

# Russia's ongoing violations of human rights in illegally annexed Crimea, Ukraine: UK statement

Thank you Madam Chairperson. I'd like to thank the esteemed Ukrainian Ambassador for raising this important issue. The UK condemns the ongoing violation of human rights in illegally annexed Crimea and the persecution of Crimean Tatars in particular.

Tuesday 18 May marked the 77th anniversary of the Soviet Union's campaign to forcibly deport the entire Tatar population from their ancestral homeland of Crimea. Over 200,000 people were deported from the peninsular and more than 100,000 Crimean Tatars died due to starvation, mass diseases, abuse and hard labour. We remember the thousands of innocents who lost their lives and all those who endured great suffering as a result of this horrific action.

Sadly, the persecution of the Crimean Tatar community is not just a historical event. Today in illegally annexed Crimea, Crimean Tatars are systematically persecuted by the Russian de-facto authorities; subject to frequent intimidation, house raids, and arbitrary arrests. These are transparent attempts to suppress dissent to Russia's illegal annexation of the peninsular and it must stop.

Over the last two years, more than half of all politically motivated searches in Crimea took place in Crimean Tatar homes. 97 Crimean Tatars are currently facing politically motivated criminal prosecution and 80 are imprisoned with many held in Russian detention facilities, rendering access to their families and lawyers almost impossible.

Crimean Tatar activists are pursued on alleged terrorism and extremism charges, and forced to spend many years in prison due to these false accusations. This includes Enver Omerov, Ayder Dzhapparov, Riza Omerov, sentenced in January to 18, 17 and 13 years in prison respectively. We call on Russia to free all Ukrainian political prisoners now.

The Mejlis Council is an integral part of the Tatar identity and its banning is just another example of discrimination against Crimean Tatars. Crackdowns on the use and teaching of the Crimean Tatar language remain as Russia continues in its attempts to diminish Tatar heritage. We stand united with Ukraine in condemning unacceptable Russian aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as against the Ukrainian people.

We call on Russia to comply with the International Court of Justice Order requiring Russia to "refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis".

I take this opportunity to reiterate that the UK does not and will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Crimea is Ukraine. We remain resolute in our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters and highlight our support for the International Crimean Platform. We stand with Ukraine and with our international partners in calling on Russia to stop the persecution of Crimean Tatars and other violations of human rights in Crimea.

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## Carrier Strike Group sets sail for first operational deployment

Twenty warships, three submarines and 150 aircraft have taken part in a UK-led multinational military exercise to test the UK Carrier Strike Group's response to a range of crisis and conflict situations.

Designed to push the Carrier Strike Group to the limits and ensure its readiness for any situation during this year's seven-month global deployment, Exercise Strike Warrior 21 provided the largest and most demanding assessment it has so far faced.

Military assets from 10 different nations took part in the exercise off the coast of north west Scotland, which saw ships from a range of partner nations deploy a range of advanced threats against the group.

Our state-of-the-art F-35 fighter jets conducted missile firings during the exercise, marking the first time British jets have done so at sea for 15 years.

And following the exercise, the UK's two aircraft carriers – HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales – were able to meet each other at sea for the very first time.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK Carrier Strike Group is a great symbol of collaboration, both across the Armed Forces and our industry partners. Sailing together through a number of different environments, the partnership will uphold British values and international order.

By leading a large international exercise, practicing its wide range of capabilities, and demonstrating its formidable size, Strike Warrior 21 has proved that years of hard work, training and planning have paid off. The UK Carrier Strike Group is ready to

promote Global Britain and confront future security threats of the twenty-first century.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Exercise Strike Warrior has been a huge success and is a fine example of the crucial role Scotland plays in the defence and security of the United Kingdom and that of our NATO allies.

I commend those who took part in the exercise in the waters off north west Scotland and am fully confident their experiences will ensure that the Carrier Strike Group's seven month global deployment beginning this weekend will be a big success. I am proud that Scotland is at the forefront of flying the flag for Global Britain, with Rosyth assembled HMS Queen Elizabeth being a key part of the exercise and the Carrier Strike Group – as were submarines from Faslane, aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth, and many Scottish Armed Forces personnel.

Strike Warrior 21 saw the Carrier Strike Group pitted against warships from NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1 to prove it can undertake high-intensity operations in response to a broad range of crisis and conflict situations. Activities included live missile firings at sea, NATO integration training, Mine Counter Measures operations and submarine exercises.

Demonstrating the ability of the strike group to operate alongside NATO allies, Strike Warrior featured forces from Denmark, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the USA and one non-NATO country, Australia.

Strike Warrior 21 formed part of the wider military biannual exercise, Joint Warrior, where the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, British Army and UK Strategic Command – alongside NATO and Australian partners – conducted land, cyber and space exercises.

This was the final test of the Carrier Strike Group before it sets sail on a maiden operational deployment this weekend that will see it undertake engagements and exercises with more than one fifth of the world's nations.

Led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, the task group will interact with 40 nations across the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific including India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

As outlined in the recently-published Defence Command Paper, the MOD is committed and ready to confront future threats alongside international partners and help seize new opportunities for Global Britain.

### **CSG 21 ready to operate – from the skies to under the sea**

A highlight of the exercise included the first missile firings from a British

jet at sea for 15 years, conducted by the state-of-the-art F-35 stealth fighters.

In the tests off the west coast of Scotland, the F-35s launched from Queen Elizabeth's flight deck to intercept a Mirach target drone.

By successfully bringing down two "bogeys" – jet target drones – with air-to-air missiles, the pilots of 617 Squadron (aka The Dambusters) showed how they can protect HMS Queen Elizabeth from air attack during the deployment and demonstrated the potency of the fifth-generation strike fighter.

Elsewhere, Type 23 frigates HMS Kent and HMS Richmond conducted a stores transfer and other exercises with Royal Navy and Allied submarines.

Proving the ability of the strike group's differing units to work together seamlessly, HMS Kent and her Wildcat helicopter from Yeovilton-based 815 Naval Air Squadron transferred vital stores to the surfaced Astute class submarine.

Following the conclusion of Exercise Strike Warrior, the UK's two new Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales rendezvoused at sea for the first time as the former returned to Portsmouth.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, said:

Having previously commanded both HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, it was hugely exciting to be present as the two met at sea for the first time. I know that sense of pride and accomplishment is shared by thousands of others, military and civilian, who have contributed to the Royal Navy's carrier renaissance over the past decade or more.

The strategic significance is profound. Building one aircraft carrier is a sign of national ambition. But building two – and operating them simultaneously – is a sign of serious national intent. It means Britain has a continuous carrier strike capability, with one vessel always ready to respond to global events at short notice. Few other navies can do that. Britain is back in the front rank of maritime powers.

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## [Civil news: help us pay your high cost claims first time](#)

News story

Changes to the requirements for submitting your high cost claims will help to make sure claims are paid at the first time of submission.



As part of the Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) improvement of processes we're changing the way disbursements are handled on civil certificated claims and high cost claims.

### **What's happening?**

From 1 June, the LAA will require you to make sure disbursement vouchers are uploaded with any high cost claims to avoid being rejected.

Disbursement vouchers are always required with a civil claim and by making sure these are included it will help us to pay your claims at the first time of submission.

This will bring our requirements on Very High Cost Claims (VHCC) in line with other civil and family claims.

We will continue to review our internal processes to make sure we get it right first time as well as help you to receive payment.

### **Feedback**

If you believe we have rejected a civil claim incorrectly, you can tell us why through our Civil Claim Fix team.

The system also provides feedback to our caseworkers on decision making within the LAA.

### **Further information**

Email [LAACivilClaimFix@justice.gov.uk](mailto:LAACivilClaimFix@justice.gov.uk) to discuss a claim decision.

High Cost Billing: [Quick Guide \(justice.gov.uk\)](#) to submit a VHCC claim in CCMS.

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# The Great Outdoor Escape: popularity for fishing here to stay as public desire long-term connection with nature

New research reveals people have formed long-term plans to reconnect with nature through a surge in popularity for new hobbies such as fishing, gardening and birdwatching.

Post-lockdown attitudes have shown a newfound appreciation for incorporating nature into lifestyles and long-term hobbies with the average person planning to spend 14 hours outdoors during a typical week over the summer.

Coinciding with the soaring popularity for a long-term connection to nature, the Environment Agency has launched a campaign calling on all potential and seasoned anglers to see their licences as more than just a legal entitlement to fish. The campaign highlights that fishing is a licence to connect with nature, see friends, provide alternative entertainment to electronic devices and more.

## **Fishing gains appeal among women since the pandemic**

40% of women questioned believe it gives them the opportunity to reconnect with nature, 31% want to learn how to catch a fish as a new skill and 38% saying they would fish for relaxation, meditation or mindfulness.

As part of a new campaign, the Environment Agency has created a short documentary film interviewing a group of women who have taken up fishing and explores how the activity has given them a licence to do more than fish. The EA hopes this will highlight some of the unique stories of how fishing can be a beneficial activity for coping with the stresses of the last year, socialising and improving mental health.

## **Fishing boom delivers environmental benefits**

Last year, the Environment Agency sold 1,019,723 individual freshwater rod licences to adults living in England, compared to 882,989 in the previous year 2019/20, an increase of 16%. This boom in sales has allowed the Environment Agency to fund even more vital restoration work to protect fish stocks, increase biodiversity, create and restore over 3,000 hectares of wildlife habitat, and sustain a healthier water environment. Thanks to rod licence income, the Environment Agency and its partners improved over 1,700km of rivers between in 2019/20.

Almost 3 in 10 people who have found fishing more appealing since the

pandemic say it is because they have learnt about the environmental benefits that can be delivered as a result of purchasing a licence.

A year on from the first lockdown, the public are looking to explore nature in a more immersive and mindful way, with 38% reporting feeling happier and enjoying better wellbeing overall when spending time in green spaces. Of those planning on trying fishing this year, 40% people said they were looking for new ways to reconnect with nature locally going forward, with a further third (31%) stating the desire to pick up a new hobby.

**Heidi Stone, Fisheries Partnerships Manager at the Environment Agency said:**

Fishing has benefitted the mental health of hundreds of thousands of people in the past year and is a great option for people who are looking for a long-term connection with nature.

We want people to see a fishing licence as more than just your right to fish. It is a licence to have fun, de-stress and spend time with family and friends. With every additional licence, we can also reinvest even more into protecting our fisheries to ensure the public can continue to reap the benefits of being immersed in nature long into the future.

**Clive Copeland, Head of Participation at the Angling Trust said:**

It's great to see the surging popularity of fishing and other outdoor pursuits continuing as we head into summer with people becoming much more engaged with nature and the benefits that participating in new activities provides.

We're hearing reports that people are becoming more mindful of the environmental impact of outdoor activities and this, coupled with a willingness to try new experiences, is reflected in the types of sustainable activities that are becoming more popular. In fact, the Angling Trust is promoting hundreds of our free have-a-go fishing lessons this summer on our website.

This is fantastic news for angling. We're passionate about promoting the positive mental health benefits of fishing, and newcomers tell us that immersing themselves in going fishing is a great way to reconnect with nature.

**Fishing influencer Beverly Clifford said:**

Angling has seen a huge boost since the pandemic with people returning to fishing, and also coming into the sport for the first time. We've seen a lot of women coming into the sport during this time and enjoying the many benefits of angling, such as reconnecting

with nature, positive affect on mental health, as well as being a low impact form of exercise and a great way to make new friends.

For me I can enjoy going fishing on my own as a way to escape a busy hectic life and have time to relax and reflect. I also enjoy fishing with others, it a great way to catch up with friends while enjoying time outside, and trying to catch a carp or two.

GO Outdoors, the UK's largest outdoors retailer, was considered an 'essential retailer' during lockdown and has seen ongoing public appetite and increased demand for camping, cycling and fishing equipment throughout 2020 and into 2021.

**Jim McNamara, GO Outdoors Buying Director, said:**

We've seen increased demand both in-store and online for fishing, camping and cycling equipment since the pandemic and it's a trend we're expecting to continue.

Our customer footfall remained high, with GO Outdoors' in-store activity experts attributing the increased public appetite to customers wanting advice around trying something new, as well as a desire to view the equipment before purchasing.

Despite a general belief that fishing is a male dominant activity, it was also great that almost one in five (17%) of our customers over 2019 and 2020 were female. We hope to see female participation continue to rise, given the relaxing nature of the activity and how it allows us to really enjoy the freedom the outdoors brings.

The mental health and wellbeing benefits of pursuits such as fishing, have been shown to help in people's post-pandemic recovery by offering an escape from lockdown stresses and busy urban environments. The ongoing changes in social habits are backed up by new data. 26% of the public were recorded feeling an increased sense of freedom when in nature and almost half of people surveyed are enjoying more time outside for mental and physical health benefits.

Over half of respondents to the Angling Trust's survey who have newly taken up fishing and other outdoor hobbies, say they got started as a Covid-safe way of socialising with friends and family, with the research suggesting the new love of the great outdoors is here to stay.

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# Poverty charity 'intentionally abused for criminal purposes' by two of its trustees, investigation finds

[In a report published today](#), the regulator finds that two former trustees of Afghan Poverty Relief mismanaged the charity and stole hundreds of thousands of pounds intended for those the charity was established to help. They were ordered by the courts to repay over £400,000 to the charity.

The inquiry opened in 2011, following a referral from the Metropolitan Police, to investigate concerns about the charity's governance and management, and specifically to examine the charity's finances. The regulator was concerned about transactions between the two trustees and the charity and that it appeared the charity was being misused for personal gain.

During its investigation, the regulator analysed the charity's bank accounts, as well as personal and business accounts associated with two of the charity's former trustees. It found that during the 4 years to 2011, over £254k was withdrawn from the charity's accounts, and over £215k was paid into personal and business accounts linked to two of the charity's former trustees.

As part of its investigation, the Commission found that the charity's trustees failed to keep adequate records; it found, for example, that many of the receipts and records it scrutinised were undated, and that it was not possible to reconcile donations recorded as having been received by the charity with deposits into the charity's accounts.

One trustee was also found to have breached an order of the Commission, including not to accept donations from members of the public on behalf of the charity.

The Commission supported the Metropolitan Police's investigation and this information, alongside witness statements provided to the courts by Charity Commission officials, helped secure the conviction of the two trustees in 2014. One trustee was found guilty of theft and sentenced to 5 years; the other was found guilty of one count of theft and four counts of fraud and sentenced to 3 years in prison. As a result, both are disqualified from serving as charity trustees or from holding an office or employment in a charity with senior management functions.

In 2014, and following the former trustees' convictions, the Commission appointed an interim manager (IM) to identify the charity's assets and liabilities, represent the charity during confiscation proceedings brought by the police following the trustees' convictions and to determine the charity's future.

The IM has wound the charity up, transferring remaining assets to another

charity for the purposes of funding an orphanage in Ghazni, Afghanistan, which had previously been supported by the charity.

Tim Hopkins, Assistant Director of Investigations and Inquiries at the Charity Commission, said:

Charity represents the best of human characteristics – that’s why the behaviour and conduct of those involved in charities matters. This charity was set up to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people, including orphans in Afghanistan. Instead of ensuring donations received by the charity were applied for charitable purposes, two of its then trustees abused and exploited it for criminal purposes. In doing so, they committed criminal offences, breached charity law and exhibited behaviours which fell far below the legal and public expectations of how trustees should behave.

I am pleased that our investigation has helped bring those individuals to justice, and that, together with the Police and the interim manager, we have ensured significant sums, that would otherwise have been lost, were returned to charity”.

The Commission acknowledges the long-running nature of the inquiry. This results from complexities experienced by the IM in transferring the charity’s remaining assets, and then winding the charity up.

The full inquiry report is [available on gov.uk](#).

**Ends**

## **Notes to editors**

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.