

## News story: Human Rights Council 39: UK statement for the Item 3 General Debate

Thank you, Mr Vice President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the attention given by the High Commissioner, and by this Council, to the safety of journalists. The ability to speak truth to power, to give a voice to the vulnerable and to shine a light on abuses and violations is an important element in protecting human rights.

Too often, such work is undermined by violence, intimidation and excessive restrictions. Already in 2018, an estimated 66 journalists and media workers have been killed. Over 300 have been imprisoned.

The UK continues to call for the immediate release of the two Reuters journalists sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Burma/Myanmar for reporting on human rights violations in Rakhine State. Their investigations revealed atrocities similar to those uncovered by the UN's Fact Finding Mission established by this Council. The verdict has undermined both freedom of the media and the rule of law in Burma/Myanmar.

Despite ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which safeguards freedom of expression, Iran continues to impose restrictions on journalists. The intimidation of BBC Persian employees and their families has rightly been condemned internationally. We call on Iran to drop the criminal charges against BBC Persian staff and cease harassment of all journalists and their families.

In Afghanistan 10 journalists lost their lives in a single day earlier this year. Another two were killed this month as they reported on an earlier attack, a stark reminder of the bravery of journalists operating in conflict environments.

In Russia, attacks on journalists continue with impunity. Activists and journalists are often faced with threats, intimidation, harassment and violence including murder.

Mr Vice President,

We call on governments to take all viable measures to ensure the safety and security of journalists and media workers, and to end the impunity for crimes against them.

Thank you Mr Vice President.