

Coronavirus (COVID-19): reopening outdoor hospitality safely

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Averting further crisis in Yemen

Thank you, Mr President, and I join others in sending good wishes for the holy month of Ramadan.

As Yemen and the Muslim world celebrates the holy month of Ramadan, Yemen, as we've heard, is sadly experiencing the darkness. The darkness of a second COVID wave – with official case numbers doubling since the beginning of the year. Lack of testing means this is but the tip of the iceberg. The darkness, too, of imminent famine; its people can ill afford a renewed COVID crisis. And we note, too, the testimony of the Special Envoy of the particular experience of Yemeni women at this time and throughout the war. So we very much support the UN agencies' efforts to redouble their efforts to respond to COVID, and we encourage the Yemeni authorities to disclose data, implement suppression measures, and allow access for international staff and supplies.

The UK fully supports the work of Special Envoy Griffiths to secure a national ceasefire and a resumption of the political process for which he set out a very clear vision. The increased engagement from the US and from Oman in support of the UN process is important and welcomed. But despite increased dialogue, the Houthis have continued their offensive on Marib, displacing thousands and endangering civilians. Indeed, in the same week that Saudi Arabia publically reiterated its commitment to a peace deal, the Houthis launched a massive drone and missile attack on civilian targets in Saudi Arabia.

With the notable exception of Iran, the international community has welcomed the Saudi announcement and condemned the Houthi military escalations. We must be clear about who is frustrating UN efforts, and I encourage all parties to engage constructively, and without preconditions, with the UN proposals.

The UK welcomes the recent release of further fuel ships into Hodeidah. However, as we've heard, this equates to only around 30% of the fuel that the

port would have expected to receive since the beginning of the year. We strongly urge the Government of Yemen to immediately release all remaining fuel ships and for all parties to work constructively with the Special Envoy towards a sustainable solution. Severe fuel shortages continue to threaten food distribution to millions of Yemenis over the coming months at a time when 16 million risk starvation. And so the UK calls on the Houthis to ensure that any fuel that arrives is distributed transparently and not used to fund their escalation of the conflict.

Finally, the SAFER oil tanker continues to pose a grave risk to Yemen and to the Red Sea. The Suez Canal incident only highlights how fragile maritime routes are, and we welcome Undersecretary-General Lowcock's recent update. While there were constructive UN-Houthi discussions last week, the Houthis have not yet agreed to facilitate the UN assessment mission. The vessel is under Houthi control and the responsibility for this matter rests on Houthi shoulders. If the Houthis fail to act on their stated desire to avert this crisis, then we will look to the Security Council to discuss further what steps we can take.

Media freedom in Myanmar: Media Freedom Coalition statement

Media Freedom Coalition members' statement on media freedom in Myanmar:

The undersigned members of the Media Freedom Coalition express their deep concern with the continued efforts by Myanmar's military and police to crack down on media freedom.

Media freedom is a cornerstone of democratic societies. It is essential to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Access to information is vital and journalists must be free to report on the developments in the country, including the protests, without fear of reprisal or intimidation. Independent reporting is all the more important in the current context, helping to counter the disinformation campaigns in Myanmar, both online and offline, and to provide the public with factual accounts of events taking place in the country. The importance of the work of journalists, particularly in remote areas, cannot be underestimated.

Since the military coup on February 1, 2021, attacks against media professionals by the security forces and their offices have increased significantly. At least 60 journalists have reportedly been detained and some of these now also face charges. The military has revoked the licences of five news organizations, suspended

access to local and international news networks, and imposed draconian measures that repress free speech and the diffusion of reliable and verified information. Internet shutdowns have also been used to restrict news coverage, communications and access to information.

We strongly condemn the military coup and the ongoing violence and call for the restoration of Myanmar's democratically elected government and parliamentary assemblies elected in November 2020.

We call on the military to immediately and unconditionally cease attacks on, and intimidation and harassment of, journalists and media workers, and to release all those who have been arbitrarily detained.

We call for the perpetrators of violations and abuses, including attacks on journalists and media workers, to be held accountable.

We demand that the military respect the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, refrain from the use of force, and respect the media's freedom to report protests independently, safely and without fear of violence or arbitrary detention.

We call for the end of all Internet restrictions in Myanmar that suppress media freedom and violate the right to freedom of expression, including freedom to seek, receive, and impart information.

Signed:

Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.

Our licensing and Post Office services will not be working this Saturday (17 April) or next Saturday (24 April)

News story

Our licensing system will not be available between 08:00 and 16:30 this Saturday (17 April) or next Saturday (24 April).



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[Recent developments in Belarus: UK statement, 16 April 2021](#)

Madam Chair,

It is with disappointment and concern that we learn of further restrictions on freedom of expression, of peaceful assembly, and freedom of the media in Belarus. There are worrying reports of amendments to a number of Belarusian laws, currently being considered in Parliament, which, if passed, will further restrict basic rights and fundamental freedoms that should be afforded to everyone. Like our EU colleagues, we also remain concerned at the treatment of the Polish community in Belarus.

According to reports by Belarusian NGO's, since last August's election more than 35,000 people have been detained, and more than 2,300 criminal charges have been brought against those who have called for greater democracy for Belarus. In his statement of 6 April, ODIHR's Director, Mr Matteo Mecacci, expressed his concern over the excessive use of force and unjustified and

disproportionate penalties. We share his concerns and echo the call for all those arbitrarily detained to be released.

The UK remains steadfast in its solidarity with those working for a more democratic future for Belarus. Our support for the International Accountability Platform for Belarus, along with the recent UN Human Rights Council resolution, which mandated the UN's Office for the High Commission for Human Rights to launch their own investigative mechanism into human rights violations, will help ensure those responsible for human rights violations will be held to account.

Unfortunately, the Belarusian regime continues to exert pressure on those who oppose it, or call for greater freedom. It continues to ignore calls for dialogue with members of the opposition. Instead, by adding further names, including that of Presidential candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, to their list of supposed terrorists they are limiting the prospects of constructive engagement. We continue to support the offer of the current and previous OSCE Chairpersons-in-Office to facilitate a genuine national dialogue and urge the Belarusian authorities to take up this offer. Engaging in meaningful dialogue, which takes into account the views of the Belarusian people, is the only way to resolve the political crisis.

Once again, we remind the Belarusian authorities of the OSCE commitments which they have freely signed up to and urge them to take forward the 82 recommendations in [Professor Benedek's report](#), including new Presidential elections, an immediate end to the violence, the release of all those illegally detained, an independent oversight mechanism on detention conditions, and an investigation into all allegations of torture.

Thank you Madam Chair