

PRESS RELEASE

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The "ship of death" arrives at the port of Sagunto

Spanish NGOs demand the government ensure Saudi ship carries no arms through Spanish ports

- *The Saudi Arabian ship Bahri Abha arrives at the port of Sagunto, Valencia*
- *Since the war in Yemen began, this ship has ferried US\$162 million of US arms to Saudi Arabia*
- *The Spanish government must stop the transit of ships carrying weapons that could be used to commit war crimes.*

Madrid /Port of Sagunto – The Saudi Arabia state-owned cargo ship Bahri Abha arrived early this morning at the port of Sagunto, Valencia, despite calls from organizations such as Amnesty International, FundiPau, Greenpeace and Oxfam Intermón for the government to prevent its entry into a Spanish port.

The organizations that make up the Spanish Control Arms campaign have come this morning to the port of Sagunto to protest the arrival of the ship and to demand that the Spanish government prohibit the transit and loading in Spain of weapons likely to be used to commit war crimes.

“Since Yemen’s current war began in 2015 this same ship has carried weapons, mostly military aircraft components, worth 143 million euros on eight voyages from the United States to Saudi Arabia. The Spanish government must intervene to ensure this Saudi Arabian ship is not transporting more deadly cargo to could be used to commit further atrocities in Yemen. If it is carrying more arms to be used to commit violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, its transit through Spanish territory violates international law,” said Alberto Estévez, spokesperson for the campaign, which has been calling on the government to suspend arms exports to the Saudi Arabia and Emirati-led Coalition in Yemen.

The Bahri Abha visited several ports on the east coast of the USA before announcing a sudden route change to Sagunto on 26 November. It is unknown if it is carrying arms on its current voyage, but it seems highly likely based on its recent history.

According to bills of lading data analysed by Amnesty International, since the war in Yemen began in 2015, the Bahri Abha has transferred some US\$162 million (€143) worth of arms on eight voyages from the USA to Saudi Arabia. Almost a quarter of this has been in 2019, and the majority has been military aircraft components. The Saudi Arabia and Emirati-led Coalition’s air war over Yemen has killed and injured thousands of civilians, including in attacks that violated international humanitarian law.

In addition the NGOs fear the ship may also load new weapons in Spain. This was the case with another ship from the same fleet, the Bahri Yanbu, which loaded weapons destined for the United Arab Emirates in Santander in May this year.

According to information Amnesty International Spain received from the Spanish government, in Sagunto the ship is due to load containers to be sent to Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) and Alexandria (Egypt). Nevertheless the Spanish government has revealed neither the content of the containers nor the cargo being carried from the USA. The organization is extremely worried about this trade shrouded in secrecy.

“We have requested information from the government regarding what this ship is doing in Spanish territory, but we haven't received a response,” Alberto Estévez said.

“Exports to the Saudi Arabia and Emirati-led Coalition are illegal because they violate Spanish and international law: the Spanish government has an obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. If officials allow this operation, they risk being complicit in the commission of war crimes. The government must therefore prevent this ship from loading arms in Sagunto or transporting arms to Saudi Arabia that would likely be used in atrocities in Yemen”.

Five years of a forgotten war

The armed conflict in Yemen began when, in March 2015, a Coalition of states led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) intervened at the request of President Hadi, with the aim of restoring the internationally recognized government to power after the Huthis took over Sana'a in early 2015.

By the end of 2019, over 233,000 Yemenis will have been killed as a result of the fighting or the humanitarian crisis; some 14.3 million people are at risk of famine; and 24 million, out of a population of 29 million, need humanitarian assistance to survive.

One person out of three in Yemen – mostly women and children – is on the brink of famine. More than 16 million people do not have access to drinking water, and 15 million do not have access to minimum health services since hospitals are closing due to lack of resources.

The UN, as well as international and Yemeni NGOs, have documented dozens of serious violations, including war crimes, by all parties to the conflict, including direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture and other ill-treatment. In the first four years of the conflict, Amnesty International has documented at least 41 air strikes by the Saudi coalition that allegedly violated international humanitarian law, many of which could constitute war crimes. These attacks alone resulted in 512 civilian deaths and 433 civilian injuries.

Background

After ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2014, Spain has a number of obligations. Article 6 of the ATT provides that each State Party shall prohibit the transfer of conventional arms and ammunition when they would be used to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes.

In addition, Article 9 ensures that States Parties "shall take appropriate measures" to regulate the transit or trans-shipment of conventional arms through their territory "where necessary and feasible" and "in accordance with relevant international law", as in this case.

In response to public pressure, [several countries, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and Germany, have suspended all or part of their arms sales to Saudi Arabia](#), the UAE and other coalition members. Following the murder of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal

Khashoggi, several more European states announced the suspension of arms transfers to Saudi Arabia, including Norway, Finland and Denmark.

Notes for editors:

- Spokespersons available for interviews.
- Photos, B-roll with images of the Bahri Abha's arrival and NGO statements are available for download here:

<https://nube.es.amnesty.org/index.php/s/ZmJgp6CmjMKWnYw>

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