

UN Human Rights Council 47: UK general comment on the resolution on Belarus

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom would like to make a general comment on draft resolution A/HRC/47/L.13 entitled 'Situation of human rights in Belarus'.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Belarus. The report by the UN Special Rapporteur makes clear that the situation in Belarus continues to worsen. Tightening the laws on media and mass events has made it more difficult than ever for individuals to exercise their rights to peaceful assembly, freedoms of association and expression, and for journalists to carry out their work safely.

The authorities' systematic harassment of independent media, human rights defenders, civil society, and members and supporters of the opposition has intensified. The forced diversion and landing of a civilian airliner in Minsk in order to arrest an independent journalist and his partner, and the recent crackdown of regional non-state media, has highlighted the lengths that the Belarusian authorities will go to in order to try and silence critical voices.

The number of people detained on political grounds increases by the day. Criminal charges on the most spurious grounds are being brought against anyone who has spoken out against the actions of the regime.

While this continues, the Belarusian authorities continue to refuse to launch investigations into the thousands of allegations of torture and ill treatment in detention. And the disregard for the international community continues with the reported recent closure of the OHCHR office in Minsk.

It is therefore of great importance that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur is extended for another year, so that she is able to continue monitoring and reporting on the situation in the country.

We would also like to thank the EU for the inclusive and transparent negotiations held on this draft resolution, and for engaging constructively on the proposals put forward by other states.

The UK has co-sponsored this resolution. We urge all members of the Council to join us in supporting the resolution.

Thank you, Madam President.

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[UN Human Rights Council 47: UK statement for the introduction of the resolution on the Syrian Arab Republic](#)

The UK has the honour to present draft resolution L.6 on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey, the United States and, of course, the United Kingdom.

We do not present again a resolution on the human rights situation in Syria lightly. Indeed, it is with great sadness that we have to present a resolution at all. The crisis in Syria has now entered its second decade – ten years of violence, death, repression, violations, and abuses.

The Syrian regime has every ability to choose to end this conflict now by credibly engaging in the UN process under the auspices of the Special Envoy, but repeatedly ignores its moral obligations and fails to do so.

All the while, the human rights situation deteriorates. It is our duty to ensure that a spotlight remains on human rights in Syria. The Human Rights Council is the place to do this. Not to do so risks implying an improvement in the situation on the ground. This would be an abject failure of our responsibility to the Syrian people.

We have focused this short resolution on the issue of missing people, including those subject to enforced disappearance. This is an issue on which Syrian civil society organisations have worked tirelessly. It features heavily in the reporting of the Commission of Inquiry. It is simply inexcusable that, as we speak, tens of thousands of people remain forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. A regime that has the bureaucratic means to provide information on these disappeared individuals, the means to end the

suffering of the families and loved ones of these people. But it chooses not to employ those means. This, Madam President, is a deliberate act of unspeakable cruelty.

This resolution highlights the scale of this issue, and the impact not only on the victims, but on their loved ones, who have had to endure so many years of not knowing the fate of those who have disappeared. It also highlights the vital work of Syrian victim, family and survivor organisations, including the pressing need for urgent access to this information, and encourages the international community to coordinate further efforts on this issue.

We held two informal negotiations on this draft. I'd like to thank all those delegations and civil society colleagues who engaged constructively in this process.

Madam President, given the gravity of the situation, we hope this resolution will be adopted by consensus; however, if a vote is called, I urge all members of this Council to vote in favour. The Syrian people deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

PM statement on Overseas Development Aid motion: 13 July 2021

Mr Speaker,

I beg to move the motion standing in my name and the names of my RH Friends and I believe that on this vital subject, there is common ground between the Government and Hon Members on all sides of the House. We believe in the power of aid to transform millions of lives and that is why we continue to agree that the UK should dedicate 0.7 percent of our gross national income to official development assistance.

This is not an argument about principle: the only question is when we return to 0.7 percent and my purpose today is to describe how we propose to achieve this shared goal in an affordable way. And here we must face the harsh fact that the world is now enduring a catastrophe of a kind that happens only once a century.

This pandemic has cast our country into its deepest recession on record, paralysing our national life, threatening the survival of entire sectors of the economy, and causing my RH friend the Chancellor to find over £407 billion to safeguard jobs and livelihoods, and support businesses and public services across the United Kingdom.

He has managed that task with consummate skill and ingenuity, but everyone will accept that when you are suddenly compelled to spend £407 billion on sheltering our people from an economic hurricane, never experienced in living memory, there must inevitably be consequences for other areas of public spending. Last year, under the pressure of the emergency, our borrowing increased fivefold to almost £300 billion – more than 14 percent of GDP – the highest since the Second World War.

This year our national debt is climbing towards 100 percent of GDP, the highest for nearly six decades. The House knows that the Government has been compelled to take wrenching decisions and the International Development Act of 2015 expressly provides that “fiscal circumstances” can allow a departure from the 0.7 percent target, so one decision was temporarily to reduce our aid budget to 0.5 percent of national income.

In the teeth of this crisis, amid every other call on our resources, we can take pride that the UK will still invest at least £10 billion in aid this year, more – as a share of GDP – than Canada, Japan, Italy and the United States. And it would be a travesty if Hon Members were to give the impression that the UK is somehow retreating from the field of international development or lacking in global solidarity.

As I speak, this country is playing a vital role in the biggest and fastest global vaccination programme in history. We helped to create COVAX, the coalition to vaccinate the developing world, and we have invested over half a billion pounds in this crucial effort, which has so far distributed more than 100 million doses to 135 countries.

This Government’s agreement with Oxford University and AstraZeneca succeeded in producing the world’s most popular vaccine, with over 500 million doses released to the world – mainly to low and middle income countries saving lives every hour of every day. The UK’s expertise and resources have been central to the global response to this emergency, discovering both a vaccine and the first life-saving treatment for COVID.

We have secured agreement from our friends in the G7 to provide a billion vaccines to protect the world by the end of next year, of which 100 million will come from the UK. We are the third biggest sovereign donor to the World Health Organisation and the top donor to GAVI, which vaccinates children against killer diseases. We are devoting £11.6 billion – double our previous commitment – to help developing countries to deal with climate change, including by protecting their forests and introducing clean energy and I can tell the House that this vital investment will be protected.

And when it comes to addressing one of the world’s gravest injustices – the tragedy that millions of girls are denied the chance to go to school – the UK has pledged more than any other country – £430 million – to the Global Partnership for Education, in addition to the £400 million we will spend on girls education this year.

Later this month, I will co-host a summit of this Partnership in London, alongside the President of Kenya. And wherever civil wars are displacing

millions or threatening to inflict famine – in Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia and elsewhere –the UK is responding with over £900 million of help this year, making our country the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor in the world.

And it bears repeating that we are doing this in the midst of a terrible crisis, when our public finances are under greater strain than ever before in peacetime history, and every pound we spend on aid has to be borrowed and in fact represents not our money, but money that we are taking from future generations.

Last year, we dissolved the old divide between aid and diplomacy that once ran through the entire Whitehall machine by creating the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. And in doing so, my whole objective was to ensure that every diplomat in our service was actuated by the mission and vision of our development officials and that our aid was better in tune with our national values and our desire to be a force for good in the world.

So I can assure any Hon Member who wishes to make the case for aid that they are, when it comes to me or to anyone in this Government, preaching to the converted. And we shall act on that conviction by returning to 0.7 percent as soon as two vital tests have been satisfied.

First, that the UK is no longer borrowing to cover current or day-to-day expenditure, and second, that public debt, excluding the Bank of England, is falling as a share of GDP. The moment that the forecasts of the Office for Budget Responsibility show that both of those conditions will sustainably be met, then from the point at which they are met, we shall willingly restore our aid budget to 0.7 percent.

The Government will of course review the situation every year and place a statement before this House, in accordance with the International Development Act. But as we conduct that annual review, we will fervently wish to find that our conditions have been satisfied. This is one debate where the Government and Hon Members across the House share the same objective and the same fundamental convictions. We all believe in the principle that aid can transform lives and by voting for this motion, Hon Members will provide certainty for our aid budget and an affordable path back to 0.7 percent, while also allowing investment in other priorities, including the NHS, schools and the police.

As soon as circumstances allow and the tests are met, we will return to the target that unites us, and I beg to move this motion.

[Driver who rammed car into victim](#)

[jailed for longer](#)

News story

A man from Stourbridge has had his sentence increased following an intervention by the Solicitor General, the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP.



Akeel Aurangzab, 25, was charged with attempting to cause grievous bodily harm with intent after driving his car into his victim.

On 27 November 2019, Aurangzab began following the victim in his vehicle around Stourbridge. He waited for him to enter a narrow lane before ramming the victim with his car at a speed, the offender estimated, of 50mph. The victim's body smashed the windscreen and he was propelled several metres into the air before landing.

Aurangzab then fled the scene and burned his vehicle in an attempt to destroy the evidence.

On 14 May 2021, Aurangzab was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment at the Crown Court at Wolverhampton for attempting to cause grievous bodily harm with intent, assault occasioning actual bodily harm and dangerous driving.

Following the Court's decision, the Solicitor General referred Aurangzab's case to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme. On 13 July 2021, the Court found the sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 5 years.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

I welcome the decision of the Court of Appeal to increase this sentence. This was a premeditated attack by Aurangzab which had a serious impact on the victim. It was important that this harm was properly reflected in the sentence.

Published 13 July 2021