

# Human Rights Abuses and the Funding of Terrorism: Britain's Relationship With Saudi Arabia Is a Disgrace

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*In the wake of the heinous [massacre](#) that took place in Paris last week, and with [Raif Badawi](#) in Saudi Arabia having just received 50 lashes out of the 1000 he's been sentenced to for the crime of setting up a blog deemed 'insulting to Islam', Britain's ongoing relationship with this vile regime is an insult to the very words 'decency' and 'democracy'.*

Indeed, has there ever been a more vile regime than the gang of bloated potentates that rules over Saudi Arabia? Responsible for fomenting chaos and carnage beyond their own borders, while at home brutalising their own people, surely it is time for the international community to turn its attention to the Saudis and their utter and complete disregard for anything resembling human rights.

The scale of the brutality and barbarism that is a regular occurrence in this oil-rich kingdom is reflected in the number of public executions by beheading that are carried out there. According to a [report](#) by Human Rights Watch (HRW), 19 people were beheaded in Saudi Arabia in the first half of August last year alone. Of those executed eight were found guilty of non-violent offences, while a further seven were found guilty of drug smuggling. One victim was executed for sorcery, whatever that means.

Let us not equivocate: in the 21st Century the idea of state-sanctioned execution of prisoners by beheading with a sword in public is beyond barbaric. Sarah Leah Whitson, HRW's Middle East and North Africa director, said:

"Any execution is appalling, but executions for crimes such as drug smuggling or sorcery that result in no loss of life are particularly egregious." She went on: "There is simply no excuse for Saudi Arabia's continued use of the death penalty, especially for these types of crimes."

Women in Saudi Arabia, along with minorities regardless of gender, are regarded as chattel, with little if any rights that most would consider compatible with a civilised society. It is a medieval system, underpinned by the most extreme interpretation of Islam, Wahhabism, which at the time of writing is playing a key role in spreading religious fundamentalism throughout the Middle East. Donations and money have verily flooded into the coffers of groups such as IS (formerly known as ISIS), enabling them to sustain and consolidate their presence as they set about turning the region into a graveyard for anyone who does not subscribe to their poisonous ideology, both Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

With this in mind, the fact Saudi Arabia remains a close strategic ally and economic partner of western governments, including France, whose failure to seriously confront or challenge it over its serial human rights abuses, smacks of immorality and hypocrisy, especially in light of the Charlie Hebdo massacres, carried out in the name of the same warped ideology that underpins the kingdom's existence.

Only in February last year, British defence firm BAE agreed a deal to supply the Saudis with 72 Typhoon fighter jets, worth £4.4billion (just over \$7billion). The deal was agreed around the same time as Prince Charles paid a state visit to Saudi Arabia, where he is a frequent visitor. When asked, the Prince's office denied any connection between the BAE deal and his visit to the country.

In fact Saudi Arabia has been a very lucrative market for British arms firms over the years. British author Nicholas Gilby, in his book *Deception In High Places* (Pluto), traces the covert deals and 'commissions' that have punctuated the murky relationship between the Saudi government and British arms firms and their representatives, among them members of the British government and Royal Family.

Gilby claims that various Saudi princes received tens of millions of pounds in these so-called 'commissions' as a reward for granting arms contracts to British firms. Between 1989 and 2002 the Saudis received over £60million in gifts and cash from BAE, the writer reveals. By an standard, this is corruption on a grand scale.

That the British government cosies up to the Saudis in the full knowledge of the living hell in which many of its citizens are forced to endure, is a scandal that has gone criminally under reported and highlighted over the years. That it does so while lecturing the rest of the world about democracy and human rights merely adds an extra layer of hypocrisy to the equation.

The only country in the world named after a family, Saudi Arabia is the world's petrol station and has been since the 1930s, when the country came into being. Indeed, US oil companies were present in the country even before a US Embassy was established in Riyadh in 1944, located in the headquarters of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO).

This close relationship between US oil interests and the Saudis, which has dictated US government policy in the region to a large extent, has never waned. In particular the relationship between the Bush family and the Saudis has attracted controversy over the years. In his bestselling book *House of Bush, House of Saud* (2004), American journalist Craig Unger asks who gave permission for prominent Saudi nationals to fly out of the United States immediately after 9/11, when all passenger and civilian aircraft were meant to be grounded. Given that 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 were also Saudi nationals, the fact that those individuals were allowed to leave the US came as a startling revelation.

To date no explanation has been given.

Public beheadings, human rights abuses, the funding of terrorism, arms deals, bribes, connections with the British Royal Family and leading US political figures – taken together it sounds like the plot of a Hollywood movie. Sadly, it is all too real.

Taking a stand against the barbarism that erupted on the streets of Paris last week, without taking a stand against Saudi Arabia and everything it represents, is more than hypocritical it is utterly reprehensible.

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