

# Concern for Syria's civilians amid escalation of violence

Thank you Madam President and thank you to Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and to Amany Qaddour for your briefings.

Firstly, Madam President, we reiterate our serious concerns about the continuing escalation of violence in north-west Syria.

Airstrikes and artillery bombardment, which violate the ceasefire agreement, have become the new normal in Southern Idlib, with around 10-20 airstrikes currently recorded every day, directly affecting civilians and humanitarian workers, as Ms Qaddour set out for us. In recent weeks, eight civilians, including two women and one child, have been killed, including in heavy artillery shelling on residential areas of Idlib city by the regime and its allies.

And since March 2021, 19 humanitarian workers have been killed and 36 injured in the violence. We urge all parties to respect the ceasefire agreement and comply with their obligations to protect civilians and humanitarian workers.

Secondly, turning to the situation in Dara'a, we welcome the recent ceasefire agreement, which we hope will provide a lasting reprieve from violence for civilians living there.

But brutal shelling by the regime military, backed by Iranian-affiliated militias, along with fierce street fighting between regime forces and opposition fighters, has resulted in the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. The estimated 20,000 people who remain in the area still have limited access to food, water, and medication. With approximately 45,000 people displaced, it is more vital that humanitarian agencies are granted unhindered access to Dara'a al Balad.

Thirdly, we note with concern the water crisis in north-east Syria. We welcome the UN's consolidated whole-of-Syria response plan to this and look forward to updates on efforts to address this situation.

Fourth, we commend the ongoing efforts of the UN and its partners to scale up humanitarian shipments cross-border into north-west Syria, in order to meet the vast needs of the 3.4 million people there. And we welcome the recent cross-line World Food Programme delivery to Sarmada, as part of the effort to address those needs.

Finally, Madam President, we wish to express our condolences for all who have lost their lives – for those who have lost their lives to maintain ceasefires and humanitarian operations, including an attack in north-west Syria where Turkish soldiers were killed at the weekend. We welcome Turkey's efforts to uphold the ceasefire agreement and protect civilians from a further regime offensive.

Thank you Madam President.

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## [UK, US AND Australia launch new security partnership](#)

- 'AUKUS' partnership will work to protect our people and support a peaceful and rules-based international order
- First initiative will be collaboration on future nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy
- New alliance will bolster the Integrated Review commitment to strengthen alliances with like-minded allies and deepen ties in the Indo-Pacific

A landmark defence and security partnership has been agreed by the leaders of the UK, the United States and Australia today which will protect and defend our shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Under the 'AUKUS' alliance, we will enhance the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing, ensuring our people are kept safe from harm and reinforcing our shared goals. AUKUS will foster deeper integration of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases and supply chains.

AUKUS is a concrete articulation of the UK's ambition, made in the [Integrated Review](#), to deepen defence, security and foreign policy ties with like-minded allies across the globe. The agreement reflects the unique level of trust and cooperation between our three countries, who already share extensive intelligence through the Five Eyes alliance.

The first initiative under AUKUS will be a collaboration on future nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. This capability will promote stability in the Indo-Pacific and will be deployed in support of our shared values and interests.

The UK has built and operated world-class nuclear-powered submarines for over 60 years. We will therefore bring deep expertise and experience to the project through, for example, the work carried out by Rolls Royce near Derby and BAE Systems in Barrow.

The initial scoping phase for the new endeavour is expected to take 18 months. The design and build process will create hundreds of highly skilled scientific and engineering roles across the UK, and drive investment in some of our most high-tech sectors.

The Prime Minister said:

The UK, Australia and US are natural allies – while we may be separated geographically, our interests and values are shared. The AUKUS alliance will bring us closer than ever, creating a new defence partnership and driving jobs and prosperity.

This partnership will become increasingly vital for defending our interests in the Indo-Pacific region and, by extension, protecting our people back at home.

The UK and US are already leading members of NATO – the world’s most important defence alliance. The work done by AUKUS will support our shared goals in new regions, promoting stability and protecting our people against new and emerging threats.

In recent years, the UK and Australia have increased collaboration on defence. The Royal Australian Navy is procuring up to 9 of the UK’s Type 26 frigates, allowing our defence forces to operate together more than ever before. Our militaries, including the Royal Gurkha Rifles, have also undertaken joint training exercises.

In recent weeks the UK’s HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier has been deployed to the Indo-Pacific region alongside personnel and equipment from the US. Last month the Carrier Strike Group undertook a series of exercises with countries including Australia to build interoperability with like-minded partners.

As set out in the Integrated Review, the Indo-Pacific is at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with potential flashpoints including unresolved territorial disputes; to nuclear proliferation and miscalculation; to climate change and non-state threats from terrorism and Serious Organised Crime. It is on the frontline of new security challenges, including in cyberspace.

### **Joint Leaders statement on AUKUS:**

As leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, guided by our enduring ideals and shared commitment to the international rules-based order, we resolve to deepen diplomatic, security, and defense cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, including by working with partners, to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. As part of this effort, we are announcing the creation of an enhanced trilateral security partnership called “AUKUS” – Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Through AUKUS, our governments will strengthen the ability of each to support our security and defense interests, building on our longstanding and ongoing bilateral ties. We will promote deeper information and technology sharing. We will foster deeper integration of security and defense-related science, technology, industrial bases, and supply chains. And in particular, we will significantly deepen cooperation on a range of security and defense capabilities.

As the first initiative under AUKUS, recognizing our common tradition as

maritime democracies, we commit to a shared ambition to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. Today, we embark on a trilateral effort of 18 months to seek an optimal pathway to deliver this capability. We will leverage expertise from the United States and the United Kingdom, building on the two countries' submarine programs to bring an Australian capability into service at the earliest achievable date.

The development of Australia's nuclear-powered submarines would be a joint endeavour between the three nations, with a focus on interoperability, commonality, and mutual benefit. Australia is committed to adhering to the highest standards for safeguards, transparency, verification, and accountancy measures to ensure the non-proliferation, safety, and security of nuclear material and technology. Australia remains committed to fulfilling all of its obligations as a non-nuclear weapons state, including with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Our three nations are deeply committed to upholding our leadership on global non-proliferation.

Recognizing our deep defense ties, built over decades, today we also embark on further trilateral collaboration under AUKUS to enhance our joint capabilities and interoperability. These initial efforts will focus on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.

The endeavour we launch today will help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. For more than 70 years, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have worked together, along with other important allies and partners, to protect our shared values and promote security and prosperity. Today, with the formation of AUKUS, we recommit ourselves to this vision.

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson, President Joseph R Biden and Prime Minister Scott Morrison

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## [Putting fundamental building blocks in place for South Sudan's future](#)

Thank you Mr President and let me thank SRSB Haysom, Ms Ghelani and Ms Nanjia for your insightful contributions. I would like to make three key points in response to what we have heard today.

Firstly, implementation of the Peace Agreement still falls far short of what is needed. This is fostering increased instability and exacerbating political divisions.

The United Kingdom welcomed in recent areas of progress, including the inauguration of parliament, exchange rate reforms, and public financial

management reforms. But three years on, delays in turning core commitments into action are compounding grievances and contributing to ongoing suffering and instability.

We share the concerns expressed by many today regarding recent splits in the SPLM In-Opposition and the destabilising impacts of political manoeuvring. We welcome the role of IGAD and Prime Minister Hamdok as Chair in seeking to resolve these divisions. And we echo their call for all parties to refrain from violence, and to focus on achieving peace and stability through compromise, trust and unity.

We also continue to call on all actors to work towards an improved security situation and for the long overdue graduation of a Necessary Unified Force. But improved security alone will not be sufficient to strengthen trust between the South Sudanese state and its people. That will also rely on more people having a genuine stake in the country's governance.

Mr President, this brings me to my second point. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by restrictions on freedom of expression imposed by South Sudan's Government in response to public calls for peaceful protests. And I think Ms Nanjia's briefing reinforced this message. Intimidation, threats and pre-emptive detentions of civil society are unacceptable.

As we draw closer to the first national elections, we urge South Sudan's Government to respect the freedoms of speech, association and expression guaranteed in the Transitional Constitution. These freedoms are vital to enable much-needed debate on the country's future. We encourage South Sudan's leaders to take concrete steps now, to ensure that the path to elections will be open, inclusive and fair, starting with inclusive consultations on the constitution process.

Thirdly, Mr President, we cannot ignore the fact that insecurity and political tensions are contributing directly to the suffering of millions of South Sudanese people. We know that 7.2 million people – 60% of the population – are likely to face acute food insecurity in the coming months. Increased violence has displaced tens of thousands and interrupted humanitarian delivery. Moreover, humanitarian workers and their assets continue to be targeted. This is deplorable and must end.

Mr President, allow me to conclude by reiterating our call for South Sudan's leaders to focus on the bigger picture and on earning the trust of their people. South Sudan's future stability and prosperity depend on putting fundamental building blocks in place now, including an end to violence, respect for human rights and humanitarian access, and a path to inclusive and credible elections. The international community, including our UN family here, should unite behind this effort. Thank you Mr. President.

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# North Korea ballistic missile tests: FCDO statement

News story

A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson responds to ballistic missile tests carried out by North Korea.



**A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:**

These tests are a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolutions and a threat to regional peace and security.

North Korea must change course and take immediate steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. Alongside our allies and partners, the UK is committed to peace on the Korean Peninsula, upholding the rules-based international system and securing an end to North Korea's unlawful activities.

We urge North Korea to refrain from further provocations, and to return to dialogue with the US.

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## Shielding programme ends for most vulnerable

People previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable will not be advised to shield again, as the government agrees to end the requirement

for centralised guidance for these groups following expert clinical advice. The closure of the shielding programme follows a pause to shielding guidance in place since 1 April 2021.

This decision is based on there being far more information available on the virus and what makes individuals more or less vulnerable, the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme and the emergence of proven treatments, such as dexamethasone and tocilizumab, to support improved outcomes in clinical care pathways.

Shielding was introduced at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the few interventions available to support those who were considered to be most at risk of serious illness from the virus.

While this was the right decision at the time to protect the most vulnerable during the initial waves of the virus when little was known about the virus and risk characteristics, shielding advice was extremely restrictive and for some, had a significant impact on people's lives and their mental and physical wellbeing.

Since 19 July, the guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people has been to follow the same advice as the rest of the population, with the suggestion of additional precautions people may wish to take. Research and evaluation for some individual clinical groups will continue.

This will move the country towards the situation pre-COVID-19, where people managed their own conditions with their health professionals, who know the needs of their individual patients best.

For some who may have a reduced immune response – for example those who are immunocompromised or have particular cancers such as blood (haematological) malignancies – and who are at risk from infectious diseases more generally, a return to routine individual advice from relevant specialists is now recommended.

Those previously on the Shielded Patient List will receive a letter from the government in the coming days to inform them of this decision.

The government will continue to assess the situation and the risks posed by COVID-19 and, based on clinical advice, will respond accordingly to keep the most vulnerable safe. Individuals should consider advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are right for them.

People aged over 16 with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 will also be prioritised for booster vaccinations, as well as adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals. This will ensure the protection the vaccines provide will be maintained over the winter months.

Vaccinations as part of a booster programme will begin from next week and the NHS will contact people directly to let them know when it is their turn.

Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency Jenny Harries said:

Since the start of the pandemic, the NHS has administered millions of life-saving COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, which is why those who were originally considered clinically extremely vulnerable have, since step 4 (19 July), been advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else.

Because of this progress, the government does not expect to have to issue shielding advice to this large group again, but will continue to assess the risks to the most vulnerable from COVID-19.

Those patients who are at risk from infectious diseases more generally – for example patients with blood cancers – and who can also remain less protected after other vaccinations, may wish to discuss this with their specialist as part of their routine care.

I would urge everyone else to follow the guidance and continue with the precautions that make you feel safe.