



## **Middle East countries rank among 'riskiest' nations receiving US arms sales**

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Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa have been ranked as the "riskiest" nations that receive US arms sales, according to a recent study published by the Cato Institute.

The Washington-based think tank concluded in their 2021 report, released last week, that Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, and Turkey had the highest risk of arms being used to undermine social stability and human rights, while receiving millions of dollars in weapons sales from the US.

"By continuing to sell weapons to extremely fragile states and countries with authoritarian governments, the US contributes to rising levels of violence and oppression around the world," said the report.

"Providing weapons to governments that treat their citizens poorly increases the power of the state at the expense of its citizens, allowing them to respond to unrest and political challenges with violence."

The research group used a number of factors - including a country's level of corruption, instability, treatment of people, and the level of conflict - to determine the consequences

involved in trading arms to different nations. It ranked countries on a scale of one to 100, with the latter being the highest level of risk.

Saudi Arabia received a score of 71 and received \$26.9bn dollars in arms sales from the US from 2009 to 2020. The kingdom, by far, acquired the largest amount of weaponry from Washington despite a poor human rights record and allegations of extra-judicial killings.

Egypt scored 78 and received \$8.5bn in US arms sales in that same period. Under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, there has been a growing prevalence of extra-judicial killings, mass arbitrary arrests and forced disappearance in the North African country, according to Human Rights Watch.

In 2020 alone, at least 35 people in custody in Egypt died following medical complications.

Iraq, plagued by corruption and violence in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, stood at 89 in the Cato Institute's index and has received around \$10.5 bn in sales from the US.

### **Biden continues to provide arms**

A report released last year by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri) found that the US remained the world's biggest exporter of major arms, and around 47 percent of US arms exports between 2016-2020 went to the Middle East - an increase of 28 percent from the previous five years.

The increases included US arms exports to Israel rising by 335 percent, Qatar by 208 percent and Saudi Arabia by 175 percent.

When US President Joe Biden first entered office last year, his administration pledged to break away from policies of his predecessor Donald Trump.

**'The Biden administration has continued Trump administration policies that increase the risks from arms sales in general'**

***- Cato Institute report***

Biden paused a weapons sale to Saudi Arabia pending a review, and also issued a review of a \$23bn arms deal with the United Arab Emirates.

He also announced an end to supporting offensive operations for the Saudi-led coalition's efforts in the war in Yemen.

However, since then, the administration has continued to greenlight arms sales to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other allies in the Middle East despite concerns the arms would be used to violate human rights.

Cato further criticised Biden for failing to reverse the burgeoning arms industry that developed under the Trump administration. Instead, policies such as reducing congressional oversight on arms sales have continued, contradicting the administration's stated goals to put human rights at the centre of foreign policy.

"To date, the Biden administration has continued Trump administration policies that increase the risks from arms sales in general," the report said.