert (Green), Jude Kirton-Darling (Labour), Paul Brannen (Labour)

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Green co-leader joins refugee English lesson to mark anniversary of Casey Review



29 November 2017

***Government has failed to respond to Casey Review**

***Green co-leader joins refugee English lesson and writes to Sajid Javid to demand action**

***Co-leader Jonathan Bartley: "Being unable to communicate is a huge barrier to refugees trying to start a new life in Britain"**

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley will today visit an English language lesson for refugees in Bradford ahead of the anniversary of the Casey Review.

Next week will mark one year since Dame Louise Casey's review into opportunity and integration [1] was published on December 5, 2016 and the Government has yet to respond.

The review highlighted English lessons as the most important factor in helping immigrants integrate into their new communities. However, funding for classes has been cut by more than 50 per cent since 2008 [2].

The Green Party has now written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid [3] to ask how the promotion of English language skills will be included in the Government's upcoming integration strategy.

Bartley said:

"It's disgraceful that the Government has firstly reduced access to such a vital service and secondly ignored the evidence that we are failing to ensure

social integration. Being unable to communicate is a huge barrier to refugees trying to start a new life in Britain and will only lead to isolation and loneliness.

“All refugees want to do is settle into their new homes, rebuild their lives and become part of their communities. But the Government is effectively shutting them out by cutting off funding for the English language lessons they need to communicate.

“I’m looking forward to visiting Bradford and seeing firsthand what an impact English lessons can have on refugees’ lives and making the case for them to be front and centre of the Government’s new integration strategy.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-int-o-opportunity-and-integration>
2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrants-wait-years-english-classes-government-lessons-esol-a7517221.html>
3. Full text of the letter:

Dear Sajid,

I write to you regarding the Government’s failure to respond to the independent review by Dame Louise Casey into opportunity and integration.

The Casey Review was published on December 5, 2016 and revealed a failure of governments to ensure that social integration policies and strategies kept up with immigration levels over the past decade. The report highlighted that access to English language lessons was the most important factor in integration and that resources for language lessons needed to be increased.

In January this year, the all-party parliamentary group on social integration also published a report recommending that migrants be enrolled in compulsory English language classes on arrival.

English lessons are essential for refugees to engage in day-to-day life. A shared language allows refugees to work, study, meet new people and even just share a meal.

However, the Skills Funding Agency has cut English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) funding from £212m in 2008 to £95m in 2015.

I would like to know how the Department for Communities and Local Government intends to respond to the Casey review and if it will be considering increasing funding for lessons in future years.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader

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[Greens blame austerity, cuts to public services and a broken electoral system for lack of social mobility](#)



28 November 2017

A new report has ranked every region of the country on social mobility, concluding there is a “postcode lottery” on the ability to improve educational or job prospects. However, Greens have pointed to funding cuts, privatisation and outsourcing and the loss of one million public sector jobs since 2010 as reasons for a lack of social mobility. They also blame an ‘unfair and unrepresentative first-past-the-post electoral system’.

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West and Green Party speaker on economy and finance, said:

“This new report shows the impacts of a decade of austerity on some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. This is a story of neglect of vulnerable communities and the consequences of the chronic under-funding of the services they rely on to improve their life chances. The public sector has also traditionally offered a route to skilled and high-paid employment for those outside the major urban centres so the loss of one million public sector jobs due to funding cuts has closed off these opportunities in many regional economics.”

Scott Cato blamed a broken electoral system for a failure to improve the life chances of the poorest:

“Many Conservatives MPs have no incentive to do anything to improve the life chances of some of the most excluded in society as they sit in safe seats under our desperately unfair and unrepresentative first-past-the-post electoral system. We need electoral reform and a system of proportional representation to give the powerless a voice in elections.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-42112436>

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European Green Party supports call for ratification referendum on Brexit deal



26 November 2017

South West Green MEP, Molly Scott Cato, has welcomed support for a resolution on holding a ratification referendum, agreed at the European Green Party conference in Karlstad today [1]. Such a referendum, which has long been supported by the Green Party of England and Wales, would allow people a democratic choice between accepting the negotiated terms for Brexit or remaining part of the EU.

Scott Cato said:

“The European Green family has expressed concern about the chaotic nature of the UK government’s negotiating strategy, and the massive failure of transparency in its refusal to release detailed studies on the impact of

Brexit.

“But the key focus of debate was the need for democratic decision-making on Britain’s future, which demands a ratification referendum on the final Brexit deal. This referendum needs to offer the option of remaining a member of the EU and be an open, honest and transparent vote.

“It was obvious that there was a serious and disturbing lack of honesty in the debate in the 2016 referendum, and it is becoming increasingly clear there has been a lack of transparency, and possibly outright illegality in the funding of the Leave campaigns.”

Natalie Bennett, Green Party former leader, who was in Karlstad, said:

“It was encouraging to receive the wholehearted support of the European Green family for the England and Wales Green Party’s position, and their understanding of the way in which the British people had been failed by the political system and media in the referendum debate.

“The Council also heard a scathing critique of the failings of the British political system and media from Sweden’s foreign minister and deputy prime minister, Margot Wallstrom (a Social Democrat), who addressed the Council.

“There was no desire at all to punish the British people for the referendum vote, or to harm British interests. What was heartening was the compassion and support for the British people in the midst of the uncertainty and turmoil.

“And, as the motion adopted expressed, there was a strong desire for us to remain as part of the European Union, in our interests, and those of the EU27.”

Notes:

1. <https://europeangreens.eu/sites/europeangreens.eu/files/8.%20Adopted%20resolution%20Karlstad%20-%200n%20the%20UK%20ratification%20referendum.pdf>

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