



Atheist Freethinkers

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

**AFT denounces the sale of military equipment by
Canada to Saudi Arabia**

Montreal, 19th April 2016 – *Atheist Freethinkers* (AFT), an association which promotes secularism and supports the rights of atheists, denounces the sale of military equipment by Canada to Saudi Arabia. AFT also denounces the draconian anti-atheist policy of the Saudi regime.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stéphane Dion, gave his approval on April 8th last to allow Canada to export 11 billion dollars worth of military equipment to Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi Arabia is notorious for its many human rights violations. 47 persons have been executed in that country just since January 2nd and 151 in 2015, an increase compared to the 87 executions in 2014. Sunni Islam, state religion of that country, opposes Shia Islam and is well known for taking a very repressive approach to dissidents who oppose the regime of the Saudi royal family.

Furthermore, a 2014 royal decree stipulated that atheists are considered by the Saudi regime to be terrorists. The regime defines terrorism as: “calling for atheist thought in any form, or calling into question the fundamentals of the Islamic religion on which this country is based.” The ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the UN, Abdallah al-Mouallimi, confirmed this fact recently in an interview on the Al Jazeera America television network. Canada has issued no statement denouncing this attitude.

Finally, Faisal Trad, ambassador of Saudi Arabia at the UN in Geneva, was chosen, in a personal capacity, to lead a panel of experts advising the UN Human Rights Council. Such a choice raises even greater concerns.

AFT asks that Canada cancel the sale of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and calls on Canada to take a more active role in defending the rights of non-believers throughout the world.

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