

# Press release: UK Minister condemns Russia's Domestic Violence law

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Russia's new legislation sends the wrong message about tackling violence against women and children

On 7 February the Russian Government passed into law an amendment which decriminalises domestic violence in Russia. It reduces 'battery within the family' from a criminal to an administrative offence, with weaker sanctions for offenders.

Baroness Anelay, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister for Human Rights and the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict said:

It is deeply disappointing that Russia has introduced new legislation decriminalising domestic violence. This sends the wrong message about the Russian authorities' commitment to tackling violence in the home. Victims of domestic violence, which are most often women and children, need more protection, not less.

The UK is committed to addressing domestic violence, and particularly violence against women and girls at home and overseas. Globally, one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in her lifetime. A 2008 report issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggest 14,000 women die annually at the hands of husbands or other relatives' and that domestic violence occurs in one in four Russian families.

Tackling violence; promoting gender equality; and empowering all women and girls are essential to defending human rights. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is supporting women's rights projects across 28 countries with a total projected spend of more than £3.5 million between 2016 and 2018.

**Further information**

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## Government is shutting the door on the most vulnerable – Diane Abbott MP

Speaking in response to a ministerial statement, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott said:

"My colleague Lords Alf Dubs is right, this is shutting the door on the most vulnerable. The Government must end these efforts to prevent refugees arriving here. This is not who we are."

"The Minister is wriggling out of the government's obligation to accept child refugees."

"But the internationally agreed principles and the Dubs Amendment were never conceived as a "one-off". They should continue to commit to meeting their international treaty obligations and our own laws."

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## Libyans must make 2017 the 'year of decisions,' UN envoy tells Security Council

8 February 2017 – Still seeking to implement a political accord signed more than a year ago, Libyans must make 2017 "the year of decisions" and political breakthrough, the United Nations envoy for the North African country urged today.

"We are beginning to see an emerging consensus among parties. 2017 must be a year of decisions and political breakthrough," Martin Kobler, the Secretary-General Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), told the UN Security Council.

He noted that 2016 was spent seeking to implement the agreement and begin the re-establishment of State authority across the country.

Despite some gains, "Libyans are not in a position to address the root causes of divisions," he cautioned, stressing that some important decisions must be taken, including on possible amendments to the political agreement, on ways to form a strong army and police force, and on how best to utilize the revenues from oil and gas exports for the benefit of all Libyans and end the dire humanitarian situation in the country.

Mr. Kobler said many meetings have taken place to discuss amendments to the

agreement, including the question of the Supreme Commandership of the army and the future composition and role of the Presidency Council.

On the security front, he said that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) terrorist group, which one year ago was expanding its territory in Libya, now controls none. However, it still poses a threat and the fight against terrorism is far from over, he added.

"The country's borders remain porous. Terrorists, human and weapons traffickers and criminal gangs continue to exploit the security vacuum," he warned, welcoming the initiative of the neighbouring States to form a panel of experts to develop recommendations on how to improve regional border security.

The on-going formation of the Presidential Guard is a step in the right direction but is a transitional measure until a unified Libyan army is formed.

Turning to the economy and finance, he said that despite its wealth and abundant natural resources, the country saw living conditions and public services deteriorate over the past years. However, oil production has increased to over 700,000 barrels per day, and the 2017 budget has been agreed at 37.5 billion Libyan dinars (about \$26 billion).

"This is an opportunity to address much-needed service delivery," in particular in the area of health, he said.

Mr. Kobler also voiced concerns about the human rights abuses against migrants, especially those in detention centres.

In January, a workshop was held in Malta with Libyan experts and activists, to establish a roadmap for national reconciliation. "A process is needed to heal the wounds of years of conflict and oppression," he said.

"I am hopeful that with bold decisions and actions we will witness a political breakthrough that can place Libya on the path of peace, prosperity and stability," he concluded.

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## [With UN support, surgeon Denis Mukwege and Panzi Hospital aid rape survivors in Guinea](#)

8 February 2017 – The United Nations office working to end conflict-related sexual violence helped to bring world-renowned surgeon Denis Mukwege and a team from his Panzi Hospital to Conakry, Guinea, to provide medical and

psychological treatment for 30 of the women and girls raped in politically-motivated violence in 2009, it was announced today.

In a statement, Under-Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, called the visit “an innovative example of how South-South cooperation can contribute to enhancing capacities and assisting victims of conflict-related sexual violence.”

Dr. Mukwege, a surgeon and gynaecologist, and his team, aided 30 survivors of sexual violence between 23 and 27 January, according to the statement.

The Congolese doctor also met with high-level officials, including from the health and justice ministries, to discuss the need for sustained health support and the importance of investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the 2009 violence.

On 28 September 2009, civilians organized an opposition rally in a soccer stadium in Conakry when Guinean security forces opened fire on demonstrators. A UN-led International Commission of Inquiry found that at least 156 people were killed and 109 women and girls raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence.

In July 2015, the head of the country at the time of the attacks, Moussa Dadis Camara, was indicted, but remains in Dakar awaiting extradition.

The indictment was part of an international effort aided by the team of legal experts working under Ms. Bangura, who have provided technical assistance to Guinean authorities since 2012, according to the UN office.

Seven years since the incidents, Special Representative Bangura today said that she is convinced “that we are closer to seeing the delivery of services, justice and reparations to victims.”

The visit of the Panzi Hospital took place at the invitation of the Guinean Government and with support from the Guinean Association of Victims, Parents and Friends of September 28, 2009 (AVIPA).

Dr. Mukwege, who co-founded the Hospital, was among the 2008 awardees of the UN Human Rights Prize, an honorary award given to individuals and organizations in recognition of outstanding achievement in human rights.

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## [Two injured in chemical plant explosion in Anhui](#)

Two people were slightly injured in a boiler explosion at a chemical plant in

Tongling City of east China's Anhui Province on Wednesday night, local authorities said.

The two suffered minor cut from glass fragments and were sent to hospital for treatment.

The accident happened at around 10:50 p.m. in a suburb area, according to Tongling's fire department. The fire had been brought under control.

Video footage on microblog Sina Weibo showed huge fire, and heavy smoke billowed into the sky.

Preliminary investigation showed the explosion was caused by fuel oil burning, and no dangerous chemical products were involved, said Zou He, director of the public security bureau of Tongling.