

# Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair,

The UK was honoured to host the [International Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief \(FoRB\)](#) in London this week.

100 media representations attended; 47 pledges were signed by countries, international organisations and entities; 31 countries signed up to 8 statements and we ran 17 thematic sessions at the event.

Over 800 faith, belief, government and civil society leaders from over 100 countries from every continent shared practical lessons on how to protect freedom of religion or belief around the world.

This fundamental right is covered in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also, of course, well covered by our shared OSCE commitments and work. This includes commitments reaffirmed in Copenhagen in 1990 on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and through the practical work of ODHIR.

Russia, despite freely signing up to OSCE commitments on freedom of religion or belief has, through its war of aggression in Ukraine had an impact on people's ability to practice their faith or belief. We have seen innocent civilians having to shelter from Russia's indiscriminate bombardment in places of worship. Churches, synagogues, and mosques have been reduced to rubble. Religion and belief is proving to be collateral damage from Putin's aggression.

This conference is therefore very timely. It provided an important opportunity to share best practice and strengthen international alliances, such as the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. We welcome that a number of states here today made national pledges to work together to promote FoRB.

The UK also announced £500,000 of funding to support everyone's "fundamental freedom" to follow a religion or belief. This includes £200,000 for the protection and promotion of FoRB and £300,000 to provide British legal expertise to countries where FoRB is under pressure.

Mr Chair, we need greater collective action to ensure the right to freedom of religion or belief is protected for everyone, everywhere. Ensuring that we meet our OSCE commitments is an excellent way to start. Thank you.

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# International Day in Support of Victims of Torture 2022: Joint statement to the OSCE

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of 43 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Canada, the European Union and its Member States, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is an occasion to reaffirm our strong commitment to prevent and eradicate torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Today, we do so against the devastating backdrop of Russia's brutal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine.

We are deeply alarmed by the various credible reports, including the [report from the first mission under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism to Ukraine](#), about the alleged use of torture and other ill-treatment, including reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as enforced disappearances, against civilians and members of armed forces during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We strongly condemn these reported violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law and stand firm that those responsible must be held to account. We stand in solidarity with torture victims and survivors in Ukraine and around the world, as well as their families and communities affected.

Mr. Chair,

This year, we mark the 35th anniversary of the entry into force of the [UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#). The Convention requires States parties to criminalize torture and to undertake to prevent other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Convention has been ratified by all OSCE participating States.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are violations of human rights and international humanitarian law as well as grave and abhorrent violations of human dignity. Our OSCE commitments and international obligations are abundantly clear: Any forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are unequivocally prohibited, under all circumstances, without exceptions. Regrettably – and despite these clear commitments and obligations – torture and other ill-treatment, as well as disappearances, continue to persist in the OSCE region, both in peacetime and in times of war. Credible reports of Russia's actions in Ukraine constitute the most recent appalling example, but not the only

one.

Mr. Chair,

More action is needed to end torture and other ill-treatment in our region. We echo the call of the Director of ODIHR in [his statement dated 24 June 2022](#) to fight impunity for acts of torture and other ill-treatment. Holding perpetrators to account is critical for the victim's redress, and it is crucial if we are to prevent torture and other ill-treatment from happening in the future. A holistic, victim-centred, and gender-sensitive approach should always be at the basis of these efforts, not least when investigating and documenting allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including those involving sexual violence.

We are pleased that we were able to reaffirm and strengthen our shared commitments by adopting the [2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#). Now it is high time to honour our commitments through effective implementation in good faith.

We call on all participating States to make good use of ODIHR's assistance and its internationally recognized expertise in this field. In addition, we advocate for the participating States to actively consider as a matter of priority to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

Mr. Chair,

While we as participating States bear the primary responsibility to eradicate torture, we would like to express our strong support to the tireless and important work of human rights defenders and civil society organisations in all areas of anti-torture efforts. They should always have access to safe spaces enabling them to speak out and fight all forms of torture and other ill-treatment without risk of reprisal.

In closing, we jointly reaffirm our clear commitment to uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and to step up our efforts to end the use of torture and other ill-treatment in the OSCE region. We will ensure that the topic remains high on the OSCE agenda, and we will continue our joint efforts to end impunity for acts of torture.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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**National Award for MDP management of**

## COVID-19

On Thursday 30 June, Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) Chief Inspector James (Jimmy) Carr and Nicola (Nikki) Dutton, MDP Head of Safety, Health and Environmental Protection (SHEP), received a joint National Operation Talla Award for Governance and Coordination.

This accolade was awarded in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the UK policing response throughout the pandemic, in their roles within the MDP Covid Management Team.

Jimmy and Nikki acted quickly to manage the impact of COVID-19 on the MDP workforce, reducing infection levels with swift and robust control measures, which maximised the safety of staff and ensured continued operational delivery. They also guided, coached, and mentored partner agencies, sharing methodology and processes which benefited the wider defence service.

Op Talla Gold and National Police Chiefs' Council Chair, Martin Hewitt speaking at the awards ceremony. Copyright: National Police Chiefs' Council.

Jason Gwillim, MDP Assistant Chief Constable Territorial Operations, Crime and Support, said:

Many congratulations to Jimmy and Nikki, and I thank you both for helping to keep people as safe as possible, and the organisation running during very challenging times.

Although I've only recently taken up post with the MDP, I understand the difficulties and risks the pandemic has presented for the force, and I am so pleased that Jimmy and Nikki's hard work has been nationally recognised.

Following the awards, Jimmy and Nikki paid tribute to everybody involved in the MDP response to COVID-19.

Jimmy said:

We're so very proud to receive this award, but in doing so we recognise that what we achieved was not done in isolation, and for that reason we dedicate this award to the outstanding collective efforts and contributions of our fantastic MDP colleagues, stakeholders and partners.

Nikki said:

From the Force Welfare Officer to the Defence Police Federation and Trade Unions, to the MDP Test, Trace and Isolate Team and the Force Control Room, to Finance, Procurement, Stores and Corporate Communications, to station Senior Police Officers and all the officers out on the ground, whether in uniform or not and whether attending the workplace or working from home, everyone played their part in helping to keep people safe and ensure operational delivery was maintained.

Operation Talla was the national policing response to the Coronavirus pandemic, with joint oversight by the National Police Chiefs' Council and National Police Coordination Centre.

The [National Operation Talla Awards ceremony](#) was hosted at the De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms in London, and presented by writer and broadcaster, Alfie Moore. Guests were joined and thanked by both the Home Secretary and Policing Minister.

Home Secretary Priti Patel MP, thanking the winners for their roles in the pandemic response. Copyright: National Police Chiefs' Council

The awards provided an opportunity to view the pandemic from a national perspective, recognising and commemorating those who led, shaped, and delivered the national response, working to equip those on the front line. At least half of the UK's territorial forces were represented in the awards, alongside colleagues from law enforcement agencies and criminal justice partners.

### **Further information**

Earlier this year, Jimmy was also [presented the Association of Police Health and Safety Advisers \(APSHA\) Safety Award](#) for his contributions to health and safety during the pandemic, and for making it relevant to operational police officers.

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## **[Service issues resolved](#)**

News story

Update for customers on disruption to IPO services



We're very sorry that customers experienced intermittent difficulties with several of our web services today (8 July).

All issues have now been resolved and all services are operating as normal

Thank you for your patience.

Published 8 July 2022

Last updated 8 July 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 8 July 2022

Updated customer information – disruption to services now resolved

2. 8 July 2022

First published.

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## [Cost of living: managing your debts](#)

The government understands that people are worried about the impact of rising prices and its effect on household incomes.

The government's [MoneyHelper](#) has lots of free information and resources to help you manage your money in uncertain times and how to keep up with essential bills and payments.

If you are worried about debt, speaking to a [trained and experienced debt adviser](#) about your situation could help you decide what to do.

And if you are concerned about missing a payment towards your [Individual Voluntary Arrangement](#), [Income Payments Agreement](#) or [Income Payments Order](#) having early conversations is the best first step to resolving your money issues and avoiding missing payments.

## **Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVA)**

If you are in an IVA, you can ask your supervisor to review your income and expenses to see if you are eligible for a reduction in payments or payment break.

You will be required to provide evidence of your income and expenditure to support a change to your contributions. This could include providing payslips, statement of benefits or utility bills.

Any amendments to your contributions into your IVAs would need to be agreed with your creditors.

Your supervisor has been provided with the latest guidance on adjustments to payments, via the IVA Standing Committee, and they will also be aware of alternative solutions to help you resolve your debt issues and can help you find further information where appropriate.

## **Income Payments Agreements and Income Payments Orders**

If you have an Income Payments Agreement or Income Payments Order, you can ask for a review of your income and expenses to see if you are eligible for a reduction in payments, or payment break.

The spending guidelines have been updated for inflation in the current financial climate and if you feel you need a review, you should contact the organisation you make payments to.

If you pay Advantis, the Official Receiver's collection agent, you can contact them on:

If you pay the Official Receiver directly, you can contact them on:

If you pay an Insolvency Practitioner or their collection agent, please contact them directly.

Further information can be found in the [Guide to Bankruptcy](#)

## **Other payment agreements**

If you currently have an agreement to pay the Official Receiver as trustee in bankruptcy or liquidator of a company, and are concerned about future payments please email the DART Team via [dart.post@insolvency.gov.uk](mailto:dart.post@insolvency.gov.uk).