

Foreign Secretary calls on Human Rights Council to address human rights violations in Myanmar, China, Belarus and Russia

Press release

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will call on the United Nations Human Rights Council to address systematic human rights violations in these countries.



- the UK returns to the UN Human Rights Council as a voting member
- Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will call for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to be given urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang
- the UK will lead resolutions on Sri Lanka, Syria and South Sudan

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will today call on the UN Human Rights Council to address systematic human rights violations in Myanmar, China, Belarus and Russia.

When he addresses the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (11:30am), the Foreign Secretary is expected to say:

On China:

- the situation in Xinjiang is beyond the pale. The reported abuses – which include torture, forced labour and forced sterilisation of women – are extreme and they are extensive. They are taking place on an industrial scale
- UN mechanisms must respond. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent fact-finding expert, must – and I repeat must – be given urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang

On Belarus:

- last year's rigged Presidential elections and Mr Lukashenko's brutal crackdown against those calling for change has resulted in a human rights crisis. There is no other way to describe it
- this Council must continue with a comprehensive investigation of human rights violations, including accusations of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment
- the UK will support initiatives to keep Belarus on the Council's agenda for as long as it is necessary, and until the Belarusian people are able to enjoy their democratic rights and their fundamental freedoms

On Myanmar:

- the position in Myanmar gets worse. The violations and abuses are well-documented, including arbitrary detention and draconian restrictions on freedom of expression. That crisis presents an increased risk to the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities
- the military must step aside. Civilian leaders must be released. And the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar must be respected
- that is why at this session we will again co-sponsor the resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, so he can continue his essential work

On Russia:

- we face a truly dire and shocking situation from a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council
- it is disgraceful that Alexey Navalny, himself the victim of a despicable crime, has now been sentenced on arbitrary charges. His treatment and the violence inflicted on peaceful protesters can only further reinforce the world's concerns that Russia is failing to meet its international obligations
- we call on other members of the Council to consider whether Russia's actions are in line with its international human rights obligations and the values that we seek and that we have pledged to uphold

The Foreign Secretary is also expected to update members and observers on the substantive steps the UK has taken to address these issues and urge others to follow suit, including the introduction of [business restrictions against supply chains using forced labour in Xinjiang](#) and implementing [sanctions against Alexander Lukashenko, 3 members of the Myanmar military regime, and those responsible for Alexey Navalny's poisoning](#).

The Foreign Secretary's speech comes as the UK returns to the Geneva based Human Rights Council as a voting member. As an elected member of the Council, the UK will focus on promoting action for girls' education, championing freedom of religion and belief, defending media freedom, and being a passionate advocate for the values of liberal democracy.

At the upcoming session, which runs from Monday 22 February until Tuesday 23 March, the UK will lead resolutions on Syria, as we mark the tenth anniversary of the conflict; Sri Lanka, as we press for progress on post-conflict accountability, reconciliation and human rights; and South Sudan, as we seek to address the human rights situation and continue to support the revitalised peace agreement.

- the 46th Session of the Geneva based UN Human Rights Council will run from 22 February to 23 March 2021
- meetings are [can be watched live](#). This is the first of 3 sessions this year
- the [UN Human Rights Council](#) is made up of 47 United Nations member states which are elected by the UN General Assembly
- the UK was re-elected to the Council in October 2020. Members of the Council serve for a period of 3 years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving 2 consecutive terms

Published 22 February 2021