

Speech: “As a long standing friend of the Burmese people, the United Kingdom has watched in horror at the violence that has erupted over the past month.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Security Council briefing on Burma

Thank you Mr President and thank you Mr Secretary-General for your briefing, and for all that you have done to bring this issue before the Council.

As a long standing friend of the Burmese people, the United Kingdom has watched in horror at the violence that has erupted over the past month. What began as a series of attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army has spiralled into an acute humanitarian crisis – one which now poses a threat to stability and security in the region.

We have all heard the reports, Mr President. We have all heard of the extrajudicial killings, the burning of villages. We’ve heard of the cruelty; the sexual violence, the landmines laid along routes taken by refugees. Half a million people have fled, many bearing the scars of the violence.

The vast majority are Rohingya Muslims, although they also include Buddhists, Hindus, and other minorities. But make no mistake, this is a human tragedy and an acute humanitarian crisis that has exploded at an almost unprecedented speed.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the government and people of Bangladesh for providing safety and shelter to so many until they can return safely, voluntarily, and sustainably to their homes in Burma. I also want to acknowledge the important diplomatic efforts undertaken by Indonesia, ASEAN, the OIC, and the United Nations. It is becoming increasingly clear, Mr President, that world opinion, whether among countries or international organisations, is aligning on this issue.

In the face of such opinion, it falls to Burma – and in particular the Burmese military – to respond. For it is the Burmese military who bear the primary responsibility for resolving this crisis. There is a way out.

First, the Burmese military, under Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing, must immediately stop the violence in Rakhine State and ensure the protection of all civilians, including the Rohingya. In this chamber I repeat my government’s condemnation of the attacks carried out by the ARSA last month. But military operations in response have been excessive and vigilante groups have carried out sectarian violence unchecked. This cannot continue. The hate speech and incitement to violence must stop. The Burmese military must act

immediately and uphold the rule of law and we are particularly concerned to ensure that the violence doesn't spread to central Rakhine.

Second, the Burmese authorities need to grant UN agencies and their partners full and unhindered humanitarian access to Rakhine. We welcome the government's cooperation with humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and we welcome the Red Cross's efforts to respond to the crisis. But the humanitarian needs inside Rakhine vastly exceed the Red Cross's capacity. Only UN agencies and their partners can provide urgent, life-saving assistance at the scale required. We believe the authorities should calm anti-United Nations rhetoric and stop it immediately in state media outlets.

Third, Burma should work with Bangladesh to establish a safe, voluntary, and sustainable way for those who have fled Rakhine to return to their homes. We welcome the civilian government's commitment to the right of return. But previous arrangements have been inadequate. There needs to be a process which allows those who have fled to register themselves as refugees. It needs to be a process which acknowledges that many fled without documents or never had them in the first place, a process which allows people to return to their homes and places of origin safely, voluntarily, and sustainably. And we welcome the UN's willingness to support this.

Fourth, the recommendations of the Annan Commission on Rakhine State must be implemented swiftly and in full. We welcome the Burmese authorities' public commitment to this and the establishment of a Ministerial Implementation Committee. It is essential that we now see progress, particularly on citizenship.

Fifth, we urge the Burmese authorities to cooperate with the UN Fact-Finding Mission established by the Human Rights Council. If the Burmese authorities have any doubt about what is happening, this is how reports can be independently verified and those responsible held to account.

Mr President, this Council deliberates many crises around the world. But the situation in Burma strikes many of us around this table with particular poignancy. Many of us here today have stood by the people of Burma for long years, have watched the inspiring steps taken towards democracy, and have welcomed the country back into the international community with open arms.

Given our history and long-standing friendship with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the UK is perhaps foremost. And we remain committed to Burma and to all of its people. We want to see further progress towards democracy. And we want Burma to thrive within the international community. And it is because of that commitment, Mr President, that we speak so frankly today in this Chamber. This crisis now casts a deep shadow over Burma's international reputation, on its leaders and its military.

The Burmese authorities must now take the decisions that will decide their place in history. They can choose to end the violence and protect civilians and defend human rights. They can choose to allow humanitarian access including by the United Nations. They can work with Bangladesh on the return

of refugees and they can address the long-term issues raised by the Annan commission.

But should they fail to do so, they will find themselves on the wrong side of history. And this Council must be ready to take further action.

Thank you, Mr President.

News story: The AAIB is sending a team to Warwickshire

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB is sending a team to a light aircraft accident near Coventry.

News story: Brokenshire: utterly repugnant to force families from their homes

Earlier this evening Mr Brokenshire commented:

It is hugely disturbing that the families should feel they had no option but to leave their homes. No-one should be forced out of their property because of threats and intimidation.

This sort of situation is utterly repugnant and has rightly been condemned across the community. It underlines the importance of work by Government departments, law enforcement agencies, community and voluntary sector partners to tackle intimidation in communities.

[Press release: M23 smart motorway plans to go on show this weekend](#)

Drivers, business owners and local residents are invited to find out more about the plans, which will add an extra lane in each direction to the M23 near Gatwick Airport, between junction 8 for Merstham and junction 10 at Copthorne, to upgrade it to an all lane running smart motorway. New technology will help to manage traffic to reduce delays and give drivers up to date information about conditions on the road ahead.

Public information events are being held this weekend (Friday 29 and Saturday 30 September, and again next weekend (Friday 6 October and Saturday 7 October), where people can find out more about the plans and put any questions directly to the project team. Highways England project manager Miguel Machado said:

This new stretch of smart motorway will tackle congestion and improve journey times not only for the tens of thousands of drivers who use the M23 every day, but also for business travellers and holiday makers using Gatwick Airport, as well as residents and businesses based in the area.

Smart motorways are central to our ambitious plans for modernising the motorway network and will add 120 miles of new lanes to motorways in the South East by 2020. They add vital extra capacity, improve journey times and maintain high levels of safety. Drivers will also see better information about conditions through new smart motorway technology which helps us to manage incidents, smooth traffic flow and make journeys more reliable. I encourage anyone interested in the upgrade of the M23 to a smart motorway to come to meet the project team at one of the information events to find out more.

The M23 is a key strategic road which connects Crawley and Gatwick Airport to the M25 motorway, routes into London and the rest of the UK.

This stretch of the M23 is heavily used by traffic travelling to and from Gatwick Airport and between Brighton and London, especially during UK holiday periods. The upgrade to a smart motorway will add a third extra capacity on this section, and will improve safety, ease congestion make journey times more reliable. Junction 9 on the M23 is also the main access for traffic travelling to and from Gatwick Airport, and currently experiences heavy congestion on a daily basis.

Under the plans, the hard shoulder will be permanently converted into a live running lane between junctions 8 and 10 in both directions. New signs and signals will be used to vary the speed limit to reduce congestion at busy

times, and to control traffic if there is an obstruction on the road ahead.

Work is scheduled to start in March 2018, with the smart motorway being fully operational in early 2020.

Anyone interested in the scheme can visit the [Highways England's project page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Speech: Learning from post-accident investigations to ensure patient safety](#)

Last week we published the draft [Health Service Safety Investigations Bill](#), which represents a landmark moment for safety and transparency in the NHS, and a victory for the many campaigners who in the wake of the Mid Staffs and Morecambe Bay scandals have called for major change.

Among many others, I particularly credit [Martin Bromiley](#), the airline pilot who lost his wife, Elaine, in a terrible and wholly avoidable tragedy. He has spent a huge amount of his time since then helping the NHS to understand how we can learn from the way airlines have used human factors research to improve safety.

The Health Service Safety Investigations Bill aims to take Martin's insights on post-accident investigations in the transport industry and apply them to healthcare. It will establish, for the first time, a fully independent investigations body responsible for finding answers and embedding new practices across the NHS in the wake of a healthcare error.

It will not replace the individual investigations that have to happen following any tragedy. But it will use a no-blame approach to try to understand patterns of harm and how they can be avoided by replicating the 'safe space' that bodies such as the Air Accident Investigation Bureau benefit from when investigating airline crashes. They are able to get to the truth quickly because all participants in investigations can share

information freely in the knowledge that it will not be disclosed without a court order.

This is the 'black box thinking' that author Matthew Syed has been championing as a way to improve standards of safety and care in the NHS – and Matthew also deserves a lot of credit for challenging the medical profession over the supposed inevitability of avoidable harm.

So an important step forward. But overall how well is the NHS doing on patient safety?

There are clear signs of progress. MRSA and C. Difficile infection rates have continued to fall – in fact, [rates for 2016 to 2017](#) have been cut to almost half those of 2009 to 2010. Avoidable harm in hospitals is down 8% over the last 3 years, with estimates suggesting that 86,000 more patients would have experienced some form of avoidable harm in hospital had rates stayed as they were in 2013. That means 200 fewer patients being harmed every single day.

And the public's view of how safe their NHS care is has never been higher – nearly [4 in 5 people say that they would feel safe](#) if they were seriously ill in an NHS hospital, compared to just over half of people a decade ago.

But perhaps the biggest impact has been the new CQC inspection regime, which makes safety one of the [5 key domains](#) and has focused the minds of hospital boards on safety in a way that simply never happened before. Professor Sir Mike Richards, who recently stepped down as our first ever Chief Inspector of Hospitals, deserves enormous credit for this change alongside his fellow chief inspectors.

What shocked him – and all of us – was the extraordinary variation in standards across the NHS. That is now changing, with 35 hospitals put in special measures – and of the 20 that have come out, no fewer than 8 moved straight to a 'good' rating.

Internationally this progress has been recognised. The Commonwealth Fund said the NHS "excels in safety" and was the safest (as well as the best overall) of 11 major healthcare systems.

But... we still have 150 deaths every week where there is a 50% or higher chance they were preventable according to the [Hogan and Black analysis](#).

'Never events' are not really falling – more than 1,000 in the last 4 years. Indeed in the last year of reporting we transfused the wrong type of blood into one patient, removed someone's ovary by accident and left a surgical needle inside someone else by mistake.

And every week [4 claims are made for babies born with brain injuries](#) following potentially preventable mistakes – leading to unbelievable human hardship for the families involved.

This says to me that we are at a crossroads. We can either say that we had our 'Mid Staffs moment' and successfully reset the dial to focus more on patient safety, but that now it's back to other priorities. Or we can say

that even after sustained efforts, our levels of avoidable harm are still way too high.

A Johns Hopkins University study says [medical error costs 250,000 lives in the United States every year](#) – the biggest killer after cancer and heart disease – so this issue is by no means unique to the NHS.

What could be unique to the NHS is solving the problem once and for all and blazing a trail across the world by showing how standards of safety really can be transformed in modern healthcare.