

News story: Ben Wallace meets Tunisian Minister at the Home Office

Today, the British Minister of State for Security, Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, and the Tunisian Minister of Relations with the Constitutional Bodies, Civil Society and Human Rights, Mr Mehdi Ben Gharbia, met in London to discuss counter-terrorism.

The meeting focused on further strengthening Tunisian-British cooperation in the shared fight against radicalisation. Both ministers deplored the global scourge of terrorism and discussed their shared desire to continue working in partnership with communities to counter the poisonous ideology that Daesh and other terrorist groups promote.

The ministers noted that their countries were built on values of democracy, respect for human rights and tolerance, and that it was these values that terrorists were attempting to challenge, by spreading hatred and division.

The Security minister welcomed Tunisia's commitment to combating violent extremism, and was clear that the UK would continue its wide range of existing support to Tunisian efforts in this field and also further areas of cooperation, such as addressing terrorist use of the internet. Over £10m of UK programmes in 2017/18 were being directed towards supporting Tunisia, including on promoting security sector reform and collaboration on tourist protection.

Both ministers discussed the good progress made in Tunisia's democratic transition with advancements in citizen's rights, and also agreed that the first ever municipal elections scheduled in 2018 would help to further consolidate these democratic gains.

Speaking after his meeting with Mr Ben Gharbia, Security Minister Ben Wallace said:

The threat we face from terrorism, and particularly the evil ideology of Daesh, is a global problem. Both our countries have suffered horrendous attacks in recent years and innocent lives have been lost.

I am grateful to Mr Ben Gharbia for his commitment to combating this shared threat together. We are also in agreement on the importance of tackling the misuse of the internet by those who seek to distribute terrorist propaganda and spread their message of hate.

I congratulate Tunisia for the steps that have been taken towards improving its security situation following the appalling terrorist attacks in 2015. This played an important role in our decision to change the travel advice for Tunisia earlier this year, and I look forward to the return of British holidaymakers to the country.

The UK and Tunisia are close partners in the fight against terrorism, and we will continue to co-operate and learn from each other's experience. We are united in our view that we must defeat terrorism together.

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Ben Gharbia added:

We are determined to continue the fight against terrorism, working closely with international partners such as the UK.

During our meeting I expressed the Tunisian government's commitment to adopting the legal framework for the protection of human rights, in line with the Tunisian constitution of 2014.

Furthermore, I stressed that in 2018 the Tunisian Government will hold municipal elections, and complete the establishment of constitutional bodies and the constitutional court, which will ensure the sustainability of the democratic process".