

Press release: Government launches Small Business Commissioner to help small firms resolve payment disputes

- new Small Business Commissioner will support Britain's 5.7 million small businesses to resolve payment disputes and tackle larger businesses unfair payment practices to drive culture change
- new guidance website to help small businesses with late payment issues
- small businesses can now submit late payment complaints to the Commissioner

The government has today (20 December 2017) launched the complaint handling service of the Small Business Commissioner to ensure fair payment practices for small businesses. This follows the appointment of Paul Uppal to the role of Small Business Commissioner.

Regulations made by Small Business Minister Margot James mean the Commissioner can now handle complaints from small businesses about unfair payment practices. The [Commissioner's website](#) is also live, providing guidance to small businesses on payment issues including how to take action if a payment is overdue.

Margot James, Small Business Minister, said:

This government's Industrial Strategy is building a Britain in which small business can continue to thrive.

Over the last 5 years the amount owed to smaller businesses has more than halved from £30 billion to £14 billion. Today's Small Business Commissioner service will empower small businesses to take action if they are paid late, potentially delivering a £2.5 billion annual boost to the economy.

Paul Uppal, Small Business Commissioner, said:

Having run my own small business for over 20 years I am well aware that integrity and trust are key to running and building a successful business. My mission is to help all small businesses nurture positive and lasting relationships with their customers that work in the best interests of both.

Today I am launching a new website so small businesses know their rights, as well as how to contact me if they need further action to be taken when the larger businesses they supply owe them money.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

The UK is gripped by a poor payments crisis, over 30% of payments to small businesses are late and the average value of each payment is £6,142. This not only impacts on the small business and the owner, it is damaging the wider economy.

The Small Business Commissioner is crucial to turning the tide on this late payments culture. FSB will be encouraging small businesses affected to use the service, and we hope then to see clear actions taken to tackle the worst examples of supply chain bullying. Success will be a UK economic culture where a business that does a job promptly, is paid promptly.

The Small Business Commissioner's website guides small businesses on how to 'check, chase, and choose' how to deal with unfair and late payments, that is:

- check if the right information has been provided to the right people in order for an invoice to be paid
- chase effectively when a payment is overdue
- choose how to take further action, including the option of submitting a complaint to the Small Business Commissioner

This is one of a number of measures government is taking to tackle a late payment culture. Regulations came into force in April 2017 requiring large businesses to publically report the average time they take to pay their suppliers. This allows suppliers, including small businesses, to make informed decisions about who they do business with. Firms can [check when large businesses pay their suppliers on GOV.UK](#). So far over 200 of the UK's largest businesses have submitted payment reports.

The Small Business Commissioner was [appointed on 2 October 2017](#) and is based in Birmingham.

Speech: "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is one of the greatest diplomatic successes in recent memory"

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefers. Jeff, for your comprehensive presentation of

the Secretary-General's fourth report. Jo, for your update on the Joint Commission. And Sebastiano, for your summary as facilitator of the 2231 format and indeed for all of your excellent work in that capacity and that of your team.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is one of the greatest diplomatic successes in recent memory. The continued endorsement of the deal, through Resolution 2231, is another considerable achievement and also a responsibility for all of us. We remain committed to its full and equitable implementation by all parties.

As the Secretary-General's latest report demonstrates, the nuclear components of the deal are working. Iran is complying with its nuclear commitments. For our part, we are committed to ensuring that the Iranian people see tangible benefits, including from sanctions relief. I encourage all Member States to uphold their commitments. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to further promote understanding of 2231 and of the Procurement Channel. We are committed to supporting these efforts.

However, despite this progress, four elements of the report are concerning. They relate to provisions of Annex B. They hinder the full realisation of the reciprocal benefits of the deal and they undermine faith in Iran's long term commitment to regional stability.

Firstly, we are deeply concerned by reported transfers of Iranian ballistic missile parts and related technology to the Houthis in Yemen. Such transfers would be a violation of Resolution 2231 which prohibits the transfer to and from Iran of ballistic missile technology and related materiel. These transfers would also violate Resolution 2216 which prohibits the sale or transfer of arms and related materiel to the Houthis.

The Houthi missile attack on Riyadh on 4 November deliberately targeted a civilian area. And earlier today, we heard reports of a further missile attack on Riyadh, this time aimed at the Yamama Palace. Both would have caused suffering and chaos had they landed as intended. This is clearly unacceptable and risks escalating the situation.

The transfer of weapons to the Houthis threatens regional security and stability. Their use is prolonging the conflict in Yemen and contributing to heightened regional tensions.

It is essential that the UN conducts a thorough investigation and informs the Security Council of its conclusions as soon as possible. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for a joint meeting of the 2140 Committee and the 2231 format. This will allow for a coherent discussion of the use of ballistic missiles against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia while also considering next steps to address this threat.

Secondly, we are concerned by the continued reported violations of restrictions on arms-related provisions. Evidence of these activities is mounting. The latest report indicates that the arms seized from a dhow near the Gulf of Oman and an unmanned surface vessel recovered in Yemeni waters

are both of Iranian origin. These activities, which are contrary to our Security Council Resolution, give us further cause for concern over Iran's involvement in that conflict.

Thirdly, we are concerned by evidence relating to Iranian ballistic missile-related activities. Paragraph Three of Annex B calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles that are designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such technology. The launch of the Simorgh space launch vehicle on 27 July made use of such technology and as such was inconsistent with Resolution 2231.

Finally, we are concerned by reports of multiple travel ban violations, including new infringements by Major General Qasem Soleimani. This is particularly disturbing given the public nature of the violation.

Putting all these issues together, it is clear that these activities are having a detrimental impact on regional security and are undermining Iran's integration with the international community.

We remain committed to the full implementation of 2231 to uphold the historic agreement, and we are committed to working with all parties to make this a reality. But we cannot stand by and allow a Security Council resolution to be ignored and the situation in the region to be further destabilised. We urge Iran to respect all provisions of Resolution 2231 and we are prepared to work with council members to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for any proven violations.

The JCPoA and its implementation through Resolution 2231 are important elements of the international community's non-proliferation architecture and they are essential to supporting regional and global security. We are all responsible for ensuring its success. We all must honour our commitments. Iran is no exception.

Thank you.

Press release: PM call with President Trump: 19 December 2017

The Prime Minister called President Trump earlier this afternoon. She began by offering her condolences over the loss of life in the terrible train crash in Washington state.

They discussed the different positions we took on the recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, and agreed on the importance of the US bringing forward new proposals for peace and the international community supporting these efforts.

The Prime Minister also raised Yemen, highlighting our ongoing deep concerns at the humanitarian situation. They agreed on the vital importance of reopening humanitarian and commercial access to prevent famine and alleviate the suffering of innocent Yemenis.

The Prime Minister updated the President on the recent good progress of the Brexit negotiations, and the President set out the progress he had made on his economic agenda. They agreed on the importance of a swift post-Brexit bilateral trade deal.

They wished each other a very Merry Christmas and looked forward to keeping in close touch.

Speech: “The delivery of cross-border aid provides a lifeline for millions...who would be impossible to reach in a sustained manner from within Syria”

Thank you Mr President.

The United Kingdom welcomes the renewal of Resolution 2165 today. For a further twelve months, Resolution 2393 will allow us to continue to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid across conflict lines and borders to reach the people of Syria.

We thank the penholders for their work and we regret that the adoption was not unanimous. Especially since the penholders ensured over many, many weeks that they listened to concerns of all Council members and took on board proposals from many of us, including Russia.

The renewal of Resolution 2165 gives the people of Syria a small ray of hope. The delivery of cross-border aid provides a lifeline for millions of Syrians, who it would be impossible to reach in a sustained manner from within Syria.

However, we must take stock. It is three years since Resolution 2165 was first passed. Despite the intention to ease the suffering of the Syrian people, the situation for them has actually got worse. 13 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance. And that's 2 million more than when we adopted Resolution 2165. On top of that, an additional 2.3 million people have fled Syria. Countless others have been killed. In some areas malnutrition has increased fivefold in this year alone.

Yes, the renewal of this resolution will ensure aid will continue to reach some of the millions who depend on it. But despite this resolution, the vast majority of 420,000 people in 10 besieged areas will be denied access to aid because of blockages imposed by the regime.

94 per cent of those people are in Eastern Ghouta. Eastern Ghouta is a so-called de-escalation zone. These zones are meant to ensure a cessation of hostilities and an increase in the amount of humanitarian aid. In reality, there is little or no actual de-escalation going on in Eastern Ghouta. The de-escalation designation has been used by the regime to cut off access to life-saving medical and food aid. The regime is starving the people of Eastern Ghouta to death in contravention of International Humanitarian Law.

The situation has now reached a critical point. More than ten per cent of all children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition. It's the highest rate recorded since the conflict began. Medical facilities are overwhelmed. 572 people urgently need a Medivac – a medical evacuation. Including 65 who are under the age of five. 18 children are at imminent risk of death.

So once again I urge Russia to use all its influence over the regime to ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and to ensure that those in urgent medical need can be evacuated. It is just a 30 minute journey from Eastern Ghouta to Damascus to receive treatment. It really is a matter of life and death.

We call on Russia to use its influence over the regime so that one more person does not die waiting for treatment. 15 is already too many. So that another child does not die for want of a 30-minute journey. Six is already too many. Those who require treatment must be allowed to leave now.

The people of Eastern Ghouta have suffered enough. Take Karim. He is a two month old baby. His mother was killed by regime artillery bombardment. He lost his eye and had his skull broken in the same attack. We must stand in solidarity with Karim. The siege must be lifted immediately.

Ultimately, the suffering of the Syrian people will only end when the conflict ends. There must be a political settlement. We must all unite to support Staffan de Mistura. The Geneva talks represent the only sustainable path to peace and all international efforts must support that process.

We commend the opposition who have maintained their commitment to direct negotiations without preconditions and have engaged constructively with the talks. The opposition's efforts presented a perfect opportunity for the last round of talks to make real progress on the substance of a political transition.

These hopes were dashed by the regime. They showed their utter contempt for the talks; they arrived late, they took a long weekend in Damascus, they refused to engage in direct negotiations with the opposition.

Mr President, the Assad regime has made aid a weapon of war. They are

restricting humanitarian access to besieged populations.

Blocking aid convoys from the UN and other impartial humanitarian organisations after approving them is abominable and it must stop.

The renewal of the resolution today is a clear signal to the regime that the international community is united in our determination to ensure that aid must not be used as a weapon. Aid must be delivered at speed, unhindered, to those who need it, full stop.

Thank you.

Press release: Foreign Secretary condemns attempted missile strike on Riyadh

I am appalled by another attempted missile strike on Riyadh on 19 December. This is the second such shocking incident in six weeks, which yet again deliberately targeted a populated area.

I strongly condemn the Houthis for this attack, which they have claimed. Everyone will be outraged at the Houthi spokesman boast that they were targeting the Royal Palace.

I call upon all countries in the region to do what they can to implement UN Security Council Resolutions and prevent such attacks which are increasing regional tensions. I strongly support UN investigations into the origins of these weapons and welcome the UN's suggestion of a joint discussion of the relevant UN bodies to look into these threats and consider action against those responsible. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Saudi Arabia as it faces regional crises and security threats.