

News story: Human Rights Council 39: UK statement for the Item 2 General Debate

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the High Commissioner to her first session of the Council and thanks her for her report.

The UK fully supports the OHCHR and the central role the High Commissioner's independent mandate plays in the international human rights system.

We remain concerned by human rights violations in Bangladesh, including restrictions on freedom of expression. We welcome Bangladesh's continued support to the Rohingya refugees, but call on Bangladesh to fulfil its commitments made at the Universal Periodic Review.

We also remain concerned at the continued erosion of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law in the Maldives. It is critical that the authorities respect fundamental freedoms. Upcoming elections must be free, fair and credible.

The national election in Cambodia was neither free nor fair. We urge the authorities to lift restrictions on political debate and media freedom, drop all charges against and restrictions on opposition leader Kem Sokha, and create the conditions for a proper functioning democracy.

Vietnam has imprisoned a number of bloggers and activists, often with heavy sentences. This further restricts the space for people to freely express their views on matters of public interest.

We urge the Philippines to conduct thorough investigations into killings associated with the "war on drugs". We are concerned by recent reports concerning land rights defenders and call on the Government to ensure their safety.

We urge the Venezuelan Government to take immediate action to facilitate humanitarian aid; the international community stands ready to assist. We also call on the Government to respect the National Assembly and release all political prisoners.

In Cameroon we are deeply concerned at further reports of the burning of villages and schools in the Anglophone regions, and an increasing number of IDPs and refugees. We call for all parties to show restraint and reject violence.

Finally, on Sri Lanka, our views have been set out in the earlier joint statement.