

Press release: Foreign Office launches 2018 Human Rights and Democracy Report

The Foreign Office has launched its [Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2018](#) today (Thursday 6 June 2019).

2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The report examines what the government has done to promote and defend human rights globally, echoing the principles and values enshrined in these Declarations. It focuses on the situation in 30 countries which the FCO has designated as its Human Rights Priority Countries* and highlights our work on a wide range of thematic issues.

The Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said:

Human rights and democracy are fundamental to the values the UK champions on the world stage. I recently appointed Rita French as an International Ambassador for Human Rights to strengthen our ongoing work.

Today's report makes for sobering reading. Respect for human rights globally seems to be at an all-time low. As Foreign Secretary I will ensure that British diplomats continue to defend and protect human rights wherever they are.

In particular, I am deeply concerned that 2018 saw the murder of 99 journalists around the world. A free press is essential to open societies. I believe the UK, alongside all democratic countries, must protect the freedom and safety of those who must be able to hold the powerful to account, without fear of retribution.

Minister of Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon launched the report to an audience of civil society, Ambassadors and NGOs today. He said:

70 years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out the fundamental rights that all people are entitled to.

Today we must continue to fight for the vulnerable and those who are discriminated against for their colour, creed or religion because in too many countries across the world, human rights and the rule of law are not respected.

Standing up for human rights is not only the right thing; it also helps to create a safer, more prosperous and progressive world.

The report sets out the UK's actions in a wide range of areas, including leadership on promoting media freedom and a commitment to deliver change for those who are abused, targeted or killed for their beliefs. It comes ahead of the international Media Freedom Conference which will be held in London in July. Co-hosted with Canada, the conference aims to highlight abuse of media freedom and raise the cost for those who wish to restrict it.

The Foreign Secretary recently appointed an [International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French](#), to help promote human rights globally.

*The 30 priority countries are Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.