

We strongly condemn any act of intimidation and reprisal

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of United Kingdom as well as on behalf of 69 other countries.

Civil society and human rights defenders play a crucial role in supporting our work at the United Nations and the healthy functioning of democratic institutions. They not only enrich our process of decision-making, but their contributions also ensure that the impact of the decisions we make here at the UN reach those furthest behind, in line with our existing obligations and commitments, in particular under the UN Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who cooperate, seek to cooperate or have cooperated with the UN undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the UN as a whole, including the human rights system.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and share his alarm about the growing number of reprisals, which take many forms. We share in particular the concern that women human rights defenders are disproportionately exposed to gender-specific barriers, threats and violence, and are alarmed at the number of attacks against journalists and media workers. We strongly condemn any act of intimidation and reprisal, whether online or offline, against individuals and groups who cooperate, seek to cooperate, or have cooperated with the UN. In this respect, we urge States to prevent and ensure adequate protection against such acts by raising awareness and by investigating and ensuring accountability and effective remedy for such acts, whether perpetrated by State or non-State actors as well as to inform the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council accordingly. We must be determined to do all we can to enable them to work and live in safety and without fear of any kind of intimidation or violence. In this regard, we welcome the positive steps taken by those States who have responded to acts of reprisals against persons and groups in their respective countries.

We welcome the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 42/28, which invites the General Assembly to remain seized of all work in this area. We are convinced that the exploration of all avenues of action is crucial. We highly appreciate the work of Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Andrew Gilmour, who has lead the UN efforts to put an end to this condemnable practice. We strongly believe that this mandate ensures a more systematised, coordinated response to the deeply worrying issue of intimidation and reprisals, including against human rights defenders, and will help to put an end to impunity for these attacks. We encourage Member States to cooperate with the Assistant Secretary-General and assist him to fulfill his mandate. We place special emphasis on raising awareness and on the dissemination of best practices.

Mr. Chair, notwithstanding the primary obligation of States to prevent and address reprisals, and to uphold the highest standard of human rights promotion and protection, the UN system also has a duty to prevent and respond to alleged cases of intimidation and reprisals against those who provide information or seek to engage with it, and to ensure accountability when these acts occur. In this respect, we encourage all UN bodies, mechanisms and agencies to strengthen the collective response to reprisals and continue to give detailed consideration to such cases brought to their attention, and to take immediate steps, including by submitting them to Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour and to the Secretary-General as contributions for his annual report. We would also welcome more frequent reporting on the issue of reprisals and follow-up by Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour, including here in New York, thereby increasing awareness, accountability and ensuring a more timely response.

Mr Chair, civil society and human rights defenders are important parts of vibrant societies which encourage openness, transparency and dialogue between people and those in power. The UN, as a global community, must be an example of best practice and ensure all civil society organisations and human rights defenders who wish to engage with the UN system are able to do so without fear of reprisal or intimidation. This will send a message that we value their contribution and will continue to mitigate the risks they face and provide them with opportunities to engage meaningfully with the UN system.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

UK to host 93rd Interpol General Assembly in 2024

The UK will host the General Assembly of the international police organisation, Interpol, in 2024 – the largest global gathering of senior law enforcement officials and heads of ministries.

The announcement was made today (18 October) during the 88th Interpol General Assembly in Santiago, Chile following a vote by member countries.

Interpol is a crucial partner to the UK, facilitating international police cooperation between 194-member countries. The General Assembly is Interpol's highest governing body, comprising representatives from each of its member countries and responsible for major decisions affecting general policy and resources. It usually takes place over four days and is attended by approximately 2,500 delegates.

The General Assembly is a key opportunity to drive innovation and leadership in police cooperation and tackle major crime trends and security threats facing the world, including organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are delighted to host the Interpol General Assembly in 2024 and this highlights the UK's strong commitment to make the world a safer place.

The UK is and will continue to be a global leader on security and justice. We are determined to build on that role by strengthening our international security relationships where it matters and enhancing our capabilities at a domestic, European and global level to protect the public. This includes investing in organisations like Interpol, that are best suited to tackling the security threats we face.

It also demonstrates our vision as a global security leader, looking to invest in strong relationships with those who matter most to our security.

Working alongside the UK's Interpol National Central Bureau, the National Crime Agency, we continue to cooperate on issues such as tackling child sexual exploitation and organised crime.

The UK has been a proud member of Interpol since 1928 and shares the organisation's vision for international law enforcement cooperation. The UK continues to work with them to lead and drive the agenda for positive change in security.

China opens doors to British Beef

The British beef industry is set to benefit from an estimated £230 million boost as the Chinese government today (18 October) finalised details of a historic UK-China agreement.

For the first time in over 20 years, UK farmers and beef producers will have full access to the Chinese market, marking the end of a ban imposed by China following the BSE outbreak in 1996.

Today's announcement follows extensive inspections by the Chinese authorities – who have confirmed that British beef producers meet the necessary standards to export to their market – and marks the final step in securing access.

The Chinese authorities have cleared four beef sites for export in the first instance – with further sites under review – and the first exports are expected to be shipped in the next few months.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Sealing this landmark agreement with China is huge news for our world-renowned food and farming industry, meaning more people across the globe can enjoy British beef.

Today's milestone marks another step towards unlocking the industry's full potential, and reflects our ambition to maximise trading opportunities for British produce across the world as the UK leaves the EU.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

Chinese diners can now enjoy the best beef in the world. I'm delighted that our dedicated UK producers can now sell quality products to one of the world's largest economies, supporting local jobs and bringing millions of pounds to the UK economy each year.

This is another step forward in realising our global trading ambitions with unbeatable British food. As we leave the European Union, we will continue to break down market access barriers to make it easier for UK businesses to trade across the world.

The China-UK beef agreement is the culmination of several years of engagement between UK and Chinese government officials. [China's ban was lifted in June last year](#) when market access engagement for UK beef exports began.

It follows a number of inspections and inward missions hosted by the [Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board](#) (AHDB), in partnership with Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and Hybu Cig Cymru (Meat Promotion Wales HCC) and other industry bodies, as well as government departments and agencies.

AHDB International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

This is a great end to a very successful year for our red meat exports. This new agreement is fantastic news for our beef processors who will now have access to another market outside of the EU.

We continue to work collaboratively with government to create new opportunities for our red meat exports and today's announcement is a testament to the persistence and hard work of all involved.

We look forward to seeing the first shipments of beef arrive in China and hope to replicate the success of our pork exports in the beef sector.

The announcement comes after China recently approved five British pork plants to export products to China, which will build on a market which is already worth £70 million per year. We look forward to further approval of qualified UK pork plants by the end of the 2019.

China is currently the UK's eighth largest export market for food and drink, with more than £610 million worth of products bought by Chinese consumers last year.

Additional information:

This agreement is the product of collaboration across government, across the Defra group including APHA, RPA and VMD, with collaboration from FSA and DAERA in Northern Ireland.

Better information for victims and greater transparency – Parole Board CEO Blog

The Parole Board is often misunderstood by victims, the public and sometimes in Parliament, because there is a lack of understanding of the work it does. I am therefore keen to ensure we raise greater awareness of the work we do.

Victim engagement

The Parole Board make 25,000 decisions each year. I am deeply conscious, having spoken to many victims, that our decisions have a significant impact on them. That is why the Board has committed to ensuring that they are treated with humanity and respect. Crucial to this is ensuring that they have access to information on their entitlements.

A victim is now entitled to:

- receive regular updates on a prisoner's progress in custody (including when their parole hearings will be).
- submit a Victim Personal Statement to the Parole Board (and can read it out if they wish).
- request licence conditions.
- request a summary of a parole decision.
- ask for reconsideration of a parole decision via the Secretary of State (as of 22 July 2019).

Over 2,000 parole decision summaries have now been released by the Board- most of which have been for victims – which reflects the appetite for better information.

Access to these legal entitlements for Victims largely depends on people being signed up to the Victim Contact Scheme and therefore knowing about the scheme in the first place. We have provided [guidance on this](#) and made a video available on YouTube to show what these entitlements are.

[A Victim's Guide to Parole](#)

In my experience, many problems stem from the fact that victims are not fully aware of their rights. For example, after an often difficult and distressing criminal trial, a Victim may not know that they can sign up to the Victim Contact Scheme. They may well then be surprised and disappointed if they hear in the news or on social media that the offender is being considered for release. It is crucial that more is done by all agencies to ensure victims are more aware of their rights. Any eligible victim can email the victim contact service: vcsenquiries@justice.gov.uk.

Public Understanding

The other real difficulty we face is misunderstanding about the role of the Parole Board and how sentencing works. By law, the Parole Board only considers release once a prisoner has served the period for punishment set by the court.

Our role is not to determine whether the punishment imposed by the court is appropriate; our sole focus is to assess risk.

In any given year over 60,000 people are released from prison. However, under 5% of those released (just under 3,000 people) are released by the Parole Board, with the majority being subject to automatic release. Contrary to popular belief, three-quarters of people whose cases go to the Board are deemed too dangerous to be released – and the Parole Board ensures that the ongoing detention is lawful.

When someone is released by the Parole Board, they will be supervised 'on licence' in the community by the Probation Service. This supervision will last until the end of their sentence, which in some cases will be for the rest of their lives.

Whilst we do not have a crystal ball, the proportion of people who are alleged to have committed a serious further offence after being released by the Parole Board are consistently at or below 1% and the number actually convicted, even lower. Every one of those cases is rigorously reviewed to identify what lessons can be learnt.

We have already taken a number of steps to open the doors to the public so that they can better understand our work. including making another video to explain parole:

[About the Parole Board](#)

A member of the public can also request a summary of a decision, and access multiple resources on our website. More than 5,000 people are now following

the Parole Board twitter accounts to access key statistics and updates; read my CEO blogs that are published on multiple platforms (like this one). Finally, we are also working on a BBC documentary that will show in detail how we make our decisions.

Reconsideration mechanism

Whilst I think our decisions are sound– I have recently welcomed [the introduction of a reconsideration mechanism](#), as a check on ensuring our decisions are fair and rational. The new mechanism allows a party to the review to challenge a parole decision made on or after the 22 July 2019.

The reconsideration mechanism gives people the right to ask for a parole decision to be looked at again by the Parole Board if they have reasons to show the decision is either:

- Procedurally unfair – the correct process was not followed in the review of the offender for parole – for example, important evidence was not taken into account
- Irrational – the decision makes no sense based on the evidence of risk that was considered and that no other rational panel could come to the same conclusion.

I am pleased to say that, so far, the mechanism is working well. The latest available figures show we have received 47 applications (only 2 from the Secretary of State) and issued 39 decisions. Three decisions have been directed to be reconsidered so far.

To further improve transparency, we are planning to start publishing reconsideration decisions to increase public and legal understanding of our work.

Whilst change can be turbulent, it is also an opportunity. I am confident that greater transparency and better information for victims will increase confidence that we have a fair and effective parole system that strives to ensure the protection of the public.

[Birmingham gang member who violently attacked victim by public restaurant receives longer jail term](#)

A man who took part in a group violent attack and fatal stabbing in Birmingham has had his sentence increased by the Court of Appeal following intervention by the Solicitor General, the Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Warsame Mohamed, now aged 24 took part in a violent attack and stabbing resulting in the death of a young man. In September 2016 the victim, Zakir Nawaz, aged 21 was with an old school friend when the car they were in was involved in a collision. As a result the victim set out to find the group responsible.

As the victim approached a group outside a restaurant he was attacked. Mohamed, alongside a further group of other individuals, exited the nearby car shortly after to join in the violence against the victim. The group violently attacked the victim for some time, using punches and kicks to injure him.

As the victim tried to flee the scene, another individual fatally stabbed him. While Mohamed did not deliver the fatal stabbing, he did inflict kicks and punches to the victim.

Following the incident Mohamed and the individual suspected of stabbing the victim fled the country, resulting in a delayed trial causing the victim's family further distress.

On 10 July 2019 Mohamed was sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court to 4 years and 6 months' imprisonment for manslaughter and 2 years' imprisonment for the count of violent disorder, to be served concurrently.

The Court of Appeal increased this to 7 years' imprisonment, after the sentence was referred as being unduly lenient by the Solicitor General, the Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

After the hearing the Solicitor General said:

"The offender acted in a way that caused harm and suffering to the victim, before fleeing justice. A longer sentence is appropriate in this case."