

Press release: Update from Priti Patel on the UK's response to Hurricane Irma

Updating on the UK's response to Hurricane Irma, International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

When crisis hits, it is right that the world looks to Britain for its leadership and the UK has already provided lifesaving support.

The UK has already sent emergency UK aid relief supplies including 200 shelter kits, each able to support a family of five, providing immediate relief to 1,000 people who have lost their homes.

I have sent world leading humanitarian experts to the region who are working with the British Red Cross to urgently assess need and ensure that the UK's help reaches those whose lives have been torn apart by the destruction wrought by Hurricane Irma.

1. The most powerful hurricane ever to hit the Atlantic has devastated buildings and infrastructure – and worse, it has done irreparable damage to families and communities. Several have lost loved ones, and some in the region are missing.
2. The UK Government has announced extra emergency support to provide assistance to those affected by the deadly Hurricane Irma, the most powerful of its kind ever recorded.
3. RFA Mounts Bay, which has 40 Royal Marines and Army Engineers on board, and her personnel are on site helping local authorities to restore vital support such as clean water, sanitation, temporary shelter and if required, medical assistance
4. The ship houses equipment to move earth or debris, repair infrastructure to provide clean water and transport water Equipped with boats and helicopters to access affected islands, the ship also carries emergency relief supplies.
5. A task force has been sent to the region, and over the next 24 hours troops and engineers will deploy with helicopters to support the relief effort. We have also sent a command headquarters to co-ordinate our efforts.
6. With the danger posed by Hurricane Jose which will hit areas already affected by the storms we are diverting a second ship to the Caribbean, our flagship HMS Ocean, to bring the help that will be needed in reconstruction after the hurricanes have passed.

7. Today's support can also be used to charter flights to deliver additional aid supplies into the region, or heavy machinery if needed.
8. Three humanitarian experts were sent to the region ahead of Hurricane Irma to assess needs on the ground and help prepare for the disaster.
9. A fourth adviser has also been sent and will arrive later today to provide vital expertise to help co-ordinate the response.
10. MapAction, a British charity funded by UK aid, has sent a two person Disaster Mapping Team to the Caribbean to support mapping and information management for partners on the ground.