

Press release: PM statement with President Erdogan

President Erdogan, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Downing Street today.

The UK-Turkey relationship is indispensable.

The issues we have discussed underline just how important it is that we work ever more closely together to make our people safer and more prosperous.

I'd like to start by addressing the troubling situation in Gaza and the West Bank, which President Erdogan and I have discussed today.

The loss of life we have seen is tragic and extremely concerning.

Such violence is destructive to peace efforts and we call on all sides to show restraint.

There is an urgent need to establish the facts of what happened yesterday through an independent and transparent investigation, including why such a volume of live fire was used and what role Hamas played in events.

Palestinians have the right to protest, but these protests must be peaceful. We are concerned that extremist elements are seeking to hijack legitimate protests to further their own objectives.

And while we do not question the right of Israel to defend its borders, the use of live fire and the resulting loss of life is deeply troubling. We urge Israel to show restraint.

It is in everyone's interests for peace and stability to prevail in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The discussions we have had today have covered the breadth and depth of our relationship.

Allow me to say a few words on each of the key topics we've discussed.

Firstly, we are NATO allies and remain firmly committed to the Alliance as the best way of guaranteeing our collective security.

Since my visit to Ankara in January last year, both Turkey and the UK have suffered grievous attacks by terrorists.

As Daesh is defeated militarily, we are aware of the risk of foreign fighters dispersing from Syria and Iraq.

To counter this we have today agreed to take concrete steps towards measures that will formalise our information sharing.

Our intent is to agree that when Turkish authorities return a British Citizen suspected of terrorist offences to Britain, they will do so with vital evidence such as media taken from mobile devices and transcripts of interviews.

This will support our efforts to secure the convictions of those who seek to do us harm.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to deepen co-operation between the Home Office and the Turkish Ministry of the Interior.

This commitment means that we will look at how our police, border, customs and coastguard agencies can share information more easily in order to tackle the terrorists and organised criminals involved in money laundering, drug smuggling and people and arms trafficking.

Turkey is on the frontline of many vital issues for the UK, particularly in Syria where it is an important member of the Global Coalition Against Daesh.

Today President Erdogan and I have reaffirmed our commitment to defeating Daesh and the need for a political settlement to end the war and provide stability for all of Syria, Turkey and the wider region.

We also agreed on the need to ensure humanitarian access in Syria and on the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law and the protection of civilians by all sides.

We reiterated our condemnation of the terrible chemical weapons attacks in Douma and on the streets of Salisbury.

While clearly the two incidents differ in order of magnitude, they are part of a pattern of disregard for the global norms that prohibit the use of chemical weapons.

Today President Erdogan and I agreed on the importance of restoring the international norm that the use of chemical weapons is abhorrent and can never be acceptable.

I underlined once again the UK position that the Salisbury attack was not just an act of attempted murder in Salisbury – nor just an act against the UK by Russia.

It was an affront to the rules based system on which we all depend.

The conflict in Syria has led to the displacement of millions of people, both within Syria and beyond.

I pay tribute to Turkey's extraordinary generosity in hosting more than three and a half million Syrian refugees and educating more than 600,000 Syrian children.

We recognise the enormous effort that the Turkish authorities are making to give those refugees the help they need.

In total the UK has committed more than £750 million both bilaterally and through the EU budget to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, in order to support those efforts.

During this visit the UK and Turkey have agreed high-level talks between our countries to explore ways in which we can work together to build capacity in the region and reduce the flow of migrants.

The importance of the UK-Turkey partnership is also demonstrated by our growing trade relationship.

Trade between the UK and Turkey has increased by more than 50 per cent over the past decade and is now worth more than £15 billion.

We continue to build on this and look to our future trade relationship once the UK leaves the EU.

During my visit to Ankara in 2017, we agreed to establish a trade working group to explore ways to liberalise and increase trade between the UK and Turkey.

Our officials continue to work together to build a solid foundation on which our relationship can flourish.

During my visit to Turkey, BAE Systems and TAI also agreed to collaborate on the pre-design phase of Turkey's new TFX fighter jet, which resulted in a contract worth more than £100 million being signed in August 2017.

This was the start of a deep and enduring defence partnership, including a new and unique government-to-government agreement that set a new framework for co-operation and dialogue, including between our defence ministries and air forces.

And today we can discuss the next phase of this project, Rolls Royce's bid to co-design the engine for the TFX fighter jet. This would support the development of aerospace engineering capability and jobs in the UK and Turkey and we look forward to continuing discussions.

Finally, the UK stood with the Turkish people when its democracy came under attack in July 2016.

It is right that those who sought to overthrow the democratically elected government are brought to justice.

But it is also important that in the defence of democracy – which has been facing extraordinary pressures from the failed coup, instability across the border from Syria and from Kurdish terrorism – Turkey does not lose sight of the values it is seeking to defend.

That is why today I have underlined to President Erdogan that we want to see democratic values and international human rights obligations upheld.

Throughout this process and in the face of the shared challenges ahead, the

UK will remain a true friend to Turkey.

So President Erdogan once again thank you for your visit and for such productive talks.