



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

UK HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT – AN INTERNATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT



Back in 1998, Tony Blair wanted to advertise to the world his moral virtue and the fashionable subject of human rights seemed just the way to do it.

As a result, the annual Foreign Office report on human rights was born, as ministers spoke of “a more just and peaceful world, in which human rights are genuinely universal”.

We might expect Britain to be consistently condemning human rights violations, calling for sanctions against those who carry them out.

ICSFT in special consultative status with the ECOSOC / Conseil oecuménique des Églises 150, Route de Ferney 1211, Offices: 191&192, Geneva, Switzerland, Tel: +41227884808/ 5&6- Fax: + 41227884807
Website: www.icsft.net - Email: uncoordinator@icsft.net / info@icsft.net



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

But, exactly 20 years later, this document no longer signals Britain's virtue, rather it has become a grotesque embarrassment and the most eloquent statement of British double standards.

This is the reality of the 2017 edition of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report on Human Rights and Democracy.

Merciless war in Yemen

The most repulsive example in this year's report concerns Yemen. The report recounts how more than two million Yemenis have been displaced, more than 6,000 killed and 10,000 injured in a [merciless war](#) with no end in sight.

Incredibly, the Foreign Office report doesn't even once mention the Saudi-led coalition that inflicts the airstrikes. It describes a war without saying who's fighting in it.

Instead, it points the finger exclusively onto actors non related to the UK or the Saudi-led coalition, as if they alone are to blame for the astronomic levels of suffering. It attacks on the grounds that: "The death penalty is used in Yemen. In August, there was a credible report of a public execution in Sana'a for an alleged violent crime."

With death falling incessantly from the sky in the Yemen, it seems disproportionate to excoriate the use of death penalty, a punishment used to this day by Britain's greatest ally, the United States.

Further, the Foreign Office gushes that the UK is the third-largest [giver of aid](#) to Yemen, but makes no mention of Britain's role in supplying some £4.5 billion (\$5.9bn) worth of arms to Saudi Arabia, which leads the [coalition](#) causing most of the suffering.

Silence about UAE human rights violations

According to the International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE, Emirati authorities imprisoned dozens of dissidents in 2017, many for comments on social media.

Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and torture went unchecked, the group says. One political prisoner, Nasser bin Ghaith, is being held in the hellish al-Razeen prison known as the [Guantanamo of the UAE](#).

The UAE has its own crimes in Yemen to answer to, running prisons in which Amnesty reports "egregious violations" of [human rights](#).



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

But the UAE does not even make it onto Britain's list of 30 nations that [cause concern](#) for human rights.

Lending cover to Bahrain

Bahrain, another of Britain's strategic allies, at least makes the list of shame. But for the second year running, the Foreign Office refers only to a "mixed picture" of human rights [in the kingdom](#). Compare that to the unequivocal statement in the first line of the entry on an enemy, Iran: "The Iranian state continued to violate human rights during 2017."

The report applauds former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson for calling out Bahrain on the death penalty. It does not care to mention that since 2012, the Foreign Office has pumped more than £5 million (\$6.6m) into Bahrain's security and justice system.

This was ostensibly to reform the system and bring down abuse, but in that time, death row has grown three times as long as it was, according to human rights group Reprieve. British companies train Bahraini prison and police officers, and Reprieve believes the UK may even have [trained](#) Bahraini torturers.

The Foreign Office report only notes that executions – three in January 2017 – have resumed for the first time since 2010. All this leads Amnesty International to accuse Britain of "[lending cover](#)" to Bahrain's human rights abuses.

Reprieve says Britain has provided justice and security assistance to several [other countries](#) that execute prisoners, among them, Saudi Arabia.

Complicity in Israeli violations

The dishonesty of the report goes on. It rightly notes that in Israel, "many human rights issues in 2017 stemmed from the Israeli Government's violation of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza".

It attacks the expansion of Israeli settlements and the state's demolition of Palestinian homes. But it does not mention the record-breaking £221m (\$290m) [worth of arms](#) Britain last year sold to Israel.

This included sniper rifles. We will discover next year whether the 2018 Foreign Office human rights report notes the possibility that British guns were fired on unarmed [Palestinian protesters](#) at the Gaza border this spring, or the fact that Britain then abstained from voting for a UN investigation into possible war crimes.

ICSFT in special consultative status with the ECOSOC / Conseil oecuménique des Églises 150, Route de Ferney 1211, Offices: 191&192, Geneva, Switzerland, Tel: +41227884808/ 5&6- Fax: + 41227884807
Website: www.icsft.net - Email: uncoordinator@icsft.net / info@icsft.net



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Perhaps it should be praised the fact that the Foreign Office even produces such a report. At least it draws attention to some of the dark injustices on earth.

But if the report is to have any lasting worth at all, it must recognise the role of the British government in the horrors in its pages.

As such ICSFT condemns the double standards practiced by the British government in trying to portrait the country as a human rights defender while being complicit in the worst cases of human rights violation worldwide.

When it comes to the condemnation of international political enemies they are fast and vocal, but when it comes to condemn its allies the UK government remains silent, even though they are often times the worst perpetrators of human rights violations and were being provided with British weapons and training to perpetrate them.