

Saving future generations from the scourge of war

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to our two briefers, Mark Lowcock and Susannah Sirkin.

Mr President, I think we all feel that it is deeply frustrating that we come here each month. But it is better that we come than that we don't come. And however harrowing, it is better that we hear what is happening in Idlib than we don't hear. And however difficult, it is better that, than we let denial take hold. Yes, we would like to act. The responsibility for the fact that we don't act lies with just three member states of the United Nations – one of them a P5 member. What is happening in Idlib makes a mockery of P5 responsibilities.

Ahead of Astana on 1-2 August and with last week's Political session cancelled, there is an opportunity today, Mr President, to get at the facts and to ensure that crimes don't go unrecorded. We have heard from OCHA. We've heard from Physicians for Human Rights. Carnage on the ground, communities tend to rebel, children saving children and then dying in the attempts. These are all breaches of International Humanitarian Law. And Ms Bachelet has made clear that those criminally responsible will be held accountable. The Syrian and Russian units bombing Idlib ought to pause at that.

It may not come today, but justice will come. If I may borrow a very famous phrase and use it in a different context, "The arc of the moral universe may be long, but it bends towards justice." The units taking part in military action against hospitals and medical facilities and personnel need to heed that warning.

I have a number of questions today, Mr President. I am used to the questions not being answered, but I am going to keep asking them because I think they go to the heart of what is happening.

I would like to know what is being done by the protagonists, Syria and Russia, to protect civilians on the ground, notably children.

I would like to know how they know – or claim to know – where the terrorists are, given that we heard from OCHA there are 100 civilians for every terrorist fighter.

And I would like to know how their forces go about distinguishing between terrorists and civilians, given the overwhelming number of civilians.

And I would like to know what part they believe of International Humanitarian Law allows terrorists to be attacked with no regard to those civilians because I read all the Geneva Conventions at the weekend, Mr President, and I can't find a single line in the conventions, or the additional protocol. By the way, Syria has not ratified the additional protocol. But I cannot find a

single line that justifies attacking civilians on the scale we are seeing in Idlib to get at terrorists.

And I would like to know in particular – you know we had a briefing from a Russian military general the other day – I would like to know what do the Russian and Syrian military doctrines and rules of engagement say about IHL and the principles of proportionality, distinction and neutrality in respect of Idlib. I would like to know what the Russian and Syrian rules of engagement are. I would be very happy to have the Russian general back, Mr President, if he can answer those questions. And I would like to know what is the explanation from Russia and Syria as to why the de-confliction mechanism is not working, why hospitals and facilities that have given their coordinates are being hit.

And I would like to know how the Syrian authorities claim that these hospitals and facilities don't exist or have been decommissioned when the UN, and PHR, and others have seen them and are in touch with their doctors.

And one has to ask, Mr President, who is more likely to be believed: the UN or the protagonists on the ground? And I hope, Mr President, that we can actually get some concrete answers today.

For the rest, I wanted to join those who have so far called for an investigation into UN de-conflicted sites. It is of the utmost importance to establish clearly the circumstances of the attacks through a transparent and credible investigation. I welcome what the Under-Secretary-General said about the UN being able to give its information to the two UN mechanisms already in existence. I think that is very important.

I would also like to raise the letter from the Syrian Permanent Representative of 16 July. Under that International Humanitarian Law, just because a hospital or clinic has been “decommissioned” or “ransacked” does not mean it can be attacked with impunity. I have said before, Mr President, if – and it is a big if – but if a hospital is being used as a military target, then the Geneva Conventions – the ones that the Syrians have ratified – require that warnings be given. No warnings are being given. The Syrian PR's letter admits to attacks on hospitals. It's hard to deny, Mr President, that that is a war crime and it deserves the utmost, deep investigation so that those units responsible, those military commanders responsible, and the politicians who give them their instructions, can be brought to justice.

A couple more words, if I may, Mr President. I agree with those speakers who are concerned about Rukban. We appeal to the authorities to let the convoys in. We also share those sentiments about the political process. There needs to be a credible and sustainable political process. The Constitutional Committee is but one step. Many more steps need to be taken and reconstruction assistance from ourselves and our partners will not be available in the absence of a credible political process. And in the absence of reconstruction, Syria cannot be rehabilitated into the international community. And I think that is an important point.

Lastly, if I may, Mr President, the Charter requires us to act to save future

generations from the scourge of war. What part of that is not understood by Syria and Russia in respect of Idlib today?

Thank you.

[CDEI and the Royal United Services Institute convene round tables to discuss the use of algorithms in policing](#)



The CDEI's Review into bias in algorithmic decision-making

The CDEI has [commissioned](#) RUSI to carry out independent research into the potential for bias to occur in predictive analytics technologies being developed by police forces, as part of our wider [review](#) into bias in algorithmic decision-making.

The CDEI and RUSI held a roundtable last week which brought together police forces, civil society organisations, academics and policymakers to discuss the use of algorithms in policing, the potential for bias and how the regulatory and governance environment can be improved. This followed a roundtable held earlier in the week, in partnership with TechUK, to explore the role of technology providers in this space.

The roundtable

Attendees at the roundtables discussed a wide range of issues including:

- **Benefits and risks of predictive analytics in policing:** One of the benefits discussed was the potential for predictive analytics to help police better-manage and gain insights from their data. However, the

potential for biased outcomes against certain groups (if the algorithm were trained on historic police data) was noted as a risk.

- **Impact on individuals' civil liberties and human rights:** We discussed the important implications these technologies can have, if unchecked, on individuals' civil liberties and human rights. There was consensus on the need to conduct meaningful public engagement before rolling out these tools, in particular with the groups most likely to be affected by them.
- **Challenges of sharing data across agencies:** We discussed the need for police to work with local authorities in order to have access to greater datasets and develop tools to provide a better picture of trends, such as the drivers behind youth violence. Nonetheless, many attendees stressed concerns around how this could lead to further surveillance, data protection issues and be challenging to implement in practice.
- **The need for a consistent, nation-wide approach:** The importance of consistency in developing this technology was emphasised. There were different views in the room about which body would need to drive this approach, but there were strong calls for clearer oversight and governance in this area.

Next steps

The CDEI will use the findings of this research to co-develop, with the policing sector, a code of practice for the trialling of predictive analytical technology in policing. The code will seek to mitigate algorithmic bias and address wider ethical concerns.

RUSI will publish initial research findings in September, with CDEI's draft code of practice circulated for consultation with stakeholders in October. The CDEI will publish its final report on the review into bias in algorithmic decision-making, including recommendations to the Government, in March 2020.

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Last updated 18 September 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 18 September 2019 Amended the timeline for the circulation of the CDEI Code of Practice to October (from September)
2. 30 July 2019 First published.

[RAF Typhoons scrambled from Ämari Air Base to intercept a Russian military transport aircraft](#)

Royal Air Force (RAF) Typhoon fighter jets operating from Ämari Air Base in Estonia launched on Sunday 28th July to intercept a Russian IL-76 military

transport aircraft that was flying close to Estonian airspace.

This is a routine NATO mission for the Typhoons which provides reassurance that the UK is here to work in partnership with Estonia.

Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, said:

As this latest Quick Reaction Alert demonstrates, the RAF are frequently called upon to use their world class skills and capabilities to help police and protect the skies over the Baltics.

Our personnel deployed to Estonia and around the world are always ready to react to any scenario as we continue our commitment to our NATO allies.

A Typhoon pilot from XI(Fighter) Squadron, attached to 121 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW), was conducting Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) duty when the scramble was called. He said:

We were scrambled to intercept an aircraft that was approaching Estonian airspace from the south. We identified and monitored it as it transited close to NATO airspace. This is standard protocol for aircraft that might not be communicating with Air Traffic Control or on a recognised flight plan.

We continued to escort the transport aircraft as it transited in a north direction, away from Estonian airspace.

The Royal Air Force is deployed on Operation AZOTIZE in Estonia in support of Baltic Air Policing. This is the 14th QRA scramble and intercept since the RAF took over enhanced Air Policing (eAP) from the German Air Force on 3 May 2019 as part of Baltic Air Policing. The UK operates in support of NATO to reassure our allies and is a further demonstration of the UK's commitment to the security of the region.

[Upcoming changes to the enhanced disclosure application process](#)

In April 2019, we published a [news story](#) advising that the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) would be implementing a change to the enhanced disclosure process.

A withdrawals policy is being introduced which means that from **1 August 2019**,

DBS will no longer be able to amend enhanced DBS check applications where missing or incorrect information has been identified in the following fields:

For applicants

Section C – Five-year address history

This refers to addresses at which an applicant has resided within the last five years that haven't been declared on the application.

From 1 August 2019, applications found to have missing address information as detailed above will be withdrawn and a new application will need to be submitted.

If an application is withdrawn for the above reasons, a refund will not be given.

Where such an omission is found, DBS will not contact the applicant, but will instead write to the Registered Body that submitted the enhanced application to inform them.

For Registered Bodies (RBs)

Paper applications

Question X61 – Workforce

Question X66 – Home-based checks

e-Bulk applications

“PositionAppliedFor” (Workforce only)

“WorkingAtHomeAddress”

If incorrect information is provided as part of these questions from Section X, from 1 August 2019, the application will be withdrawn, and a new application will be required.

For RBs, as before, DBS will contact you to resolve the query, and only if an error or omission is identified, will the application be withdrawn.

If an application is withdrawn for the above reasons, a refund will not be given.

Where such an error is found, DBS will not contact the applicant, but will instead write to you as the Registered Body that submitted the enhanced application.

Applications submitted prior to 1 August 2019

For applications submitted prior to 1 August, DBS will continue to apply amendments, however applications submitted after this date will be subject to the withdrawal policy and a new application will be required.

We must shine a light on disproportionality

As a retired police officer, and now Youth Justice Board (YJB) member, I have seen disproportionality affect the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of children.

Coming from Birmingham and working for 32 years in the first and second largest police services in the UK, I have seen a lot. Yes, sometimes children do bad things, but I don't believe that I have seen bad child. I have however met many children who need a different perspective on life. Someone to show that they care and take them seriously.

A poignant moment for me was meeting a young lad who had just finished 12 weeks on a Princes Trust programme. He had been written off by a lot of people but the police and the Princes Trust were prepared to work with him. He gave a powerful end of programme presentation that finished with 'and now down to me'. This was because for the first time that young person had learnt to recognise his own ability and chart his destiny.

We see the over-representation of children from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds occurring at different stages in the youth justice system. In particular, black children are more likely to grow up in deprived areas, receive free school meals and get permanently excluded from school. Shockingly, they are over four times as likely to be arrested than white children. They also face harsher penalties. Most recently, I was hugely disappointed to see that, for the month of May 2019, children from a BAME background now make up more than half of the youth custody population. It's not right, and it's certainly not fair.

When David Lammy MP wrote to the prime minister following his review of BAME people in the criminal justice system in 2017 he cited the youth justice system as his area of greatest concern. Sadly, the situation does not appear to have improved. The reasons continue to be multi-faceted and cannot be resolved by any single agency. Only through working together can we bring about change.

To shine a light on this disparity we produced ['the disproportionality journey of the child'](#) which clearly shows the massive disadvantages BAME children face. My hope is that these materials spur us on to do more and give BAME children a better chance at making a positive contribution to society. This data will also help us challenge the organisations that impact on this disproportionality to 'explain or reform' and we will support them in their efforts to do this.

I have seen countless examples of how children can change and improve their lives given the chance. I have also seen how society's view of children who do something wrong can hold them back and potentially delay or prevent positive change. I am therefore, excited about the possibilities for the

future, if people in positions of authority and wider can open their eyes to the impact of their decisions on children and be brave enough to challenge the status quo.

The disproportionality journey of the child is part of the YJB's work to improve transparency and therefore trust in the youth justice system. This is a crucial part of our work to reduce the overrepresentation of BAME children in the youth justice system.