

Green Party: Government has no viable plan for prisons crisis



Green Party

13 February 2017

The Green Party is calling on the Government to tackle the growing prisons crisis after an undercover BBC investigation discovered chaos in HMP Northumberland, one of the country's largest prisons [1].

Justice Secretary Liz Truss is expected to call the plan to cut prison numbers a 'dangerous quick fix' in a speech to the Centre for Social Justice today [2].

A separate report published today highlighted the rising number of suicides in prisons, the impact of staff shortages and a 'toxic' working environment [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Justice Secretary appears to be caught like a rabbit in the headlights. A huge crisis in our prisons is bearing down but there is no viable plan to deal with it.

"Liz Truss has repeatedly ignored the calls for sensible moves to bring prison numbers down to manageable levels. Reducing overcrowding would ease the excessive workload of prison officers, ensure a focus on rehabilitation and help stop the riots, deaths and escapes that are becoming commonplace.

"We're not talking about turfing dangerous criminals out onto the street. We need a long term, common sense approach, including investment in education, youth services and anti-poverty measures to tackle crime at its root, as well as restorative measures to cut reoffending.

"The privatisation of prisons has proved disastrous and profit-focused companies should never have been allowed to take control of such a large part of our justice system. A complete overhaul of our failing prison system is necessary, with all prison services brought back into public hands."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38931580>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/13/liz-truss-rejects-calls-to-cut-sentences-to-reduce-prison-population>
3. <http://home.bt.com/news/uk-news/profound-shift-needed-to-change-trend-on-prison-suicides-11364150503382>

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[Press release: Baroness Anelay's visit to East Africa](#)

Baroness Anelay, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI), will travel this week to Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi, where she will see first-hand the support provided by the UK on preventing sexual violence, strengthening human rights and delivering humanitarian aid.

The Minister will also meet with a number of senior government representatives, including Ugandan President Museveni, and officials at the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She will also host a number of events with civil society, human rights defenders and members of the judiciary.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Baroness Anelay said:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to visit the region and see first-hand the work of the UK to tackle sexual violence and support survivors of these atrocious crimes.

This visit comes at an important time. Preventing sexual violence, ending the culture of impunity and ending survivor stigma remain top priorities for the UK. I am proud of the 17 Peace Support Training Centres that the UK has provided for training across the African continent since 2001.

I look forward to seeing the impact of our work. The UK is a friend and close partner of the region. We will continue to work together on shared challenges and opportunities.

Baroness Anelay will first travel to Kenya, where she will visit the British Peace Support Team (BPST (EA)) who are delivering teaching courses to police and security personnel from across the region on mechanisms for prevention

and response to SGBV.

In Uganda, the Minister will visit a refugee settlement to see UK humanitarian support in action, meet survivors of sexual violence in Gulu refugee camp, and visit a gender-based violence shelter in Kampala. Despite the conflict in Northern Uganda ending over a decade ago, stigma suffered by survivors continues to impact many aspects of their lives, including access to jobs and community services. In collaboration with organisations such as the Refugee Law Project and World Vision, the UK supports a number of projects in Uganda which help provide both physical and psychological support to survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape.

Before she travels to Burundi itself, in Rwanda the Minister will meet with Burundian human rights defenders in exile, independent media and NGO partners delivering UK projects. In Burundi, the Minister will meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and UN, AU and EU representatives to discuss how international partners can best work with the Burundian Government to support inclusive dialogue and bring a resolution to the protracted political crisis.

Whilst in Burundi, Baroness Anelay will also visit Centre SERUKA, which provides services for survivors of sexual violence. The UK provides support to a number of initiatives across Burundi, empowering women to prevent and address the impact of sexual violence. These initiatives reduce stigmatisation, promote the role of women in peace building and support faith and community leaders to investigate incidences of sexual violence.

Notes to Editors

1. The British Peace and Support Team (EA) in Kenya delivers pan-spectrum training as part of the UK's commitment to long term peace and support in East Africa.
2. This year alone, 9,500 military, police and civilians from across the region will be trained in specialist areas ranging from Protection of Civilians/Human Rights, through numerous types of tactical training to high-end Weapons Technical Intelligence and Counter-IED courses. BPST(EA)'s current primary focus is pre-deployment and in-mission training for troops making up the AU force in Somalia – AMISOM – prioritising those niche areas which are requested by regional militaries as enabling them to fight more effectively. The team also provides limited Counter Illegal Wildlife Trade training in security specific areas to Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania wildlife agencies.

Further information

Press release: UK embraces healthcare collaboration with south China

UK Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Mr Alok Sharma, is leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to south China to explore opportunities to increase trade and collaboration between the UK and China.

The delegation will visit Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen, showcasing world class UK expertise and developing export opportunities for the UK across the region.

After 3 days in South China, Mr Sharma will travel to Beijing for a series of political meetings with Chinese Ministers. He will make a speech to mark 45 years of UK-China ambassadorial relations ahead of the official anniversary on 13 March 2017.

In Guangzhou, the Minister will open a healthcare roundtable at the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University between UK businesses and representatives of this prestige Chinese university and its 10 affiliated hospitals. The session will focus on UK capabilities in hospital infrastructure, training and education, digital health and out-of-hospital care. The Minister will also witness the signing of an agreement between Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hospital and Cardiff University on breast cancer research.

Speaking ahead of his visit, the Minister for Asia and the Pacific Alok Sharma said:

The UK has a strong and innovative healthcare and life sciences sector. Our NHS ranks amongst the best in the world. British expertise and businesses are well placed to support China in achieving its national vision of 'Healthy 2030'.

There is a wealth of investment and export opportunities for the UK across south China. Guangdong has the largest GDP of all China's provinces and its economy grew by 7.5% last year. Part of Fujian's Free Trade Zone, Xiamen is the sixteenth largest port in the world, and its openness to trade has made it a pioneer in economic reform.

China has the largest education system in the world, with an estimated market value of £340 billion by 2020. Our world class British universities are already collaborating on areas like healthcare training, research, clinical services and new hospital buildings and refurbishment. I look forward to seeing even greater cooperation and commercial and export opportunities for British businesses.

Mr Sharma will open a newly-expanded UK Visa Application Centre in Fuzhou as part of plans to accommodate the increasing number of Chinese applicants.

Fuzhou is one of 15 centres across China, welcoming visitors to study, holiday and invest in the UK.

The Minister will also visit Xiamen, Cardiff's flourishing sister city and part of the Fujian Free Trade Zone. Xiamen University has connections with more than 12 British universities, and is partnering with Cardiff University on a new dental school.

Further information

Follow Foreign Office Minister Alok Sharma on twitter [@AlokSharma_RDG](#)

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[News story: MOT fails could be avoided by basic car maintenance](#)

Nearly 50% of all faults found on MOTs could be avoided by carrying out regular, simple checks and maintenance, like replacing bulbs, wipers and tyres.

Between April 2015 and March 2016, nearly 1 in 5 cars taken for their MOT had problems with lighting and signalling – including simple problems such as blown bulbs.

Top reasons for MOT failures between April 2015 and March 2016

Type of defect	% of MOTs where the defect was found
Lighting and signalling	18.9%
Suspension	13%
Brakes	10%
Tyres	7.7%
Issues affecting the driver's view of the road	7.2%

Tips to avoid a fail and stay safe

Check that brakes work smoothly, tyres are legal, headlights and other lights work, windscreen wipers and washers work, and the driver's view of the road is clear of any obstruction.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is urging drivers to carry out regular, simple checks on their vehicles to avoid MOT fails and the accidents

that defects cause.

Make sure that:

- brakes work smoothly and that the vehicle doesn't pull to one side
- tyres are correctly inflated, have no cuts or bulges, and that they all have at least 1.6mm of tread
- headlights and other lights work – give them a tap to check they're not loose or damaged and check the colours are correct and match
- windscreen wipers and washers work
- the driver's view of the road is clear of any obstruction, such as stickers, toys or air fresheners

Car defects contributing to accidents

The [2015 road casualties report for Great Britain](#) shows that car defects were a contributory factor in 1,131 accidents.

Over 75% of defects that contributed to accidents were either braking or tyre issues.

The MOT is there to help avoid this and help you keep your vehicle safe to drive. However, you need to follow the standard to pass the MOT all year round.

Safe to drive at all times

DVSA Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA's priority is to help you keep your car safe to drive on our roads.

Don't wait until your MOT to find out if your car needs attention. Make sure your car is properly maintained and safe to drive at all times.

Carrying out regular checks on lights and tyres will help you to stay safe and legal, as well as saving you time and money when your car's MOT is due.

Find out more about [getting an MOT](#).

The [MOT testing data for Great Britain for 2015 to 2016](#) has more information about why other types of vehicles fail their MOT.

News story: Britain, coalition and Iraqi forces to maintain momentum in campaign against Daesh, Defence Secretary says

Speaking in Iraq, where local Iraqi and Coalition forces recently scored a major victory in the fight against Daesh in eastern Mosul, Sir Michael welcomed the progress made in defeating Daesh in Iraq.

Sir Michael saw how Britain's commitment to training Iraqi forces, which was stepped up last year is having an effect in the fight against Daesh. Numbers of Iraqi Security Forces trained by UK and Coalition personnel has increased threefold since October 2016, with around 3,000 Iraqi forces now being trained every month, 10,000 troops have been trained since the end of October 2016, increasing the Iraqi force's skills and ability to defeat Daesh.

With operations to clear the western approaches to Mosul already underway, Sir Michael met with the Prime Minister, President and Defence Minister of Iraq, and the Prime Minister and other representatives of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, to take review campaign progress and planning

During his visit, Sir Michael also met with UK personnel training Iraqi security forces. Britain leads the Coalition's training programme in Iraq, and so far has helped to train nearly 40,000 troops. The training in countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is proving to be vital, as Daesh have booby trapped many parts of eastern Mosul during its occupation. Iraqi forces have been using their training to dispose of these crude devices, allowing their forces to advance and civilians to safely return to their homes. This training will also prove essential when forces move into the heavily mined and densely populated neighbourhoods of western Mosul.

The liberation of eastern Mosul marked a major victory for Iraqi forces, who Sir Michael praised for their patient and deliberate operation, taking care to minimise the risk to civilians. The RAF also played an important role in the Iraqi victory, providing sustained close air support to Iraqi troops. RAF Reaper aircraft played a particularly vital role, delivering precision attacks on Daesh extremists engaged in street fighting, while also using its advanced sensors to alert Iraqi ground forces to the presence of civilians.

Residents in eastern Mosul are already returning to their homes, with over 29,000 having done so in recent weeks. The liberation has also enabled more than 23,000 children to return to school and continue their education.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Iraqi forces, supported by Britain and the Coalition, have made

strong progress in the fight against Daesh. We're keeping up the momentum with operations to liberate western Mosul due to start shortly.

This will be a more complex fight in a densely populated urban environment. Britain will continue playing its part providing precision strikes, vital intelligence, and training Iraqi forces to deal with explosive devices planted by Daesh.

Sir Michael also announced that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training mission in Iraq, from July this year. The new NATO training and capacity building team will help the Iraqis in dealing with the threats they face, including to counter Daesh improvised explosive devices. The UK has already contributed £1 million to help establish NATO's presence in Baghdad, which will provide expert advice on defence issues to the Iraqi Government.