

International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance members' statement on the crisis in Myanmar



Statement from the 15 countries signed up to the International Religious Freedom of Belief Alliance:

We stand in solidarity with the victims of human rights violations and abuses by the Myanmar security forces. People of all faiths and beliefs have come together to condemn the military's actions since the 1 February 2021 coup.

Faith actors have played prominent roles in the anti-coup movement, including by supporting human rights defenders and vulnerable communities. As a result, some have been subjected to inhumane treatment by the military regime. We remember those who have been killed and call for the release of all those unjustly detained.

We echo the previous calls of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo to protect religious buildings, as well as hospitals, schools and other civilian structures during the ongoing violence. We condemn attacks on all those seeking refuge or protection. We condemn any violence against buildings that are at the very centres of communities, such as the Sacred Heart Church in Loikaw, Katkyaw Monastery in Bago, and Sule Mosque in Mandalay among others.

We condemn any attack on places of worship in Myanmar and support all who pursue peace and human rights in Myanmar. We commend the role of faith actors in responding to COVID-19 in Myanmar as well as civil society organisations who are working in challenging circumstances, and remember all those who have died as a result of the pandemic.

Co-signatories: Albania, Australia, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, US and the UK.

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1. 4 August 2021

Added Latvia to the co-signatories.

2. 22 July 2021

First published.

[Addressing the climate crisis through culture](#)

Thank you. It is a pleasure to be here with you all today, in the splendid baroque setting of the Palazzo Barberini. During my stay I have been fortunate enough to visit some of Rome's finest architectural gems, from the Vatican Library to the Colosseum. These iconic buildings are testament to human ingenuity, creativity and imagination, all of which contribute to Italy's rich cultural heritage.

And it's our shared need for ingenuity, creativity and imagination that I'm going to speak about today. The global climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges we currently face. Across the world, people, places and objects are being displaced, damaged and destroyed due to the catastrophic effects of climate change. Unless we act swiftly, the losses to our global community will be unimaginable and irreplaceable.

If we want to halt this trajectory, we need to work together to implement our most innovative ideas and approaches to address these climate challenges;

We recognise the role that we, as G20 members collectively, and individually as Ministers, have, to use our voices and our influence, to champion the role of culture in driving forward climate actions.

I congratulate the G20 presidency for the tireless efforts to shape such a strong and compelling Ministerial Culture Declaration, emphasising how intertwined the culture and climate agendas are. And, for effectively reinforcing these messages at the highest level, so consistently, across all G20 tracks.

Addressing challenges relating to climate change is at the heart of the UK government's agenda. Climate and culture are inextricably linked and the UK is working to safeguard cultural heritage at risk, while advancing innovative, culture-based solutions to the climate crisis, in the UK, and in our international programmes.

We firmly believe that culture-based solutions can help us adapt to current climate challenges, and mitigate future crises. We feel that any solutions or approaches must also be based on inclusivity: culture-based climate action must be sustainable and push us all to take concrete steps to embed climate change in the culture sector, and to embed culture in climate policy.

But despite our fruitful discussions throughout this G20 track, we feel that the role of culture as a means through which to address these challenges can oftentimes be sidelined outside our own sectors.

We, along with you all, I am sure, are eager to ensure that this does not happen, and maintain the remarkable momentum generated here at the G20 Culture Ministerial to ensure that the role of culture in addressing climate challenges achieves the recognition that it deserves.

And the UK has committed to this in our Adaptation Communication, which was presented by our Prime Minister at the Paris Climate Summit last December. We unequivocally championed the role that cultural heritage has to play in addressing the climate crisis and I strongly encourage you all to use your adaptation communications to do the same.

For me, the key part of what was included, and forgive me for a direct quote, was that:

protecting cultural heritage has an irreplaceable role in preserving the long-standing spirit and individual identities of communities. In the face of our changing climate, it is imperative to build resilience of historic settlements, cities and villages and intangible culture, to enhance wellbeing, stability, security and prosperity.

We will harness the recognised global consensus on the importance of this issue that has crystallised here, at the G20 Culture track, where cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, adaptation and resilience are recognised as key tools through which to address the grand challenges associated with climate change.

And we will use our platform at COP26 to focus this ambition. As Co-Presidents of COP26 with Italy, we want to underscore the commitment of our respective Governments to the role of cultural heritage within adaptation and resilience strategies and encourage the widening out of the gains made as a result of the G20 into our collective COP26 ambition and leadership.

I firmly believe culture has a key role to play in our efforts to address the climate crisis. Cultural heritage is fundamental to what makes us all human; a threat to heritage is a threat to our shared humanity.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as fellow G20 members, on addressing this great challenge of our time, and as we collectively work towards the opportunity of COP26. Thank you.

Minister for Digital and Culture reaffirms UK commitment to strengthen the role of culture in addressing the climate crisis at G20 Culture Meeting

Caroline Dinenage attended the G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting in Rome, with Culture Ministers from the world's leading economies in attendance. This was the first G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting to be hosted in person, following a virtual Culture Ministers' meeting hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in November 2020.

The G20 Culture Ministerial was launched at the Colosseum by the Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who delivered a speech recognising the importance of the cultural sector in Italy and the role of culture as a crucial engine for sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth globally.

Following interventions from all G20 members and observers, the Ministerial concluded at the historic Palazzo Barberini, with all associates unanimously adopting the 'Rome Declaration of the G20 Culture Ministers'.

The Rome Declaration is a 32-point statement recognising that culture is an essential component for human development and plays an unparalleled role in fostering the resilience and the regeneration of our economies and our societies. It focuses on five priorities:

1. The protection of cultural heritage and tackling illicit trafficking;
2. Addressing the climate crisis through culture;
3. Building capacity through training and education;
4. Digital transition and new technologies for culture; and
5. Creative industries as drivers for sustainable and balanced growth.

Caroline Dinenage delivered a [keynote speech](#) outlining the UK's approach to addressing the climate crisis through culture.

In the margins of the G20 programme, Caroline Dinenage also held bilateral meetings with the lead representative for Culture from France, Spain, Germany and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Discussions explored cultural collaboration to support female leadership, artist mobility, diversity and inclusion within the creative industries, culture-led climate action, and international cultural heritage protection.

Caroline Dinenage, Minister of State for Digital and Culture, said:

Celebrating the role of culture in supporting diversity, inclusion

and human rights was at the heart of the G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting in Rome.

The UK recognises the huge potential that exists in particular for culture and digital technologies, and is committed to tackling the digital divide through our domestic and our international projects and policy platforms, ensuring that diversity and inclusion shapes our approach.

The UK is working to safeguard cultural heritage at risk recognising the vital part this plays in peace-building, security and stability all around the world, while advancing innovative, culture-based solutions to the climate crisis – in the UK, and in our international programmes.

Through these world leading programmes, and our COP26 Presidency in partnership with Italy, the UK looks forward to working with partners from across the globe to implement and support culture based climate action as set out in the historic G20 Rome Declaration.

The Minister visited cultural leaders and institutions in Rome to celebrate the special cultural relationship between Italy and the UK, and committed to building new creative partnerships in the coming years. The Minister also visited the Carabinieri to see Italian expertise in policing the illicit trafficking of cultural property; met Bishop Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and had a tour of the Vatican Library; visited the archives and artists' studios at the British School in Rome; met Pinewood Studios and Netflix representatives during a film screening of *The Dig*, and interacted with a Virtual Reality experience at the Keats-Shelley Memorial House.

[Women, youth and elections in Libya: call for proposals](#)

Background

The [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund \(CSSF\)](#) is a cross-government fund that supports and delivers activity to tackle instability and to prevent conflicts that threaten UK interests. It has been a catalyst for a more integrated UK government response to fragility and conflict, including delivering the [UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security \(WPS\) 2018-2022](#).

The CSSF in Libya is supporting work that leads towards an equitable, durable peace process. A key milestone in the achievement of this will be national

elections, currently scheduled to be held at the end of 2021. Ensuring these elections are inclusive of women, youth and other minority groups is crucial for building a sustainable peace. This project will provide flexible, responsive support to local organisations seeking to support women's and young people's engagement with the electoral process as candidates and voters.

Women globally face significant threats of violence and harassment related to political participation. Libyan women and young people have played a core role in community peacebuilding, mediation and conflict resolution, but their role has been limited in the formal peace process, including at local and national government level. The majority of civil society organisations in Libya are women-led, but this has not translated into participation in formal decision-making fora.

Under the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) roadmap, the interim executive has committed to 30% participation of women in government. Women's current representation is at 15%. Only 39% of voters in the last election were women.

The participation of young people is critical. The importance of youth participation is recognised in multiple international agreements, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Resolution on Youth Participation in Democracy.

60% of the Libyan population are under 34. Unemployment for this group is at over 40%, and young people have experienced decades of conflict, instability and have limited experiences of the political process. Young women especially have their engagement limited by cultural barriers to mixed gender gatherings. Digital platforms, however, are widely used and a critical part of communication and learning for young people.

Project details

This project will provide flexible and responsive support to organisations working to achieve more equitable election participation for women and youth in Libya. This will take forward recommendations made (including in UK-funded [consultations](#) and [research](#)) to provide funding for women's rights organisations that allows them to determine their own priorities and activities, respond flexibly to changes in contexts and emergencies, and protect their civic space. At least 60% of funding must be targeted at women and girls and this must be demonstrated in bidders' budgets.

The project will aim to support organisations working to:

- improve youth and women's political participation, as candidates and voters, including organisations providing protection and psychosocial care for activists
- providing voter education and skills training
- support safer elections for women, both as voters and candidates
- monitor and/or take action on online and offline violence,

disinformation and threats

- improve voter registration and turnout among women and youth and support for securing voting rights
- any other activity that supports women, girls and young people to engage in the upcoming electoral process

The implementer will work to provide funding to local youth and women's organisations, which can include coalitions or supporting local-national links. Building on previous successful models in the CSSF, we anticipate the bidder will propose a mechanism to identify and select recipients. Core funding to local organisations is encouraged, provided they are working on the areas outlined above. We will work with the implementer to develop a set of outcomes and a monitoring and evaluation approach that reflect the flexible nature of this funding.

Organisations should aim to demonstrate a broad geographical reach, including West, East and Southern Libya if possible. Organisations should provide evidence of ability to operate (official registration documents or other permissions should be provided).

Proposals

Proposals should clearly outline timeframes, costs, risks and sustainability and ability to operate. Activities should take an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach, working with local organisations and partners wherever possible across East, West and Southern Libya. Proposals should demonstrate strong civil society networks and consultation with women, youth and their organisations as well as outline how they will be involved in project oversight.

Bids for the project should address:

- a) How your organisation is well-equipped with the expertise and resources for this project.
- b) Your organisation's proposed approach to delivering, measuring progress and monitoring short-term impact. Bids should include a particular focus on how they shall measure the value for money impact of their proposed approach. Strong proposals will be high-impact interventions, defined by clear evidence of the potential to deliver solutions that are sustainable and/or scalable.
- c) Your approach to safeguarding and conflict sensitivity.
- d) How your organisation will deliver its activities and outcomes under different COVID-19 scenarios, including full or partial lock-downs and restrictions on local/international travel.

Scope and scale

The project will require that all activity take place by 31 March 2022. The project budget should not be more than £350,000.

Bidders should not craft proposals in such a way to reach the budget ceiling. Bidders should instead construct their bid to specifically meet the objectives in pursuit of demonstrable impact and value for money.

Assessment

We would welcome bids from not-for-profit organisations working with women and youth in Libya.

The successful applicant will have previous experience working in Libya. We would welcome applications that show ability to work across East, West and Southern Libya. A successful bidder should also have a track record of working with local organisations. It will have the technical and organisational capacity to manage a grant-scheme with different funding streams and to provide tailored capacity and technical support to civil society organisations (CSOs) of differing organisational strengths and capabilities. Applicants should demonstrate at least 60% of funding will be targeted to Women and Girls.

Bids will be assessed against the following criteria and weighting:

- strategic fit: Alignment with the stated objectives, underpinned by organisational alignment to feminist and youth-centred values and approaches, and demonstrated experience, expertise and reach to take forward activity in the political participation space (25%)
- project design and viability: based on a good contextual analysis and understanding of the CSO operating space in Libya (and required project responses therein); a realistic description of activities including methodology and capacity to adapt to the security context and to restrictions and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (25%)
- project monitoring, evaluation and learning: framed against considered, achievable outcomes and outputs and a grounded Theory of Change (ToC) and Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (MES) (15%)
- partnerships and donor engagement: capacity to build meaningful, collaborative partnerships, based on mutual respect, shared endeavour, and supportive, open communication with sub-grantees and CSSF Libya, the British Embassy Libya (10%)
- value for money: financial soundness of the proposed activity, demonstration of economy and efficiency of costs (10%)
- sustainability: clear consideration of how to sustain project benefit(s) after project completion (5%)
- risk management, gender and conflict sensitivity: a clear understanding and approach to risk management and to gender and conflict sensitivity (10%)

Requirements

- the FCD0 requires applicants to have the necessary permissions to operate in the relevant regions of Libya
- at least 60% of funding should be targeted at women and girls
- applicants should have sufficient financial resilience and a proven

track record of transparently and effectively managing donor funded projects of similar scale

- CSSF will conduct a due diligence assessment on the successful potential partner including reviewing safeguarding measures
- the project will be delivered through a Grant Agreement and therefore the organisation cannot profit from the received grant funding. Read [further information/guidance](#) on what that agreement might look like
- additional project documentation will be completed by the successful bidder/s, following the award

Bidding process

Contact WomenYouthElectionsLibya@fcdo.gov.uk if you have questions.

Indicative timeline:

Dates	Activity
4 August 2021	Announce request for submission of bids
3 September 2021	Deadline for bidders to submit bids
20 September 2021	Post announcement on outcome of bids

[Visa-free short-term touring allowed in 19 member states](#)

We want the UK's fantastic performers and other creative professionals to be able to tour abroad easily.

That is why we tabled ambitious proposals during negotiations with the EU. Our recent trade deal with the three EFTA countries was based on the same offer, and shows it is workable.

We, as government, have spoken to every EU Member State about the issues facing our creative and cultural industries when looking to tour in Europe. From these discussions 19 Member States have confirmed UK musicians and performers do not need visas or work permits for short-term tours. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden.

Supporting our creatives

We are now actively engaging with the remaining EU Member States that do not allow visa and permit free touring, and calling on them to align their arrangements with the UK's generous rules, which allow touring performers and support staff to come to the UK for up to 3 months without a visa. Formal approaches via officials and DCMS Ministers have been made to Spain, Croatia,

Greece, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania, Malta and Cyprus. We are also working with the sector to amplify each other's lobbying efforts.

We recognise challenges remain around touring, and we are continuing to work closely with the industry. We want to ensure that when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, touring can resume and our world-leading creative and cultural artists can continue to travel widely, learning their craft, growing their audiences and showing the best of British creativity to the world.