

OXFAM report reveals UK arms sales to Saudi-led coalition up by almost 50 percent



London, December 27 (RHC)-- A UK-based charity has revealed that Britain's arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its allies in their aggression on Yemen have seen an almost 50-percent rise over the past five years.

The British government has sold some 6.4 billion pounds worth of aircraft, helicopters, drones and other weapons and ammunition to the Saudi-led coalition since 2015, according to a research study published by Oxfam on Tuesday.

The charity said the UK has signed off two billion pounds more in arms exports since January 2015 than it approved over the previous five years, which marks a 45-percent spike in licenses for British arms manufacturers. Since the onset of the Saudi-led war on Yemen in 2015, more than 3,600 Yemeni children have been killed and 800 others paralyzed, a recent report shows.

Ruth Tanner, the Oxfam's head of humanitarian campaigns, denounced the increase in arms sales as a "stain" on Britain's conscience given the buying countries' role in the devastating war in Yemen. "Just a few years ago, the UK government enthusiastically pursued the introduction of legislation to better control arms transfers to avoid the kind of indiscriminate violence that has been unleashed on civilians in

Yemen,” Tanner said.

“Now the UK is doing all it can to avoid suspending arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners. This rise in arms sales should be a stain on our conscience. The Yemenis who’ve had to flee their homes, go without food and clean water, and endure outbreaks of disease need an end to this war and a chance to rebuild their lives,” she added.

The increase comes despite the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) signed in 2014 — an international treaty that bans arms sales if there is a risk those weapons could be used in violation of international humanitarian or human rights law.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

A number of Western countries -- the United States, France and Britain in particular -- are accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression as they supply Saudi Arabia with advanced weapons and military equipment as well as logistical and intelligence assistance.

International aid agencies have called for life-saving assistance to help millions of Yemeni civilians facing starvation and disease. The US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past four and a half years.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

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