

Press release: Penny Mordaunt announces UK aid commitment to protect civilians, aid workers and hospitals targeted by the Asad regime

Women and children are evacuated from eastern Ghouta, Syria, March 2018.
Picture: UNICEF/Omar Sanadiki

The UK will provide lifesaving emergency medical support and help protect medical facilities and brave humanitarian workers that are being deliberately targeted with bombs and chemical weapons by the Asad regime, the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will say in Brussels today (Wednesday 25 April).

UK aid will help to train thousands of doctors and nurses to deliver trauma care in the most extreme conflict zones and to immediately respond to attacks, including how to remove shrapnel and treat blast injuries, burns and wounds from mortar fire. It will also provide essential medical supplies such as sutures, oxygen, blood and anaesthetics.

UK support aims to keep medical facilities open and we are providing blast proofing materials and sandbags to reinforce underground medical facilities and limit the damage from attacks.

Ms Mordaunt announced that the UK will provide at least £450 million this year to alleviate the extreme suffering in Syria, as well as providing vital support to millions of Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries.

With at least 30,000 people currently injured every month in Syria, it is expected that around a quarter of this UK aid support in Syria will be spent on healthcare next year.

Speaking at the Brussels conference on 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the region', Ms Mordaunt is expected to say:

It is clear the Syrian Regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, will attempt to block every diplomatic effort to hold the regime accountable for these reprehensible and illegal tactics.

Syria is now one of the most dangerous places on earth for aid workers and medical staff. Medical facilities and schools have been deliberately targeted, aid has been blocked to starve communities into submission, and rape and sexual violence have been deployed as routine weapons of war.

Today's pledge of UK aid support will help keep medical facilities

open in the face of relentless attacks so doctors and nurses can save the lives of innocent Syrians, as well as helping the millions of Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries. But today can't only be about pledges of money and we cannot allow anyone to turn their backs on the global rules and standards that keep us all safe.

We're calling for an immediate ceasefire and safe access so that brave aid workers and medical staff can do their jobs without fear of attack. This year, we must go beyond commitments. We must see concrete actions, which lead to greater protection for civilians and aid workers and work together to put Syria on a path towards peace.

It is estimated that at least 478 health facilities have been attacked or destroyed and at least 830 health workers have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in 2011.

There has been an increase in the number of health facilities in Syria targeted in the first months of 2018, with 36 facilities attacked in February alone.

Last year UK aid supported more than 175 health facilities, with more than 11,000 trained healthcare workers that delivered 2.2 million consultations.

On top of this, UK support has provided specialist training and equipment to respond to chemical weapons attacks, as well as providing personal protective equipment for frontline aid workers and 20,000 ampules of antidote to treat the effects of some chemical agents.

The UK will continue to use our position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and on the Human Rights Council to support resolutions that seek to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as calling for existing resolutions to be observed by the regime and its backers.

With 5.6 million Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries, the UK aid commitment announced today will also provide support in Jordan and Lebanon so that Syrian refugees can remain close to home until they are one day able to return safely. On top of this, the UK will provide additional support for refugees in Turkey.

Notes for Editors

1. The International Development Secretary has committed to provide at least £450 million for Syria and the region in 2018 and £300 million in 2019. This brings the total amount that the UK has committed in humanitarian funding to the Syria region to £2.71 billion, up from £2.46 billion. The UK's pledge for 2018 includes £200 million of new money for the crisis, and our pledge for 2019 includes £50 million of new money.

2. In addition, the International Development Secretary also confirmed that the UK will pay its part of the second round of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT2).
3. The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date, we have committed over £2.71 billion in humanitarian funding to the region.
4. UK aid has already delivered over 27 million food rations, 10 million relief packages, 10 million vaccines and 12 million health consultations for those in need in Syria.
5. For security reasons, we cannot disclose the specific areas that our partners work in.
6. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

ENDS

News story: New taskforce to take action against violent crime

Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, today announced a coalition of government ministers, cross-party MPs, police leaders, local government and the voluntary sector will make up the Serious Violence Taskforce – which will ensure sustained, swift and decisive action against violent crime.

Together with the government, the taskforce will help design and deliver the key commitments of the [Serious Violence Strategy](#), working with affected communities to ensure immediate and real action is taken.

The taskforce's aim is to stop the recent increases in serious violence and see levels of violent crime reduce. It will hold the government and others to account, evaluate the strategy's impact and commission further work as commitments are delivered.

Chaired by the Home Secretary, the taskforce – which will meet for the first time on 26 April, when the frequency of future meetings will also be decided – will have the vital job of ensuring the strategy is effectively delivered.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I am determined that the Serious Violence Strategy will have an immediate impact on tackling the scourge of serious violence.

I am absolutely clear that the taskforce must work with the government to deliver the strategy's commitments. Together, we will seek to prevent serious violence from happening in the first place and ensure the measures that I set out when I launched the strategy are delivered.

Everyone joining the taskforce is committed to ending the serious violence blighting our communities and I look forward to working together in the weeks and months ahead.

The taskforce's members include Home Office ministers Nick Hurd and Victoria Atkins; London MPs Chuka Umunna and David Lammy; Mayor of London Sadiq Khan; Met Commissioner Cressida Dick; National Crime Agency Director-General Lynne Owens; and Chingford and Woodford Green MP Iain Duncan Smith, who founded the Centre for Social Justice and has a long-standing interest in issues around serious violence.

Its membership reflects the Home Secretary's words when launching the strategy last week when she spoke of the importance of the taskforce's cross-party dimension.

Establishing the taskforce was one of 60 measures announced in the Serious Violence Strategy. Commissioned by the Home Secretary and backed with £40 million of Home Office funding, the strategy marks a major shift in the government's response to serious violence.

It strikes a balance between prevention and robust law enforcement with a new £11 million Early Intervention Youth Fund for community projects to help young people live lives free from violence.

The strategy identifies the changing drugs market – in particular the devastating impact of crack cocaine – as a key driver of the violence harming our communities, and announces a range of powerful actions to tackle the issue of 'county lines' and its implications for drugs, violence and exploitation of vulnerable people. That includes £3.6 million to establish a new National County Lines Co-ordination Centre.

The membership of the taskforce will be:

- Home Secretary, Amber Rudd
- Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins
- Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Nick Hurd
- Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi
- Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Margot James
- Member of Parliament for Tottenham, Rt Hon David Lammy MP

- Member of Parliament for Streatham, Chuka Umunna MP
- Member of Parliament for Chingford and Woodford Green, Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
- Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Cressida Dick
- National Police Chiefs Council Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Duncan Ball
- Director-General of the National Crime Agency, Lynne Owens
- Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan
- Chair of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, David Lloyd
- Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund, Dawn Austwick
- Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield
- Chief Executive of Public Health Wales, Dr Tracey Cooper
- Chief Executive of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie
- Local Government Association, Councillor, Simon Blackburn
- CEO of the Ben Kinsella Trust, Patrick Green
- CEO of Redthread, John Poyton
- Head of Gangs SOS project for St Giles Trust, Junior Smart
- CEO of Onside Youth Zones, Kathryn Morley
- Chief Operating Officer of Catch 22, Naomi Hulston
- Knife crime campaigner and Member of Parliament for Enfield North (2010-2015), Nick de Bois

[News story: Britain bites back in the fight against loan sharks](#)

[Britain bites back in the fight against loan sharks](#)

Loan sharks face a fresh crackdown today (25 April), with more funding to tackle unlawful lending, and an increase in the amount of money seized from loan sharks to support those most vulnerable to their nasty tactics.

- over £5.5 million will be spent to fund the fight against loan sharks, helping to investigate and prosecute illegal lenders, and support their victims
- £100,000 of money already seized from loan sharks will also be spent to encourage people in England at risk of being targeted by loan sharks to join a credit union, helping them to access a safer form of finance and get their lives back on track
- and for the first time in Northern Ireland a new education project will be created to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks and to support vulnerable communities

John Glen, Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

These nasty lenders are nothing more than lowlife crooks taking

hard-earned cash from the pockets of the most vulnerable. Over 300,000 people are in debt to illegal money lenders in the Britain and they need to know that we're on their side. That's why we're taking the fight to the loan sharks and spending more than ever to support their victims.

In total, £5.67 million of funding will be provided to Britain's Illegal Money Lending Teams (IMLT) and bodies in Northern Ireland to tackle illegal lending – a 16% increase compared to the previous year. The money will be used to investigate and prosecute illegal lenders, and to support those who have been the victim of a loan shark.

Since the Illegal Money Lending Team was established in England in 2004, they've made over 380 prosecutions, leading to 328 years' worth of sentences, and have written off over £73 million of illegal debt, helping over 28,000 people to escape the jaws of the loan sharks. Similar teams operate in Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland, the Consumer Council will lead its first ever education and awareness campaign to help prevent the most vulnerable from being bitten by loan sharks, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will get funding for a specialised officer who will lead on illegal lending within the Paramilitary Crime Task Force.

Tony Quigley, Head of the England Illegal Money Lending Team, said:

Loan sharks are a blight on society and prey on vulnerable people who struggle to make ends meet. These criminals use callous methods to enforce repayment and victims are often subjected to threats, intimidation and violence. We will not tolerate this sort of criminal activity in our country and loan sharks who are caught flouting the law will be pursued and prosecuted.

It is important for people to realise that alternatives to borrowing from loan sharks are available if you are in financial difficulty. Loan sharks are never the answer and we strongly support credit unions who can provide a safe and legal alternative. If you have been affected by illegal money lending, please call our confidential hotline on 0300 555 2222.

Press release: Minister for Europe

attends Gallipoli Commemorations in Turkey

The Minister paid respects to allied forces who lost their lives over a century ago in the World War One Gallipoli campaign.

Sir Alan attended an International Service of Commemoration where he was invited to deliver a [speech of reconciliation](#) and lay a wreath.

He will join other dignitaries from around the world representing New Zealand, Australia and France.

The Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

I am honoured to attend the Gallipoli commemorations and pay respects to allied forces who fought in the World War One campaign.

It is also a remarkable testament to the power of reconciliation that a century after Turkey and the UK were on opposite sides, we now stand shoulder to shoulder as NATO allies and trusted friends.

Further information

News story: Robin Walker Speech at Community Outreach event

As a Minister at the Department for Exiting the EU, I have spoken at a number of these events with our EU communities here in the UK and I am delighted to be here tonight to hear from you directly.

The purpose of our meeting today is to bring you, the French community here in the UK, together with officials from the Department for Exiting the EU and the Home Office to reassure you on your rights and discuss the issues that matter most to you.

I know that many of you, your friends and your families, will want to know what our EU exit means for your future in the UK. As we have made clear throughout this process, and as the PM emphasised in her speech in Florence: EU citizens who have made their lives in the UK are highly valued, we want you to stay; and we thank you for your contribution to our country.

The United Kingdom and France are very close partners and friends – as has

been shown in recent weeks – and I hope that tonight's event can help to demonstrate our desire – as we prepare to leave the EU – to maintain the strong bonds that we have created over generations, indeed centuries.

Everyone in this room, and members of the French community across the whole of the UK, make a contribution to British society and culture. You help save lives, you teach children, you enrich our business, tech and finance industries, and you help to make Britain the inclusive and diverse society it is. So I want to stress that you are an important part of our community. We want to make sure that everyone here continues to feel welcome – and that you're able to carry on living your lives as before, in the country you have chosen to make your home.

I hope that today's event will demonstrate that commitment.

From the start of our negotiations we have prioritised citizens' rights. I am delighted that in March we were able to announce real progress on the legal drafting of the Withdrawal Agreement. This includes successfully translating all the commitments made in the December political agreement between us and the EU commission on citizens' rights into the Withdrawal Agreement legal text. This agreement will enshrine your rights in international law, securing your rights, and those of the other 3 million EU citizens in the UK, and 1 million UK nationals in the EU.

This agreement gives certainty not only about residency, but also healthcare, pensions and other benefits. We understand that the arrangements on which citizens rely need to go beyond broad political declarations and deal with the realities of people and their lives. The point of meetings such as today is to hear from you and learn about these realities.

It will enable families who have built their lives together in the UK and EU to stay together. And will ensure close family members can join after the implementation period, on the basis of current EU rules, as long as the relationship existed at the end of the implementation period – 31 December 2020.

Let me stress – the guarantee we are giving on your rights is real. We have committed to incorporating the Withdrawal Agreement fully into UK law. This will mean that the UK courts can refer directly to it and your rights are protected fully in law both here and internationally.

Details of the agreement are set out in a Joint Report published on 8 December and the Withdrawal Agreement legal text, published on 19 March.

Our agreement with the EU will protect your right to residency through granting settled status.

You will hear fuller details of this proposed scheme later in the evening but let me summarise:

Settled status will be granted to those who have been in the UK for five years or more at the end of the implementation period. For those of you – or your friends – who don't yet have five years residency on that day, the 31st

December 2020, we will make sure that you will be able to stay to make up these years, so you can apply for settled status when you have.

We have committed to giving you until June 2021 to submit an application for settled status – and we have made a commitment in the Withdrawal Agreement that this application system will be smooth, streamlined and low cost. I know that the French community in the UK is long established, and for those who have already acquired permanent residence documents I would like to stress that there will be a simple process to exchange this for a settled status document completely free of charge. This will also be available to people who have documents demonstrating Indefinite Leave to Remain, such as those who came before the UK joined the EU.

In addition, those who acquire settled status will be able to leave the country for up to 5 years, without losing their right to return. In this respect we have gone further than existing EU law which only allows for an absence of 2 years in the permanent residence process.

The Home Office is currently developing this application system, which will be designed with your needs and priorities in mind. This system will be launched for voluntary applications by the end of this year, giving those of you already living in the UK, 2 and a half years to apply.

Events such as this give the officials working on the system the opportunity to hear directly from EU citizens to ensure it is carefully designed to meet your needs. I am grateful to the officials from my department and the Home Office who are here to listen to you and to take your questions.

Even while we're leaving the EU, we want to continue to deepen the strong relationship we already have with France, after decades, indeed centuries, of cooperation.

The UK's relationship with France is one of the longest, most complex and, arguably, most important in the world. In 48 years' time, it will be one thousand years – a millennium – since William the Conqueror landed near Hastings, and the Duke of Normandy became the King of England. The famous Bayeux Tapestry chronicles William's triumph and we are delighted that, at the 35th Franco-British Summit hosted at Sandhurst earlier this year, President Macron agreed the loan of the Bayeux Tapestry to the UK – an important signal of the depth of our relationship and a marker for how far we have come since William landed on UK shores.

Of course, the UK and France have a partnership like no other. We work closely together across a full spectrum of issues from defence, to science, to culture and we reinforced this co-operation at this year's Franco British Summit. We agreed to: strengthen our security co-operation, including on military engagements, counter terrorism and cyber security; collaborate further to deliver cutting edge technologies in areas such as medicine and space; develop our partnership on education, and work together to protect our cultural heritage. And there's more.

We also have a strong economic relationship – France's total trade with the

UK is worth nearly 100 billion euros. And over 5,000 of our companies invest in each other's countries. As immediate neighbours it is in the interests of both the UK and France to forge a strong economic partnership between the UK and the EU on goods and services.

But of course, the relations between our two countries are not only, or primarily, about the relations between the Governments. It's the human stories and links that underpin our shared history and future. These are ties of family, friendship, work and beyond. There are hundreds of thousands of British and French citizens living in each other's countries. And there are no fewer than 12 million British visits to France each year – more than any other country in the world. Likewise, more French people visit the UK than those of any other nationality. It is no coincidence that the French language is the first language, after English, that is taught in schools here.

French schools have been operating across the UK for years – there are over a dozen such schools in London alone. And at our recent summit the UK and France agreed to deepen cooperation across all education sectors, to increase opportunities for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We also have very close ties in the higher education sector, which were set out to me when I visited the University of London Institute in Paris recently. It is clear to see that the lives of hundreds of thousands of French and British people are intertwined every day, and it is these people who will make the Franco-British relationship such a rich one for years to come.

All of you here today are a big part of that and, as the Prime Minister said at the Franco British Summit reception at the V&A Museum: "I am proud that more than three million EU citizens [including hundreds of thousands of our French friends] have chosen to make your homes and livelihoods here in our country. We greatly value the depth of the contributions you make – enriching every part of our economy, our society, our culture and our national life. We know our country would be poorer if you left and I want you to stay".

I echo these remarks and I know that President Macron feels the same about the British Community in France.

So I hope that you leave today more informed by the steps we're taking to secure your future. I also hope that you leave today able to share the information you learn with your friends and relatives in the French community and have the chance to share your views with us.

Reassuring and informing our citizens is best done when it is a shared endeavour. That's why we hope to host more events such as this with EU citizens across the country.

We value enormously the French community in the UK, and I hope today's event will help to ensure we provide reassurance to as many people as possible that, despite the challenges of Brexit, there is a bright future for French people in Britain.

Both our Foreign Secretary and the President of France have spoken about

London as the sixth biggest French city in the world. We want our French neighbours to continue to enjoy the UK, to contribute to our communities and to continue to be part of the fabric of our nation. The UK and France will remain partners, neighbours and friendly rivals for generations to come.