

UN Human Rights Council 47: Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

World news story

This statement was delivered during the Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.



The Human Rights Council takes place in Geneva.

Thank you Madam President,

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Working Group for the presentation of its report today, and the insights it provides on arbitrary detention relating to drug policies. We further recognise the volume of communications and requests for action handled by the Working Group.

Arbitrary detention is a hallmark of authoritarian regimes and its use is a tool of political intimidation. Arbitrary detention not only violates human rights, but also undermines the trust in institutions that keeps societies safe and open.

We know that persons in marginalised and vulnerable situations, as well as human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society activists are more often arbitrarily detained, and that persons who are arbitrarily detained are vulnerable to other human rights violations.

This year, the United Kingdom has supported the Canadian-led Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State to State relations, and we have committed to working with the G7 and with other likeminded partners to end the practice.

Members of the working group, what steps can states take to share good practice and work together to end the practice of arbitrary detention?

Published 2 July 2021

[PM call with Prime Minister of Estonia: 2 July 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas this morning.



The Prime Minister spoke to Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas this morning and reiterated the UK's commitment to deepening our bilateral partnership.

The leaders discussed collaboration on cyber and security issues, including the successful ongoing deployment of UK troops to Estonia as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence mission.

They also spoke about the shared global fight against COVID and progress on vaccinations.

The Prime Minister welcomed Estonia's action to date on tackling climate change and encouraged the Estonian Government to join the Powering Past Coal Alliance, to speed up the international transition to renewable energy.

He also invited Prime Minister Kallas to attend the Global Partnership for Education Summit in London later this month, and looked forward to welcoming her to COP26 in Glasgow in November.

Published 2 July 2021

[GFSL celebrates Hidden Heroes 2021](#)

Press release

This year, GFSL is proud to be fully supporting the #Hidden Heroes Day on 29 September 2021, to celebrate and pay tribute to the prison workforce.



Announcing its support of this year's #Hidden Heroes, CEO Paul Ryder said:

GFSL is fully committed to this campaign and to joining forces with HMPPS in a summer of activities in the lead up to 29 September. All of GFSL's 48 site teams are engaged – it's a timely opportunity for them to celebrate their dedication to providing a seamless service.

Alongside this, GFSL has embraced the [Butler Trust Annual Awards](#) by nominating those who have gone 'above and beyond' during one of the most challenging periods of history. Naturally, everyone is hoping to be shortlisted for one of the ten prestigious awards, which will be announced on 3 January 2022. The awards ceremony will take place in Spring 2021.

Meanwhile, a summer of charity challenge events will be held at all sites; co-ordinated by The Butler Trust in aid of Mental Health UK. Again, GFSL staff will be joining forces with their HMPPS colleagues and local communities to help raise funds for this great cause. It will also be a great opportunity to raise team spirits, not to mention a chance to showcase everyone's own hidden talents!

Butler Trust Director, Simon Shepherd, said:

We're very pleased to invite GFSL to be part of this year's Hidden Heroes celebrations. It's important that everyone who works in the prison environment feels valued for the important work they do in the justice sector. Even more so after one of the toughest 18 months which no one could have predicted.

About Hidden Heroes

Hidden Heroes is run by The Butler Trust on behalf of all those who work in prisons. They perform a critical but incredibly challenging public service – never more so than during the Covid-19 pandemic – yet because they work largely out of sight and literally, in the case of prisons and IRCs, behind closed doors, they can often feel forgotten, and the public they serve know little about them or what they do. The Patron of The Butler Trust is HRH The Princess Royal.

The #HiddenHeroes campaign helps to shine a light on the dedicated, and highly skilled, men and women who work in our criminal justice system, and to show them that while they may be hidden, they are not forgotten.

Published 2 July 2021

[Newcastle stalker jailed for longer](#)

A Newcastle stalker has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP.

Dipu Ahad, 41, abused his position of trust to stalk his victim over a period of several months in 2019.

The victim, who had been the victim of cyberstalking at the hands of her ex-husband, turned to Ahad for help, in his role as local councillor and friend. While Ahad pretended to help the victim, emailing the police regarding the investigation into her ex-husband, he stalked her in a way that would lead her ex-husband to be blamed.

The offender set up fake social media accounts in the name of the victim and contacted her friends, relatives, and colleagues. He also impersonated various officials with false claims including police and immigration officers when contacting her family members. On one occasion he defaced the victim's car with chalk paint.

Ahad pleaded guilty to one count of stalking involving serious alarm or distress. On 27 May, he was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Crown Court.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme by the Solicitor General, on 2 July the Court found the sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 2 years and 4 months' imprisonment.

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

“Dipu Ahad was trusted as a community figure and friend to the victim. Instead of supporting her he carried out a campaign of harassment while she was vulnerable. I welcome the increase to his sentence today and I hope that this brings the victim some comfort.”

Numbers on furlough halve in three months

- Latest government statistics show more than one million workers came off furlough in May alone
- Milestone moment as the lowest amount of people on furlough since the pandemic began
- Comes as scheme begins to wind down ahead of closure in September

More than one million workers came off furlough in the four weeks between the end of April and the end of May alone, which coincided with the start of restrictions being lifted and non-essential retail, restaurants and pubs reopening.

New figures published today show 2.4 million people moved off the scheme between the end of February and the end of May as businesses reopened.

2.4 million people remain furloughed or flexi-furloughed down from a peak of nearly 9 million at the height of the pandemic in May last year.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

Our Plan for Jobs has supported people’s jobs and livelihoods throughout the pandemic and it’s fantastic to see so many people coming off furlough and into their workplaces with our restaurants, pubs and shops reopened.

These figures show what we always hoped would happen – that the scheme is naturally winding down as the economy reopens, but continuing to support those businesses and employees that need our help.

Today’s ONS Business Impact of Covid-19 Survey show numbers may have fallen even further – with estimates that between 1.3 and 1.9 million people are still on furlough.

These figures reinforce other positive signs about how the recovery is progressing. The number of employees on payroll is at its highest level since last April, business and consumer confidence have improved significantly and economic growth is outperforming expectations.

The figures show the largest reduction in the hospitality, retail and accommodation sectors, with nearly 180,000 people in pubs, bars and clubs alone returning to work between April and May.

Furlough was extended until September to allow for businesses to adjust after the end of the Roadmap and to bring people back to work.

Now, as the economy begins to reopen and demand returns, employers are being asked to contribute more and from today, they will contribute 10% towards the cost of paying for unworked hours.

This employer contribution will increase to 20% in August and September, before the scheme closes, with the Plan for Jobs still in place to provide support, including traineeships and more work coaches to help people find jobs.

New statistics for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, also published today, show more than £25bn has been claimed to date in support for the self employed.

350,000 properties have paid no business rates for 15 months thanks to an unlimited rates relief between March 2020 and July 2021. Over 90% of businesses will now be able to benefit from a 66% reduction in business rates bills until March 2022.

Further information

- The latest HMRC statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme can be found [online](#)
- From July, employers are required to contribute 10 per cent of wages for hours not worked up to £312.50 per month. This is the same approach the Government successfully introduced last summer, where comparable restrictions were in place
- In August 2020, employers were required to pay employer NICs and make full pension contributions, and further employer contributions of 10 per cent and 20 per cent were introduced in September and October 2020 respectively. And as employees came off furlough, the vast majority returned to work
- The number of employments furloughed decreased by around 670,000 between May and June 2020; and fell from 6.8 million at 30 June 2020 to 2.4 million at 31 October 2020, as employer contributions were introduced

and the economy reopened

- It is therefore right to continue with the existing timetable to reintroduce employer contributions, in order to strike the right balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns
- Larger businesses required to close as at 5 January 2021 will be able to benefit from up to £2 million of relief, while those that were permitted to open on that date will be able to receive up to £105,000. Businesses will receive £6bn in relief in total in 2021-22. The Government has also decided to freeze the business rates multiplier in 2021-22, saving businesses in England an estimated £575m over the next five years