

UK to host international conference to promote freedom of religion or belief next summer in London

- Foreign Secretary Liz Truss announces that the conference bringing together international governments and faith leaders will be hosted next July in London.
- The conference follows previous FoRB events held by the US and Poland, and will boost global efforts to tackle persecution.
- The Foreign Secretary sees FoRB as a key part of the UK's foreign policy and development agenda.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) will host a global summit to promote freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) next summer (Tuesday 5 July – Wednesday 6 July) in London.

The Summit will drive collective action in promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities around the world so that everyone, everywhere can practise their own religion or belief freely. It will play a key role in shaping the network of liberty the UK, as a fierce champion of freedom, is building around the world.

Promoting FoRB for all is one of the UK's long-standing human rights priorities and is a key pillar of the Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy. In February 2020, the UK became a co-founding member of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. Since then, the group's membership has grown from 27 to 33 countries, and we continue to strongly encourage other countries to join.

Throughout 2021, the UK has made great strides with our international partners in collective efforts to stamp out intolerance and persecution relating to religious and non-religious beliefs. In May, under our G7 presidency, the UK secured – for the very first time – the inclusion of FoRB issues in the communique the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

I want all people, everywhere, to be free from discrimination and persecution regardless of their opinions and beliefs. We have used our G7 Presidency this year to defend and advance these fundamental freedoms and will build on that next year when we host friends and partners from across the world.

FCDO Minister Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

I warmly welcome that the UK will be hosting an international

conference on freedom of religion or belief next summer in our vibrant capital, London.

The UK continues to take any form of human rights abuses and violations extremely seriously, which is why we are laying the foundations for further global action to protect and promote freedom of religion or belief for all.

International collaboration is the only way to bring about real change.

Fiona Bruce MP, UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) said:

As the UK's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, I whole-heartedly welcome today's announcement regarding the UK-hosted international conference next summer, here in London to promote freedom of religion or belief for all.

The conference will be a pivotal opportunity to engage with our international partners to ensure that the rights of all individuals, regardless of their religion or belief, are fully protected and respected, no matter where they are in the world, without fear of prejudice or persecution.

Notes to Editors:

- FoRB at the United Nations. FCDO Minister Lord Ahmad hosted a successful Arria meeting focused on Religion, Belief and Conflict in the margins of the UN Security Council in March this year.
- Human Rights Reporting. Every year, the FCDO releases an Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report. Freedom of religion or belief is a key theme of this report.

PM meeting with Israeli President Isaac Herzog: 23 November 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog today.



The Prime Minister met Israel's President Isaac Herzog at Downing Street today, for discussions on strengthening our bilateral relationship across a range of areas.

The leaders welcomed the recent cooperation on tackling COVID-19 and stressed their commitment to boosting ties in security, trade and technology, including by moving forward with an enhanced free trade deal.

The Prime Minister noted positively the recent agreement between Israel and Jordan to provide solar power and clean water, and they discussed opportunities to cooperate on green, sustainable infrastructure following COP26.

On regional stability, the Prime Minister welcomed the recent normalisation agreements with a number of Middle East states, and reiterated the UK's commitment to Israel's security and to the stability and prosperity of the region.

He also reaffirmed the government's absolute commitment to tackling antisemitism in the UK and internationally, as they looked ahead to Hannukah celebrations next week.

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G7 presidency statement – patient safety: from vision to reality

On Monday 22 November, the UK under its G7 Presidency convened a meeting on 'Patient safety: from vision to reality', co-sponsored with the World Health Organization (WHO). Patient safety is a critical global public health issue and is essential if health systems are to advance and achieve universal health coverage (UHC). This event provided an important opportunity to demonstrate the continued importance of patient safety as an urgent global endeavour, facilitate international collaboration, and support strategic

initiatives designed to eliminate avoidable harm in healthcare globally.

Since 2016, the UK has worked closely with international partners, including in the G7, to raise the profile of patient safety issues and work together to drive solutions. This engagement led to the establishment of the annual Global Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety and adoption by the 72nd World Health Assembly (2019) of a UK co-led Resolution on 'Global Action on Patient Safety' (creating an annual World Patient Safety Day on 17 September) and WHO's 'Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021 to 2030' by the 74th World Health Assembly (2021).

The event on 22 November brought together G7 countries, UK devolved administrations, system partners and patient advocates to share learning and reaffirm the importance of this critical issue. With the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, patient safety has become an even more crucial area for international cooperation, and the event underlined the importance of countries continuing to work together to maintain momentum on improving patient safety worldwide.

The event was chaired by Dr Aidan Fowler, National Director of Patient Safety for NHS England and NHS Improvement, and was very well attended by global experts. The importance of continued international work to improve patient safety was underlined in the keynote speeches from Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO, as well as Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and Jeremy Hunt, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee.

The event also provided an important opportunity for sharing learning from around the world; and highlighted the need for and value of continued collaboration between countries on health issues. Interventions from G7 countries and UK devolved administrations provided important insights into how different countries are tackling this shared aim of eliminating avoidable harm in healthcare. It was clear that although health systems differ from country to country, many threats to patient safety have similar causes and similar solutions.

The UK looks forward to continuing to engage with international partners, including the G7, for example through the next Global Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety which will be hosted by Switzerland.

National Transfer Scheme to become mandatory for all local authorities

Today (Tuesday 23 November), the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster, has written to all local authorities with children's services across the UK to inform them of the government's intention to temporarily mandate

the National Transfer Scheme.

Under this change all local authorities have been given legal notice to accept transfers of children into their care, providing crucial placements to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

The decision to mandate the scheme is vital to ensure unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive the critical care they need and end the use of hotels for them following the unprecedented recent pressure placed on the asylum system.

Whilst many local authorities have been providing support under the voluntary scheme announced in the summer, this is a national issue that requires all local authorities play their part. Therefore, urgent steps must be taken to ensure immediate, fuller participation that is fair for all local authorities with children's services across all parts of the country.

The Home Office continues to constructively engage with local government partners in England, Scotland, Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive and their contribution is crucial to making the scheme a success.

Minister Kevin Foster, the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration said:

It's right we do all we can to protect unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, many of whom have gone through dangerous journeys and been exploited by despicable people smugglers.

I am grateful for the continued, and invaluable, support of local authorities across the country who have provided crucial placements to vulnerable young asylum-seekers.

This decision has not been taken lightly but it is in the best interests of these children to make sure they receive the support they need.

The Home Office will consider a number of factors when transferring children to a local authority including the existing child population, the number of supported asylum seekers and pressures on children's services, and the best interests of the child.

Local Authorities will not need to accept unaccompanied asylum-seeking children where this cohort already makes up 0.07% or more of their general child population.

The scheme will be kept under review and the length of time for mandating will be determined by a range of factors including intake levels and how long it takes to end the use of hotels.

Local authorities will have a 14 day notice period where representations may be put forward regarding a transfer which will be given careful consideration. A start date for mandatory National Transfer Scheme transfers

will be confirmed as soon as possible following the initial notice period.

Children and Families Minister, Will Quince said:

It is often the case that some of the most vulnerable children in our care are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Through the National Transfer Scheme, we know that many councils across the country have already stepped up to fulfil their duty to care for these children. But this responsibility must be more equally shared between councils, which is why we will be mandating temporary transfers where appropriate, so that these children can access the support services they need and become successful members of their local communities.

Following last year's joint consultation with the Home Office and Department of Education, an extra £20 million of additional funding was made available to support the needs of these children.

In order to support local authorities in supporting children, any local authority receiving a child transferred under the scheme now receives a funding contribution at the higher rate of £143 per child per night.

In addition, the government increased the contribution for all former UASC care leavers from £240 per person per week to £270 per person per week. These changes follow a significant uplift in funding in June 2020.

The National Transfer Scheme allows unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be moved to a different local authority to begin a care placement rather than responsibility falling disproportionately on certain local authorities.

Cllr Georgia Gould, Chair of London Councils, said:

We welcome the decision to make the national transfer scheme mandatory to create more capacity for councils to do this crucial work, which is something London Councils has long been calling for.

London boroughs are currently caring for 1,500 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children – a third of the national total. These children enter the country having faced difficult and traumatic circumstances from a young age and need specialist support to make a fresh start.

Boroughs believe that a mandatory national transfer scheme is an important first step in a different and fairer approach to responding to this national challenge and we look forward to working with government on this.

The Borders and Nationality Bill is making its way through Parliament to

overhaul the decades old broken asylum system. This legislation marks the most significant overhaul of our asylum system in decades and will end the cycle of endless appeals and abuse of the system.

No country can eliminate modern slavery alone

Hello everyone, and thank you to the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to discuss the Global Plan for Action.

When new global estimates on modern slavery are published, it will make for difficult reading.

The pandemic has had a devastatingly disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable and those already victim to modern slavery.

More critically than ever we must make immediate and lasting progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 to eradicate this scourge by 2030.

No one nation can do this alone.

In 2017, the UK led the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Over 90 countries have endorsed that Call to Action, taking a range of steps, and – crucially – collaborating internationally with others.

The UK continues to look for opportunities to collaborate, with governments, businesses, and survivors. It will take us all to end this menace.

For example, under our Presidency, the leaders of the G7 committed to tackling forced labour global supply chains.

Last month, G7 Trade ministers discussed steps to eradicate forced labour, protect victims and improve global supply chain transparency.

Meanwhile our efforts continue earnestly at home.

The UK is strengthening our already world-leading Modern Slavery Act.

A key focus is to increase transparency in supply chains. We were the first country globally to require businesses to report on tackling modern slavery in their operations and global supply chains.

Other landmark provisions include extending the reporting requirement to public bodies with a turnover of more than £36 million, as well as mandating that organisations publish their statements on the government registry.

We will introduce financial penalties for non-compliance under the Modern Slavery Act.

We also became the first country to publish our own statement, and later this year we will publish individual statements for ministerial departments.

Looking ahead, the UK wants to make sure we continue to respond effectively to these terrible crimes.

For that reason, we are reviewing our modern slavery strategy now, and will publish a new strategy in Spring 2022.

I would like finish by paying tribute to the survivors of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking.

I urge you all to listen carefully to the most vulnerable in our societies, and to come together regionally and internationally to ensure this generation of victims is the last.

Thank you.