

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Sudan in April 2018

Mr Irfan Siddiq OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Sudan in succession to Mr Michael Aron who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Siddiq will take up his appointment in April 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Irfan Siddiq

Married to: Penélope Siddiq

Children: Two

2017 – 2018 Plan International, International Advocacy Director
(secondment)

2016 – 2017 FC0, Head, Secondment Unit

2013 – 2016 Baku, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2011 – 2013 FC0, Head, Arab Partnership Department

2010 – 2011 Baghdad, Deputy Head of Mission

2007 – 2010 Damascus, Deputy Head of Mission

2005 – 2007 FC0, Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary

2004 – 2005 Washington, secondment to US State Department as Political Officer

2003 – 2004 Baghdad, Political Officer, Coalition Provisional Authority

2002 – 2003 Cairo, Second Secretary (Political/Press)

2000 – 2002 Full time language training (Arabic)

2000 – 2000 FC0, Desk Officer, Middle East Peace Process Section

1999 – 2000 New Delhi, Second Secretary (Economic/Commercial)

1998 –1999 FC0, Desk Officer, NATO

1998 Joined FC0

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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[Press release: Minister for Middle East's statement on planned Israeli settlement](#)

Minister Burt said:

The UK strongly condemns the Israeli government's decision to 'legalise' the Netiv Ha'avot outpost in the West Bank. The international community has repeatedly stated that settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution.

Further information

- Follow the Minister Burt on Twitter [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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[News story: Defence Minister hosts Polish counterpart at Allied Rapid Reaction Corps](#)

Following Mr Lancaster's visit to Poland in August 2017, the Polish Under Secretary of State has been in the UK for a two-day visit to discuss plans for the continued close defence relationship between the two countries.

The pair visited the UK's leading contribution to NATO, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. The high readiness force staff includes two Polish nationals, as well as UK nationals and personnel from 21 NATO countries.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

Our defence cooperation with Poland continues to go from strength to strength. We recently signed a defence treaty together, only the second such treaty the UK has signed with another EU country, signifying the importance of our relationship. We remain entirely committed to the security of our friends in Europe.

We are allies together in NATO and this visit has shown how our troops work side by side within the alliance to protect our interests.

The UK has deployed 150 military personnel to Poland as part of NATO's Enhance Forward Presence (eFP) in the region. [Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visited these troops in December.](#)

As well as visiting the UK's leading NATO high-readiness headquarters, the Defence Minister and his Polish counterpart commemorated veterans at the Polish War Memorial and witnessed a Ground Based Air Defence demonstration at Salisbury Plain. They also held a series of bilateral talks following on from the successful signing of the [new defence treaty in December.](#)

[Press release: UK Public Health Rapid](#)

Support Team deploys to Nigeria

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST), a joint run effort of Public Health England and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, is deploying to Nigeria to help control an outbreak of Lassa fever.

Nigeria is currently experiencing an unusually severe epidemic of Lassa fever – a viral haemorrhagic illness that is normally present in the country but on a lower scale. The outbreak is most prevalent in the southern Nigerian states of Edo, Ondo and Ebonyi.

Given the size of the current outbreak and the risk of further spread locally, the government of Nigeria has requested support from the UK-PHRST team.

The UK-PHRST team deployment includes an expert in patient management, 2 epidemiologists (experts in tracking outbreaks) and a logistician.

The UK-PHRST will provide technical and analytical support for the public health response to control this outbreak, and will also assist with important research on Lassa fever that can provide insight for controlling the disease in the future.

The team will be working alongside the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, the World Health Organisation (WHO), and other experts in outbreak control to support the Nigerian government's response.

Professor Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK PHRST said:

The Lassa fever situation in Nigeria has been worsening and now requires an escalated level of response in order to help the Nigerian government slow transmission and save lives.

We are proud to be assisting the government of Nigeria by offering specialist support that will benefit the country both in the immediate and long term.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine MP, said:

Viruses like Lassa fever do not respect borders – and it is only right that we share our expertise with countries facing serious outbreaks around the world.

Our invaluable Rapid Support Team will provide help on the ground in Nigeria to manage the spread of the virus, and grow the country's ability to protect itself from other dangerous diseases.

Humans usually become infected with Lassa virus from exposure to urine or

faeces of infected rodents that are unique to Africa. The virus may also be spread between humans through direct contact with the blood, urine, faeces, or other bodily secretions of an infected person, though this tends to be less common. Typical symptoms include fever, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, with bleeding and shock in severe cases. The public health risk to the UK is low.

The UK PHRST is funded by the UK government. It continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where the deployment of specialist expertise could prevent these threats from turning into a global outbreak. It also conducts outbreak-related research and focuses on building in-country capacity to prevent outbreaks with overseas partners.

Background

For latest case numbers of Lassa Fever in Nigeria, please refer to the WHO: <http://www.ncdc.gov.ng/reports/weekly>.

UK-PHRST

UK-PHRST consists of public health experts, scientists, academics and clinicians ready to respond to urgent requests from countries around the world within 48 hours to support them in preventing local disease outbreaks from becoming global epidemics.

Informed by surveillance data, the UK-PHRST deploys on behalf of UK government in response to requests from low- and middle-income countries, as well as with the WHO and the Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN).

The UK PHRST has previously deployed members to Ethiopia (outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhoea), Nigeria (Meningitis outbreak), Sierra Leone (cholera risk), Madagascar (plague outbreak) and Bangladesh (Diphtheria outbreak).

The core team consists of:

- epidemiologists (experts in tracking and understanding disease transmission)
- microbiologists (diagnosing the cause of an outbreak)
- clinical researchers (developing the best patient management practices)
- social scientists (community engagement during outbreaks)
- data scientists (managing data and modelling outbreak trajectories)
- infection prevention and control experts (advising on preventing transmission)
- logisticians

The UK-PHRST consortium of research institutions includes the University of Oxford and King's College London as academic partners.

Public Health England

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and

wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE_uk](#) and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland.

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

The [London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#) is a world-leading centre for research and postgraduate education in public and global health, with more than 4,000 students and 1,000 staff working in over 100 countries. The school is one of the highest-rated research institutions in the UK, is among the world's leading schools in public and global health, and was named University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards 2016. Our mission is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice.

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[Press release: Over £2 million paid to charity rebuilt by Commission inquiry](#)

Over £2.1 million has been recovered to a charitable trust after a Commission inquiry exposed and addressed misconduct and mismanagement in its administration.

The London based grant-making charity was established to further general charitable purposes. Despite lending £2 million the charity was not able to evidence adequate attempts to protect the charity's assets or recover the loan. The Commission opened a statutory inquiry in May 2015 by which point the total due to the charity had risen to £2,236,401 as a result of interest

accrued.

The Commission first engaged with The Reb Moische Foundation in 2014 regarding a loan it made to a private commercial company, Gladstar Ltd, which was connected to one of the trustees. The inquiry found that poor decision-making regarding the loan had placed the charity's funds at serious risk. The charity took no external investment advice before entering into the loan, and as Gladstar Ltd was based in Gibraltar, recovery of the funds would be challenging.

The Commission's inquiry also identified concerns about unmanaged conflicts of interest. One of the charity's trustees was secretary of the company at the time the loan was made, and subsequently became a Director. As a result of the Commission's intervention, the surviving trustee agreed to transfer the proceeds of the sale of six properties owned by Gladstar Ltd to the charity which resulted in £2,137,368.50 being vested in the bank account of the Official Custodian for Charities (the OCC).

The surviving trustee resigned from the charity and agreed not to take on any other charity trusteeships. Two new trustees were appointed by the settlor, and have opened a new bank account and adopted policies for grant making, investment and conflicts of interest. The Commission has since directed the OCC to transfer the recovered funds to the charity which, including interest, totalled £2,137,736.39. This happened on 7 October 2017.

The inquiry closed on 27 February with the publication of this report, however the Commission will continue to monitor the new trustees' application of the new policies and charitable funds.

Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

Failings of governance and financial management unfortunately put this charity's assets on the line. The good news is that, following our intervention, over £2 million can now be put towards important charitable causes.

This inquiry demonstrates that if not properly managed, conflicts of interest can seriously hamper trustees from acting in the best interests of their charity.

The Commission's full report of its inquiry is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).

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