

UK welcomes new sanctions against Maduro regime



The UK has welcomed new EU sanctions on seven more Venezuelan officials involved in torture and human rights violations.

The individuals, who are members of the security and intelligence forces, have been added to the EU's Venezuela Sanctions Regime, taking the total number of those targeted to 25.

There remains deep concern among the international community at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the increasing repression of the opposition by the Maduro regime.

The death of Captain Rafael Acosta Arevalo in June whilst detained by Venezuela's Military Counter Intelligence organisation demonstrated this deeply disturbing trend.

A UN report on Human Rights in Venezuela, published in July, described the appalling scale of violations, from extrajudicial killings to grave disregard of fundamental rights under Maduro's rule.

For these reasons, the UK is also in support the September 2018 referral of the situation in Venezuela to the International Criminal Court.

When the UK leaves the EU, not only will existing EU sanctions on Venezuela be carried over, but the UK will deliver its own Magnitsky human rights sanctions to go further in standing up against human rights abuses anywhere in the world.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

These sanctions are part of our response to the humanitarian crisis that is having a terrible impact on the Venezuelan people, and detrimental effect on the whole region.

Alongside our international partners, we must maintain the political and moral pressure on the brutal and illegitimate Maduro regime.

Further information

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1. 30 September 2019 Added translation
 2. 27 September 2019 First published.
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[New report estimates value of Companies House data at up to £3 billion per year](#)

New research has estimated the value of Companies House data to users at up to £3 billion per year.

The findings have been published in a [report commissioned by Companies House and BEIS](#), and sets out how the data benefits businesses, consumers and wider society.

Companies House incorporates and dissolves limited companies. We also register company information and make it available to the public. There are currently more than 4 million companies on our register and more than 600,000 new companies are incorporated each year.

Last year the Companies House register was accessed more than 6 billion times.

The report outlines the value of Companies House data for different types of user, assesses the changes in those values over time, and identifies the specific pieces of data that generate the greatest user value.

The research identified 3 main types of user:

1. Direct users, such as companies, creditors, investors and researchers, that use Companies House data to access information about registered companies in the UK.
2. Commercial users or 'intermediaries', who use Companies House data as an input to their own data products and services. This category includes credit reference agencies and other providers of financial data and information.
3. Providers of public goods, such as government departments or law enforcement organisations, who use the information during policy or investigative work.

The report found that:

- in total, the annual user benefits of Companies House data are estimated to be between £1 billion and £3 billion per year
- the annual benefit to direct users of Companies House data is estimated to be around £2,000 per user per year
- larger and mid-sized groups of commercial or 'intermediary' users attributed £23 million of their revenues to the use of Companies House data

The report also carries testimonials from a government department, a transparency campaign group and a law enforcement agency. All 3 highlighted the importance of Companies House data to their work.

Louise Smyth, Chief Executive at Companies House, said:

As one of the most open registers in the world, we know that by making the information accessible more people will use it. Last year alone our data was accessed more than 6 billion times.

This research now shows how incredibly valuable Companies House information is to data consumers, ultimately helping to drive confidence in the UK economy.

[Court orders former Northumberland recycling business to pay over £50,000 after breaching environmental regulations](#)

On Tuesday 24th September at South Tyneside Magistrates Court a former Northumberland-based recycling business and its director were ordered to pay a combined amount of £54,365 in fines and compensation after being found guilty of failing to comply with legal obligations.

This follows an investigation by the Environment Agency (EA) resulting in Northern Compliance Ltd and its director Vincent Francis Eckerman pleading guilty for their failure to finance the cost of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection, treatment, recovery or disposal of household WEEE items, as per their obligations in 2017.

Northern Compliance was an EA approved WEEE compliance scheme established to assist businesses meet their producer obligations under the WEEE Regulations.

There were two charges recorded, one against Northern Compliance Ltd and the

second against Vincent Eckerman as company director.

For the period of 31 December 2016 and 1 April 2018, Northern Compliance Ltd also failed to pay the WEEE Compliance Fee Fund a substantial amount estimated to be in the region of £1,108,862, payment of which would have resulted in them conforming to their obligations under the WEEE regulations for 2017.

Director of Northern Compliance Ltd, Mr. Vincent Eckerman, aged 59 of Castlefield, Prudhoe told the court the company missed its WEEE collection targets due to a 'perfect storm' of problems with suppliers. Mr. Eckerman then realised he would be unable to pay the compliance fee as he hadn't been prepared for the sum to be as high as it was.

The penalties included the company being ordered to pay £50,900 in compensation to the WEEE Compliance Fee Fund, where the compliance fee should have initially been paid by 31 March 2018.

The second charge saw Mr. Eckerman being ordered to pay a £2,295 fine with a £170 victim surcharge and £1,000 court costs.

Prosecuting for the Environment Agency, Rebecca Chalkley told the court that Mr. Eckerman had flagrantly disregarded the law, and his arguments stating he was not to blame amounted to "smoke and mirrors".

When sentencing Northern Compliance Ltd and Mr. Eckerman, District Judge Begley commented "I found his evidence verbose and lacking in clarity...he simply has not done what I would expect of a man with his experience...and he had been reckless and significantly undermined the regulatory regime."

District Judge Begley further commented that the figures he imposed for fines and compensation would have been higher had the defendants had the ability to pay.

Electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) is regulated to reduce the amount of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) incinerated or sent to landfill sites.

Reduction is achieved through various measures which encourage the recovery, reuse and recycling of products and components.

David O'Toole, Regulated Industry Programme Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Rules and regulations are in place for people and organisations to abide by and when those legalities are broken we aim to bring the perpetrators to justice. In this case, Northern Compliance Ltd have paid the ultimate price as the company is no longer trading having had its authorisation revoked and Mr Eckerman now has a criminal conviction.

We respect the sentencing restrictions with which the Judge had to

work to in this case. This prosecution shows that where a Producer Compliance Scheme fails to meet their financing obligations under the WEEE Regulations, the Environment Agency will not hesitate to take robust enforcement action against Compliance Schemes and individuals, to prevent the WEEE Regulatory regime being undermined.

Hopefully this will make other companies in a similar position of responsibility think twice about breaking the law and pay their compliance fees.

[Michelle Heath joins NDA Board as a Non-Executive Director](#)



Michelle Heath

This appointment has been approved by Andrea Leadsom, the Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Tom Smith, the Chair of the NDA, said:

I am delighted that Michelle is joining us in support of our vital work decommissioning 17 complex nuclear sites across Wales, Scotland and England. She has a wealth of relevant and current experience in the nuclear industry which will be a great addition to the Board's capability.

Michelle Heath has a 20-year track record in the nuclear industry having previously worked for BNFL, Springfields Fuels and Westinghouse Toshiba.

She has wide experience in the UK and internationally, with a strong focus on waste management, treatment and storage. At Westinghouse, Michelle was the

Global Product Manager for residues treatment and prior to that she held a number of senior roles at the Springfields nuclear fuel fabrication plant in Lancashire. Michelle holds an MBA and BSc from Lancaster University.

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[UN Human Rights Council 42: UK statement for the Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic](#)

The UK has the honour to present draft resolution L.22 on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of a group of states: France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Turkey will make a statement in its national capacity as an Observer at the end of action today.

In presenting this updated resolution, we have reflected the human rights situation on the ground, including in Idlib. Since May, attacks by the Syrian authorities and their allies have killed more than 1000 people and displaced over 600,000. Airstrikes have repeatedly hit civilian infrastructure including schools and health facilities.

The resolution reflects the latest COI findings, with new detail on the impact of the conflict on children, including increased child labour and early and forced marriage. The resolution highlights continued arbitrary detention, particularly in areas controlled by the regime, and the obstacles that this and other regime behaviours place on safe, voluntary and dignified refugee return.

We repeat our call for a Syrian-led political process under the auspices of the UN. We warmly welcome the announcement by the Secretary General of the formation of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. This is a welcome first step towards a political settlement, and I want to pay tribute to the work of Special Envoy Pedersen. All parties must now engage in good faith with this committee.

This resolution negotiation process has been open and transparent, and we would like to thank member states for their constructive participation.

Mr President,

This resolution should enjoy the support of all at this Council, and be adopted by consensus. We urge all member states to put the plight of the Syrian people first, and to support the UN-led political process

In the event we must have a vote on this text, we urge all delegations to vote in favour of the text as drafted.

I now turn to the delegation of Qatar to continue the introduction of this resolution.