



Factum

Four in Five (80%) Canadians Support Canadian Foreign Minister's Call for Release of Human-Rights Activists Detained in Saudi Arabia

Strong Majority (84%) Disagrees that Canada Should Continue to Sell Arms to Saudi Arabia amid UN's accusations of Grave Human-Rights Violations by Saudi Arabia

Toronto, ON, August 27, 2018 — As the diplomatic quarrel between Canada and Saudi Arabia over the detention of human-rights activists by the Saudis continues to boil, a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of AVAAZ has revealed that four in five (80%) Canadians support (37% strongly/43% somewhat) "Canada's Foreign Minister's decision to call for the release of human-rights activists detained in Saudi Arabia". Conversely, two in ten (20%) disagree (6% strongly/14% somewhat) with the Minister's outspoken remarks.

Moreover, only four in ten (42%) agree (11% strongly/30% somewhat) that Canada shouldn't get involved in other countries' issues, even if related to human rights, while a majority (58%) disagrees (17% strongly/41% somewhat) with this sentiment, believing that Canada is right to involve itself in these types of issues.

Recently, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland has called for the release of human-rights activists detained in Saudi Arabia, which has led to a dispute with Saudi Arabia who has enacted a range of diplomatic and economic sanctions against Canada, including recalling its Ambassador, cancelling flight service, and bringing home its international students studying at Canadian universities.

The issue is of particular interest to the international community because Canada has been selling arms to Saudi Arabia, and the UN has made accusations of grave human-rights violations by the Saudi authorities using those arms. While the original deal to sell arms to the Saudis was designed by the previous Harper government, the Trudeau Liberals have allowed the sales to continue, now putting the Government of Canada in a tricky political situation.

Canadians have nearly reached a consensus on the issue: a strong majority (84%) disagrees (49% strongly/35% somewhat) that Canada should continue to sell arms (weapons) to Saudi Arabia, even though the UN has made accusations of grave human-rights violations by Saudi Arabia. Just two in ten (16%) agree (4% strongly/12% somewhat) that the transactions should continue.

Canada's stance has not been without repercussions, which were made swiftly by the Saudis in the form of economic and diplomatic sanctions. Even so, Canadians still favour speaking out to staying silent: eight in ten (78%) agree that "the Canadian government should continue to speak out against countries that violate human rights, even if it means sanctions against Canada". Conversely, two in ten (22%) disagree (7% strongly/15% somewhat) that the government should continue to speak out against human rights violations, fearing economic sanctions against Canada.

Canadians also believe that the government should do what it can to salvage relations with the Saudis, despite what has happened between the two countries. Six in ten (59%) agree (12% strongly/59% somewhat) that "Canada should do whatever it can to preserve a strong economic relationship with Saudi Arabia", while four in ten (41%) disagree (11% strongly/31% somewhat). A delicate balance indeed.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 16 and 20, 2018, on behalf of AVAAZ. For this survey, a sample of 1,001 was interviewed. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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