

[Press release: Minister for the Middle East statement following an increase in violence in Eastern Ghouta, Syria](#)



Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Alistair Burt, said:

The Asad regime's brutal siege of Eastern Ghouta, coupled with escalating bombardment and reports of chemical weapons use, is causing unprecedented levels of suffering. The enclave has become a crucible of misery and violence, which is simply unacceptable in the 21st century.

Airstrikes, artillery and rocket attacks by pro-regime forces are at some of the most intense levels seen in the besieged area in years, leading to scores of civilian casualties. Over 700 people need medical evacuation, but the regime continues to refuse to allow this.

We call on the regime and its backers to cease this campaign of violence, to protect civilians and allow rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. As the international community has made clear to the Asad regime and its backers: the world is watching.

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[Statement to Parliament: Oral Statement on the political situation](#)

in Northern Ireland

With permission I should like to make a statement about the current political situation in Northern Ireland.

Over recent weeks there have been talks involving the main political parties, particularly the two largest parties, the Democratic Unionists and Sinn Fein, to see if there is a basis for re-establishing the Executive.

The UK Government has facilitated and supported these intensive negotiations. We have been in close touch with all the parties, and responded to requests for advice and support

The Irish Government have also been involved in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach.

And I would like to place on record my appreciation of the contribution made by the Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney, and his team.

In addition my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister has been consistently and closely involved, speaking to party leaders and visiting Belfast last Monday. I have continued to give her up-to-date reports as the talks have progressed.

The aim of those talks has been very clear: to bring about the re-establishment of inclusive, devolved government at Stormont which Northern Ireland has effectively been without for over thirteen months.

In doing so, we have been able to build on the progress made by my predecessor, my Right Honourable Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, who I warmly welcome back to this House today.

In the Government's view, both the DUP and Sinn Fein participated

in discussions seriously and in good faith.

And we believe that progress towards reaching agreement on all the key substantive issues has been made.

It became possible in the light of this progress to identify a basis for a possible agreement to allow an Executive to be formed, embracing how the parties ensured the Executive was sustainable, and how they reached a balanced and fair accommodation on the difficult issues of language and culture, and how this was reflected in a package of legislation. Many other issues were addressed too, if not always resolved. Unfortunately, however, by last Wednesday it had become clear that the current phase of talks had reached a conclusion, without such an agreement being finalised and endorsed by both parties.

As I said then, it is important for everyone to reflect on the circumstances which have led to this and their positions, both now and in the future.

What is important today is for me to give some direction as to next steps.

First, as our manifesto at the last election set out, this Government believes in devolution under the terms of the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

We want to see local politicians taking decisions over local matters accountable to a local Assembly.

We need devolved government to help deliver a stronger economy, to build a stronger society and to ensure that Northern Ireland's voice is properly heard as we leave the European Union.

In addition we want to see all of the other institutions of the Agreement operating in the way that was intended.

I cannot reiterate too strongly that devolved government is in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland because it ensures their interests and concerns are fairly and equitably represented.

It is also in the best interests of maintaining and strengthening the Union, to which this Government remains fully committed, consistent with the principle of consent.

So we will continue to explore with the parties whether the basis for a political agreement still exists.

And as my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister has reaffirmed we stand ready to bring forward the necessary legislation that would enable an Executive to be formed at the earliest opportunity.

That is this Government's clear hope and desire, something that I believe is shared widely across this House.

Second, however, things in Northern Ireland cannot simply remain in a state of limbo.

A number of challenging decisions will have to be taken.

Ultimately the Government has a responsibility to ensure good governance and the continued delivery of public services.

In particular, as the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service has made clear, there needs to be certainty and clarity about a budget for Northern Ireland for next year as soon as possible.

And I intend to take steps to provide clarity on the budget and I will update the House as soon as I am in a position to do so.

This is clearly not where I want to be but in the absence of an

Executive in Northern Ireland I will have no other choice.

Longer term the Government will not shirk its responsibilities to take whatever steps are necessary to provide certainty and stability for the people of Northern Ireland, while maintaining our commitment to govern with rigorous impartiality in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland.

But we will only do that once we are sure that all other viable options designed to restore devolved government have been properly considered, including my statutory obligation to call an Assembly election.

In the absence of devolution it is also right that we consider the issue of salaries for Assembly Members.

At the end of last year my Right Honourable Friend for Old Bexley and Sidcup received recommendations on this from Mr Trevor Reaney, a former Clerk of the Assembly.

The Government will need to decide shortly on the next steps.

I acknowledge the public concern that while a number of Assembly members continue to carry out constituency and representative functions, current salaries are maintained while the Assembly is not meeting.

On the issue of addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past the Government has manifesto commitments to consult on the implementation of the bodies set out in the 2014 Stormont House Agreement and to support the reform of inquests.

I would much prefer to do this in the context of an agreement that sees the restoration of a devolved Executive.

But I am conscious of the Government's responsibilities to make progress in this area to provide better outcomes for victims and

survivors, the people who suffered most during the troubles.

So we will continue to proceed toward a full consultation as soon as possible, so that everyone can have their say.

Mr Speaker, as the House will recognise this April marks the 20th anniversary of the historic Belfast Agreement.

That Agreement, along with its successors, has been fundamental in helping Northern Ireland move forward from its violent past to a brighter, more secure future.

And this Government's support for the Agreements remains steadfast. As does our commitment to govern for everyone in Northern Ireland.

There is no doubt that Northern Ireland has taken huge strides forward in the past twenty years.

In my short time as Northern Ireland Secretary I have seen a place full of wonderful talent and huge potential.

Yet any commemorations this year will look decidedly hollow if Northern Ireland still has no functioning government of its own.

So everyone needs to continue striving to see devolved government restored and to build a Northern Ireland fit for the future.

That remains the clear focus and determination of this Government.

Government response: Aramark takes ownership of DIO Hestia contracts



Aramark has assumed full ownership of the CarillionAramark operating company which will continue to provide services to the DIO for the duration of the existing Hestia contracts in respect of the South East & London, Scotland & NI and North Regions;

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News story: People with significant control (PSC): who controls your company?

A person with significant control (PSC) is someone who owns or controls your company. They're sometimes called 'beneficial owners'.

You must [identify your PSC](#) and tell us who they are. This might be you, or someone associated with your company. A company can have one or more PSC.

You must [record their details](#) on your company's PSC register and send us this information. If you can't identify your PSC, you need to tell us why. The easiest way to do this is online.

Send us your PSC information [online](#).

If you don't already have an online account with us, you'll need to [register](#).

You can also send us PSC information using [third-party software](#).

Identifying your PSC

[How to identify people with significant control \(PSC\)](#)

A PSC must meet one or more of the following conditions of control.

Most PSCs are likely to be people who hold:

- more than 25% of shares in the company
- more than 25% of voting rights in the company
- the right to appoint or remove the majority of the board of directors

If your PSC holds more than 25% of shares, they're likely to hold the same amount of voting rights.

You should check your company's register of shareholders. Your company's constitution and articles of association may also contain information on voting and other rights.

Other significant influence or control

Your PSC might influence or control your company through other means. This could be directly, or on behalf of someone else. For example, someone who tells the directors or shareholders what to do.

This condition will only apply in limited circumstances. [Further guidance](#) is available on the meaning of significant influence or control.

Companies controlled by a trust or firm

If a trust or firm influences or controls your company, you must decide if they meet any conditions of control described above. If they do, the trustees or members of the firm are PSCs.

If you think this applies, you should get professional advice.

Recording your PSC information

You'll need to confirm certain details with your PSC, and record them in your PSC register. These details are:

- name
- date of birth
- [nationality](#)
- [country](#) of residence
- service address
- usual residential address (not displayed to the public)
- the date they became a PSC of the company
- the date you entered them into your PSC register
- which conditions of control are met

You must include the level of their shares and voting rights, within the

following categories:

- over 25% up to (and including) 50%
- more than 50% and less than 75%
- 75% or more

You must try to identify and contact anyone you think may be a PSC of your company. If they refuse to provide PSC information, they're committing a criminal offence.

You can place restrictions on the shares or voting rights of someone who won't give you this information. Applying restrictions is a significant step. You should only consider this if they've repeatedly refused your requests.

If you're thinking of making restrictions, you should [read the guidance](#) first.

Changes to your PSC information

If your PSC information changes, you must update your company's PSC register and tell us as soon as possible. The easiest way to do this is [online](#). This could be changes to an existing PSC, such as a new address or nature of control. You could also have a new PSC, or someone is no longer a PSC.

Update your PSC information [online](#).

Protection for people at risk

All PSC information is available to the public, apart from their home address. The day is also hidden from their date of birth.

In exceptional cases, some individuals can [apply to protect their PSC information](#). If they've applied for this protection, you should note this on your PSC register.

Protection from disclosure applies from the date the application is made to us.

If a PSC has already been granted protection as a director, they must re-apply for protection as a PSC.

Other company types

Limited liability partnerships (LLP), eligible Scottish partnerships and *societas Europaea* (SE) must also send us their PSC information.

Information on these company types can be found in the [full guidance](#).

Press release: South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee has two vacancies

More than 5 million people are at risk of the devastating effects of flooding in the UK, with thousands of properties at risk in the south west.

The Environment Agency is looking for enthusiastic people to help manage flood risk throughout the south west and make a real difference to people's lives and to the environment we live in.

The Agency is looking for people from all walks of life to fill vacancies on the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). Being an RFCC member is an exciting opportunity to help guide local flood and coastal management across the whole region.

The RFCC covers Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The successful applicants will play an important role in deciding on local priorities, approving programmes of work, and supporting the Environment Agency and lead local flood authorities in working with communities and other partners.

They will have a key role in balancing local priorities and making sure that investment is co-ordinated at the river catchment and shoreline scale, as well as promoting the consideration of climate change impacts in local decision making.

The Environment Agency is recruiting a member to represent land/country farming and another member to represent business interests.

Land/country farming

- provide a land management perspective at committee – working with the inland member and conservation members
- help the committee to understand issues affecting inland communities, landowners and farmers and how this impacts on river process and the coast
- monitor and review flood risk management and the river needing to be addressed
- provide a link between the committee, land management and farming groups in the committee's area
- advocate good soil management with the farming sector to benefit flood risk and reduce diffuse pollution

Business interests

- experience in securing funding/investment from/for the private sector
- currently working in the business sector and understands the impact that flooding can have on private business
- established links to economic/regeneration institutions such as chamber of commerce, local enterprise partnership and other business leader forums

People from a wide range of backgrounds are invited to apply for the posts, especially those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and women who are currently under-represented on regional flood and coastal committees.

A key role will be ensuring the aims of the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy are embodied within the committee's decisions and to ensure consistency between strategic and local plans.

Further information and how to apply is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/south-west-regional-flood-and-coastal-committee> or contact pamela.udy@environment-agency.gov.uk on 02084 746298. The closing date for applications is Thursday 5 April at 5.30pm.