

[Press release: UK statement on political developments in Macedonia](#)

There has been a political crisis in Macedonia since 2015. Early elections took place in December last year. On 1 March 2017, a clear majority of those MPs elected in December asked to form a government. However, President Ivanov refused to offer the mandate so that the majority coalition could form a government. On 27 April a Speaker was elected by the Macedonian Parliament.

A Foreign Office Spokeswoman said:

The UK supports the democratic decision of the majority of Macedonian MPs to elect Talat Xhaferi as Speaker. We look forward to working with him.

We call on all individuals, institutions and parties to allow an unhindered and non-violent transfer of power from the previous ruling party to the majority coalition elected in December 2016. The sooner a government is formed, the sooner it can get on with implementing urgent reforms to benefit Macedonia's citizens.

At a time of heightened tension, all leaders should refrain from inflaming ethnic tensions. Any such behaviour is dangerous and contrary to the interests of Macedonia's national unity.

In the wake of the unacceptable violence of 27 April we also call for the State authorities, in particular the police, to be allowed to fulfil their roles without political interference.

Further information

[News story: Accelerator face-to-face meetings](#)

An opportunity to book a meeting with the Defence and Security Accelerator team to discuss your research idea.

The Accelerator is holding Enduring Challenge and Autonomous Last Mile Resupply themed challenge face-to-face meetings in London to give you the opportunity to discuss your innovative research idea in private.

The Accelerator focuses on innovations which can provide advantage to defence and national security to protect the UK from its adversaries. It funds the development of suppliers' innovative ideas and provides support through to potential application. This is through the [enduring competition](#) or [specific themed competitions](#).

Before you come to your meeting please prepare by thinking about:

- what is your research idea?
- what do you think the benefit is to defence and security?
- will it save time/costs, improve capability/performance/reliability?
- why should MOD or the Security Agencies invest in this work?
- what will your approach be?
- how will you structure your research?
- what will you deliver? what evidence will you produce?
- what will the impact of your research be?
- how will you demonstrate progress towards the claimed benefit?

The main purpose of this meeting is for you to ask questions, and most importantly, receive advice from the team, so please leave time for this during your session.

Spaces will be on a first-come, first-served basis and an organisation should only register once.

Defence and Security Accelerator Email accelerator@dstl.gov.uk Telephone+44 (0)30 67704236

Please email for the quickest response.

[News story: UNESCO: UK Explanation of Vote \(EoV\) concerning the Jerusalem and Culture resolutions](#)

In the long shadow cast by World War II, UNESCO was founded to build bridges and cross divides through solidarity in mankind's shared cultural heritage. Heritage that Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories are blessed with in abundance. It is therefore right that UNESCO supports their protection.

And we share fellow Members' concerns at the sharply negative trend in Israeli conduct of the Occupation, including the unacceptable threat posed to Cremisan's Christian Monastery. And it is of course important the long-standing status quo concerning the Holy Sites, continues.

But whilst we agreed with many points in the Culture resolution, we could not vote in favour of a text that ignored terrorism. According to the Quartet's report last year, 30 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks. In past years we have seen repeated one-sided, inflammatory, and unacceptable UNESCO resolutions on Jerusalem, which sought to deny the Jewish people's ancient connection to Jerusalem. The Old City of Jerusalem is sacred to the world's three great Abrahamic faiths: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. We welcome some improvements in today's Jerusalem decision that better acknowledge this essential truth.

But the Jerusalem text still suffers from grave deficiencies. Absent agreement by both parties and safeguards to ensure objectivity, the monitoring mission as presently conceived risks hardening positions, as well as maintaining an excessive focus on Israel, at a time when regimes and terrorist groupings elsewhere in the world trample on cultural rights. For these reasons, today the UK has voted against the Jerusalem resolution.

UNESCO's founding constitution calls for the "principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men". We are keen to work with like minded partners in support of this noble vision and ensure much greater balance in UNESCO on the Israeli-Palestinian file. Ultimately, only an even-handed approach can help realise our shared objective of two states for two peoples.

[News story: UK troops deploy to South Sudan to support peacekeeping mission](#)

Touching down in country today, an additional 35 UK military personnel will join the current UK presence providing support to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

This latest addition to the British contingent will provide engineering support to the UN mission, undertaking projects such as the construction of a jetty on the River Nile, helicopter landing sites and other infrastructure improvements, and will be based mainly in Malakal.

In particular, the Royal Engineers will support the construction of a temporary field hospital in Bentiu. On completion of this, a permanent hospital facility, which will support over 1,800 UN peacekeepers and UN staff, will be constructed. These hospitals will be staffed by medical personnel drawn from all three services.

This latest arrival means around 240 British personnel are now based in South Sudan, primarily split between Malakal and Bentiu in support of UNMISS.

The latest deployment of British troops has arrived in South Sudan. Picture: UNMISS.

Along with a small number of staff officers in the UNMISS headquarters in Juba, the total number of UK military deployed will rise to nearly 400 over the coming months, making it one of the UK's largest operational deployments across the world.

Speech: "The Syrian Regime are using starve or surrender tactics. That is abhorrent and a clear breach of International Humanitarian Law."

Thank you Madam President and thank you also to you, Stephen, for your important briefing today and indeed for all your sterling work.

I want to begin as you did Stephen by wholeheartedly condemning the terrorist attack on desperate civilians as they were being evacuated as part of the Four Towns agreement. It is utterly tragic that over 120 people, including a very high number of children, were brutally killed. The United Kingdom condemns this terrible attack. We will work to ensure that whoever is responsible is held to account. I wish also to salute the unity and bravery of the humanitarian response including the response of the White Helmets.

Despite a ceasefire being in place since the end of 2016, we continue to witness terrible ongoing violence. In April alone, we know that the Regime or its allies have carried out aerial attacks on at least six hospitals and three schools in Syria. Six hospitals. Three schools. This is utterly deplorable. I hope others will join me in condemning all such incidents. All of us need to do everything in our power to bring the suffering to an end. And so I ask my Russian colleague, what is Russia doing with its leverage to ensure the Regime stops attacking schools and hospitals?

These attacks once again bring into laser focus the urgent and desperate humanitarian needs of 13 million people in Syria. I am especially concerned by the difficulty in reaching the 1.5 million people who live under siege-like conditions and a further 3.2 million in other hard to reach areas in Syria. All of them urgently require food, water, and medicine.

Roughly 5 million Syrians live in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, but the only regime-besieged area to be reached in 2017 was Khan al Shieh, where 6,000 people were reached with aid. The other besieged areas reached are Deir Ez Zour, besieged by Daesh, where the UN carries out air drops; and the Four Towns, besieged by the Iranian-backed Hizballah and armed opposition groups. This is a tiny proportion of aid reaching those people who are in most need of it.

Let me be clear. The Syrian Regime are using starve or surrender tactics. That is abhorrent and a clear breach of International Humanitarian Law.

I am especially concerned about the 420,000 innocent civilians in the besieged part of Eastern Ghouta, where supplies are rapidly running out. There are urgent medical needs, shortages of basic food items, and no water or power supplies.

I fully support Stephen's call for a pause in fighting to allow the UN and its humanitarian partners to safely enter Eastern Ghouta.

At the International Syria Support Group meeting in Geneva on 20 April, Russia committed to press the Regime to allow the UN and its humanitarian partners to access Douma, one part of Eastern Ghouta. What is the situation one week later? The Regime has not acted. There is still no convoy. We owe it to the people of Douma to do everything we can to improve this situation.

The UN has received the requisite assurances from the relevant armed opposition groups to allow them to deliver assistance to Douma, and it has identified a safe route to enter. The only things now lacking are for the Assad regime to issue a facilitation letter and to pause its aerial bombardment of the area for long enough for the UN and its humanitarian partners to enter.

If Russia is unable to ensure that the regime allows access, we call on the Security Council to act to ensure the UN is able to deliver urgent supplies to Douma in the first instance.

Madam President, I will reiterate now what I have said many times before, there can be no sustainable peace until there is a political transition. The Asad regime bears overwhelming responsibility for the suffering of the Syrian people. I implore the whole of the Security Council to work in unity to end the conflict for the sake of the Syrian people.

Thank you.