

Press release: Statement by the British Ambassador to the UAE, Philip Parham

Foreign Office staff around the world work hard to support British people who need our help. You can talk to a member of the consular team 24/7 by calling the Foreign Office, or the local Embassy number. Our consular network helped more than 23,000 people last year as well as continuing to help those with long-running cases from previous years. I am proud of the contribution which our consular team in the UAE makes to this global effort.

More than 100,000 British people live in the UAE and another 1.5 million visit every year. Fortunately, most stays in the UAE are trouble-free. The nature of consular work means that our team become involved when something has gone wrong. These can be highly distressing cases. Our team is there to provide support to the individuals and their partners and families. This support can include issuing emergency travel documents, visiting British people in hospital or in prison, or providing advice when they have fallen victim to crime. For people in detention our staff are there to support them and take an interest in their welfare. In 2017 so far there have been 213 new detainee cases (in 2016 there were 281).

There are, however, limits to the support we can provide. We cannot interfere in the legal processes or prison systems of other countries (just as we would not allow other governments to interfere in ours). But we do make representations if we have good grounds to believe that, for example, the host country's own laws are not being properly followed, or a British person is being held in conditions which fall short of international standards. More information on what we can and cannot do can be found [here](#).

[Our travel advice for the UAE](#) explains that local laws and customs are very different to those in the UK and that there may be serious penalties for doing something which may not be illegal in the UK. Both our travel advice and our Embassy's many public awareness-raising campaigns cover some of the specific issues which may arise from differences in laws and customs.

We recommend that people make an effort before they travel to familiarise themselves with local laws and customs, and respect them while abroad. The Foreign Office doesn't promote any country as a holiday destination. We do publish travel advice on 225 countries or territories to help British people make better-informed decisions about their foreign travel. No foreign travel can be guaranteed safe, but our advice is one source of useful information to help people make well-informed decisions – and take responsibility for their choices – when they are travelling. But we understand that, regardless of how prepared we all are, British people can still find themselves in difficult or distressing situations, and we are ready to help on those occasions.

More detail on how we put together our travel advice is available [here](#).