

# Securing a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians

Thank you, Mr President. Thank you also to SRSB Mladenov for his briefing. I would like to begin by welcoming the swearing in of the new Israeli Government. The United Kingdom looks forward to working with this government on a whole range of bilateral and regional issues, not least peace in the Middle East.

We do, however, remain deeply concerned about the prospects of annexation of parts of the West Bank. Annexation of any part of the West Bank by Israel would be a clear violation of international law and would profoundly damage efforts to restart peace negotiations. We instead encourage the new Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work towards a lasting agreement based on a two-state solution.

To this end, the United Kingdom appreciates the proposals which the Palestinian Authority has made for renewed dialogue. As part of this, we look to the Palestinian leadership to offer detailed proposals for a settlement, and find a means of restarting discussions with the United States, who retain a key role in the Middle East Peace Process.

Mr President, we are disappointed by the announcement by President Abbas yesterday. Now is the time for more cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, not less. Security cooperation is particularly important. Instability is in no one's interest, except extremists. It is critical that both Israel and the Palestinian Authority work together to meet their obligations under the Oslo Accords, and refrain from unilateral actions that could set back the cause of peace.

The United Kingdom remains committed to achieving a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

We reiterate our call on the Government of Israel to halt any activity that makes peace more difficult to achieve. This includes advancement of settlement plans including in Givat Hamatos, Har Homa, and in E1. All settlements are illegal under International Humanitarian Law. Settlement construction in these highly sensitive areas threatens to further undermine the viability of a future Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem. We also remain concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property, and repeated incidents of settler violence. Perpetrators must be held to account.

At the same time, we call on the Palestinian Authority to tackle incitement and anti-Semitism which create a non-conducive environment for cooperation and negotiations. The United Kingdom strongly condemns the use of racist,

hateful or anti-Semitic language.

Mr President, we remain deeply concerned by the ongoing cycle of violence. Recent weeks have seen the killing of an IDF soldier in Jenin and the killing of a number of Palestinians across the West Bank. Among those Palestinians killed was 15-year-old Zaid Al-Qaysiya from Hebron who died as a result of IDF live fire. Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. The ongoing violence underlines that a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. We urge continued calm in Gaza. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable.

Finally, Mr President, I would like to thank the Government of Israel for pledging on behalf of Israel \$60 million to the international fund for vaccines at the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) Summit on 4 May. During this global crisis, cooperation is vital, and we continue to welcome the ongoing cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority towards tackling COVID-19, as well as the important part played by the United Nations.

It is our hope that the positive cooperation we have seen in response to COVID-19 will translate into cooperation to achieve a negotiated settlement to the Middle East peace process.

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## [Oliver Dowden's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 20 May 2020](#)

[Coronavirus press conference \(20 May 2020\)](#)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's briefing. I'm pleased to be joined by Steve Powis – the National Medical Director at NHS England.

First, I want to update you on the latest data on the coronavirus response.

- 2,962,227 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 177,216 tests carried out yesterday;
- 248,293 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 2,472 cases since yesterday;
- 9,953 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, down 13 % from 11,443 this time last week.

And sadly, of those who have tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 35,704 have now sadly died. That's an increase of 363 fatalities since yesterday. Of course, my thoughts are with everyone of the families of those people who have been affected by this.

Before we begin questions from the public and from the media I just want to remind people of the details of the next phase of our fight against Coronavirus.

First, in order to monitor our progress, we are establishing a new COVID Alert Level System, with five levels, each relating to the level of threat posed by the virus.

The alert level will be based primarily on the R value and the number of coronavirus cases.

And in turn that alert level will determine the level of social distancing measures in place.

The lower the level the fewer the measures; the higher the level the stricter the measures.

Throughout the period of lockdown which started on March 23rd we have been at Level 4.

Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the British people in this lockdown, we have helped to bring the R level down and we are now in a position to begin moving to Level 3, in careful steps.

We have set out the first of three steps we will take to carefully modify the measures, gradually ease the lockdown, and begin to allow people to return to their normal way of life – but crucially while avoiding what would be a disastrous second peak which overwhelms the NHS.

After after each step we will closely monitor the impact of that step on the R and the number of infections, and all the available data, and we will only take the next step when we are satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Step 1 – as the PM announced this week:

- Those who cannot work from home should now speak to their employer about going back to work.
- You can now spend time outdoors and exercise as often as you like.
- You can meet one person outside of your household in an outdoor, public place provided that you stay 2 metres apart.

Having taken the first step in carefully adjusting some of the measures and our advice to people on what to do, we have also updated what we are asking people to do, which is to Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

Yes – staying alert, for the vast majority of people, still means staying at home as much as possible. But there are a range of other actions we're advising people to take.

People should Stay Alert, by:

- working from home if you can;
- limiting contact with other people;
- keeping distance if you go out – 2 metres apart where possible;
- washing your hands regularly;
- wearing a face covering when you are in enclosed spaces where it's difficult to be socially distant – for example in some shops and on public transport;
- and if you or anyone in your household has symptoms, you all need to self-isolate.

Because if everyone stays alert and follows the rules, we can control coronavirus by keeping the R down and reducing the number of infections.

This is how we can continue to save lives, and livelihoods, as we begin as a nation to recover from coronavirus.

Over the past months, we've all naturally been focused on the huge, life-or-death health implications of this pandemic.

But I'd now like to provide an update on some of the crucial work taking place behind the scenes to support and protect the things that give our lives added meaning – such as sport, art, tourism and our charities, music and theatre.

And when we look back on coronavirus, one of the things we'll remember is the incredible contribution made by so many people.

As a way of showing our national gratitude to these everyday COVID heroes, we are announcing today that we are delaying Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday honours list until the Autumn so that they can be recognised and celebrated.

And as the Prime Minister said today, I'm delighted that Her Majesty The Queen has approved a knighthood for Captain Tom Moore, in recognition of his outstanding achievement in raising nearly £33 million for NHS charities.

Captain Tom set a marker for generosity, and the public have matched it.

Incredibly, it looks as if British people and businesses have now contributed over £800 million – just through national fundraising campaigns alone – and a great deal more has obviously been raised at a local level.

As the British people have generously given both their time and money, the government has sought to back them every step of the way. We promised to match every penny raised by the BBC's Big Night In campaign and, after a fantastic public response, I'm delighted to announce today that over £70 million is now being distributed by Comic Relief, Children In Need and the National Emergencies Trust to charities on the frontline.

This comes on top of the hundreds of millions of pounds we've already announced for charities doing vital work to support those suffering with poor mental health, to help victims of domestic abuse, and to make sure hospices

can continue to care for families in these most difficult circumstances.

And today, I am pleased to confirm that the Government's dedicated support scheme for small and medium sized charities – the [Coronavirus Community Support Fund](#) – will open for applications this week.

Initially there will be a £200 million tranche of government funding and this will be administered by the National Lottery Community Fund and will focus on those charities we may not know nationally, but are a lifeline to communities at a local level.

On top of that I can also announce that we are releasing £150 million from dormant accounts to help social enterprises get affordable credit to people who are financially vulnerable and support charities tackling youth unemployment.

Our charities, both large and small, have really been at the forefront of the national effort to defeat the coronavirus. And together this all amounts to a multi-billion pound boost for Britain's charities.

I know people are also eager for news on the return of live sports and arts. The last few months have felt odd without them, and our calendars strangely bare.

Finding creative, crowd-free ways to navigate coronavirus is the biggest challenge for our recreation and leisure sectors right now.

So this week I am setting up a [renewal taskforce](#) which will help them bounce back. It will be made up of the brightest and the best from the creative, tech and sporting worlds. These are experts in their fields and they'll be advising me on how to find new and different ways to get their industries back up and running. They include:

Alex Scott, a former Lioness and Olympian, and now an award winning broadcaster. She will help us think through how we can get sport back safely in a way that works for clubs, players and supporters alike.

Similarly Lord Grade, a former Chairman of both the BBC and ITV, will provide an insight into how we can get our creative and media industries back up and flourishing again.

Tamara Rojo, the English National Ballet's Artistic Director, will give us ideas for how we start to get our arts scene back up and running.

And Martha Lane Fox, well-known as the founder of lastminute.com, will advise on how tech can power the recovery of all these sectors, but particularly in tourism, as part of the much wider role it will play in driving our economy forward, as it has done already.

Meanwhile, bit by bit, we are developing guidance that is helping some of the lighter bits of our economy return to a new normal.

So we have supported the safe return of TV production, meaning our

broadcasters are able to keep some of our favourite shows on the TV screens, whether that's Corry or Eastenders.

We've helped to reopen the country's tennis and basketball courts, and guided elite athletes back into training safely – and that in turn will pave the way for the return of live sports behind closed doors in the near future.

Normal life as we have known it is still a long way off, and the path to get there is a narrow one.

But these things will return, when it is safe for them to do so, thanks to the same drive and creativity that makes a great performance or a great piece of art.

And I really think that when they do, and when we have overcome this crisis together, we will appreciate them that much more.

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## [Coronavirus and regional security: UK statement on Foreign Ministers' meeting](#)

Press release

The Foreign Secretary hosted a meeting with the Turkish, French, and German Foreign Ministers, to discuss coronavirus as well as Middle East security issues.



The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab hosted a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, France, and Germany on Monday (18 May). They discussed cooperation on shared challenges faced by all our countries, both from COVID-19 and wider security issues.

Ministers agreed on the importance of international cooperation in the global

fight against COVID, particularly in the search for a vaccine and supporting vulnerable countries and groups.

Ministers all agreed that in Syria the priority must be to progress from ceasefire to long term political resolution, and to support the delivery of aid to Syrians, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

Ministers were in strong agreement on the importance of continued coalition presence in Iraq, to avoid a resurgence by Da'esh.

On Libya, Ministers affirmed the need to renew the ceasefire, and to return to the parameters process outlined at the Berlin Conference.

Ministers also agreed that, as NATO allies, we must continue to maintain deterrence and unity through the challenges thrown up by COVID-19.

### **Further information**

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## [Home Office extends bereavement scheme to NHS support staff and social care workers](#)

News story

The bereavement scheme has been extended to the families and dependants of NHS support staff and social care workers who die as a result of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19).



The Home Office is extending the offer of indefinite leave to remain, free of charge, to the families and dependants of NHS support staff and social care workers who die as result of contracting coronavirus.

The offer of indefinite leave to remain will be effective immediately and retrospectively.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Every death in this crisis is a tragedy, and sadly some NHS support staff and social care workers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of saving the lives of others.

When I announced the introduction of the bereavement scheme in April, I said we would continue to work across government to look at ways to offer further support. Today we are extending the scheme to NHS support staff and social care workers.

We want to ensure families have the support they need and so this will be effective immediately and retrospectively.

The bereavement scheme was initially launched in April for health workers in the NHS and independent health and care sector, and today the scheme will now extend to NHS support staff and social care workers in recognition of their tireless dedication and selflessness.

This is a complex issue that the government has been working hard to address. Many employers in the social care sector are not visa sponsors, and the majority of migrant workers in the sector do not need to inform the Home Office of where they work as their visas give them a generic right to work. The Home Office's dedicated NHS team will work directly with trusts and employers to identify family members to whom this extension may apply and arrange for the issue of indefinite leave to remain.

Detailed records of coronavirus deaths are being compiled and it will be reflected on the death certificate. If anyone feels that they are in this position they can contact the UKVI NHS team directly at:

[UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk)

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## **[Joint Statement of The Northern Group of Defence Ministers, 20 May 2020](#)**

News story

Defence Ministers of The Northern Group have issued the following Joint



## Statement



Today, 20 May 2020, under the current chairmanship of Latvia, the Defence Ministers of the Northern Group (consisting of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) met by video teleconference (VTC).

The Northern Group is a valuable forum in which members come together informally for discussions on defence and security issues common to us as Northern European nations, and to explore new opportunities to work together.

Northern Group nations are committed to maintaining security and stability in our northern European region and the wider continent, as well as strengthening the bonds with our transatlantic partners.

During the meeting the Northern Group Ministers considered a number of key issues regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. Ministers discussed the impact of the pandemic on their Armed Forces' capabilities and readiness; and the importance of adapting to the 'new normality' this crisis has brought by ensuring our forces remain agile and combat-ready, including by restarting military exercises, sustaining operational deployments and continuing to increase defence spending in order to provide the necessary military capabilities.

Ministers also shared lessons learned from responding to the crisis and the challenges posed by various disinformation activities.

Today, all members of the Northern Group expressed their solidarity in these challenging times. We salute the work of our Armed Forces in support of the civil authorities managing the crisis.

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