

Marking the tenth anniversary of the Syrian conflict

Thank you, Madam President. And I'd like to start by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Monsieur Bernard Duhaime for their briefings.

Ten years ago, Syrians took to the streets to peacefully call for an end to regime oppression, torture and corruption. Assad and his regime answered those calls with brutal violence, chemical weapons, and starvation.

The latest Commission of Inquiry report highlights the horrific scale of atrocities, and the tragic suffering of Syrian people in the past decade. Over half a million Syrians have lost their lives. Tens of thousands more have been forcibly detained, tortured or 'disappeared'. Over 12 million refugees cannot return home without fear of further violence or arbitrary arrest and torture. As we've heard from the Special Envoy and the Secretary-General, this is a living nightmare.

This grim ten-year milestone is a reminder that we, the United Kingdom and the wider international community, should do all in our power to strengthen accountability for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes in Syria.

We continue to support the Syrian people and international efforts to assist victims of human rights abuses and violations and are pleased to be finalising an agreement with the IIIM to support this.

The UK's autonomous Syria sanctions regime has designated over 350 individuals and entities responsible for repressing civilians in Syria, or enabling the Assad regime to keep doing so. Today the UK has announced further sanctions against six individuals that fall into this category. These sanctions send a clear message to the Assad regime and its backers: we will not stand by while you continue to commit heinous crimes against the Syrian people.

Meaningful progress on detainees and missing persons is a central element of Security Council resolution 2254 which could build confidence towards a political process. As a starting point, the Syrian authorities should provide comprehensive lists of the names of all detainees, clarifying the whereabouts of people who have never emerged from arbitrary detention. The UK continues to support the International Commission on Missing Persons' work with Syrian families of the missing to secure their rights to justice, truth and reparations, as well as ICMP's critical work to build an impartial database of all those who have gone missing, regardless of their origin, role in the conflict, or the circumstances of their disappearance.

The UK reiterates its unwavering support to Mr Pedersen and calls once again on the regime and its backers to engage seriously with the political process outlined in resolution 2254.

Though the situation is desperate, the people of Syria have shown incredible resilience and hope, for the future lies with them. The UK stands with the Syrian people to deliver all the steps enshrined in resolution 2254: a nationwide ceasefire; unhindered aid access; the release of those arbitrarily detained; conditions for safe refugee return; and free and fair elections pursuant to a new constitution – all of which represent the only way out of this conflict. Like you, Madam President, we hope that the eleventh anniversary of this conflict will not pass the same way as the tenth.

Thank you, Madam President.

Joint statement on the 10th anniversary of the Syrian uprising

The following statement was released by United States Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio and UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of the Syrian uprising:

Today marks ten years since the Syrian people peacefully took to the streets calling for reform. The Assad regime's response has been one of appalling violence. President Assad and his backers bear responsibility for the years of war and human suffering that followed. We praise the brave individuals and organisations who over the last ten years have exposed the truth from Syria, documented and pursued abuses, mass atrocities and grave violations of international law to hold the perpetrators accountable and delivered vital assistance to communities. That work remains essential.

After years of conflict, widespread corruption, and economic mismanagement, the Syrian economy is broken. More than half of the population, nearly 13 million Syrians depend upon humanitarian assistance. The millions of Syrian refugees, hosted generously by Syria's neighbours, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt as well as those internally displaced cannot yet return home without fear of violence, arbitrary arrest, and torture. Continued conflict has also led to space for terrorists, particularly Daesh, to exploit. Preventing Daesh's resurgence remains a priority.

It is imperative the regime and its supporters engage seriously in the political process and allow humanitarian assistance to reach communities in need. The proposed Syrian Presidential election this year will neither be free nor fair, nor should it lead to any measure of international normalization with the Syrian regime. Any political process needs the participation of all Syrians, including the diaspora and the displaced, to enable all voices to be heard.

We, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, will not abandon the Syrian people. Our nations commit to reinvigorating the pursuit of a peaceful solution which protects the rights and future prosperity of all Syrians, based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Impunity is unacceptable and we will firmly continue to press for accountability for the most serious crimes. We will continue to support the important role of the Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. We welcome the ongoing efforts by national courts to investigate and prosecute crimes within their jurisdiction committed in Syria. We will not tolerate Syria's non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and fully support the work of the OPCW in this regard. We will continue to strongly call for a nationwide ceasefire, unhindered aid access through all possible routes to those in need, including through the renewal of UN Security Council Resolution 2533 and the cross-border mechanism by the UN Security Council, as well as the release of those arbitrarily detained, and free and fair elections under UN auspices with all Syrians participating, including members of the diaspora.

To that end we reiterate our firm support for UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen's efforts to deliver all aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 as the only way to resolve this conflict. Clear progress towards an inclusive political process and an end to the repression of the Syrian people is essential. We cannot allow this tragedy to last another decade.

[More countries added to red list to protect UK vaccination programme against variants of concern](#)

- travel bans implemented for visitors from Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia and Qatar from 4am Friday 19 March 2021
- British, Irish and third-country nationals with residence rights (including long-term visa holders) arriving from these countries will be required to quarantine in a government-approved hotel quarantine facility for 10 days
- move follows new data showing an increased risk of importation of variants of concern

Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia and Qatar have been added to [England's red list](#) to protect the country against new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19), at a critical time for the vaccine programme.

With over 24 million vaccinations delivered in the UK so far, the move will help to reduce the risk of new variants – such as those first identified in

South Africa and Brazil – entering England.

From 4am on Friday 19 March 2021, visitors who have departed from or transited through these countries in the previous 10 days will be refused entry into England. Only British and Irish citizens, or those with residence rights (including long-term visa holders), will be allowed to enter and must [stay in a government-approved facility for 10 days](#).

During their stay, they will be required to [take a coronavirus test on day 2 and day 8](#).

A ban on commercial and private planes travelling from Oman, Ethiopia and Qatar will also come into force on Friday to reduce the risk of importing variants of concern. This excludes cargo and freight without passengers.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of the spread of variants of concern internationally. These risk assessments cover a range of factors for each country including:

- assessment of surveillance and sequencing capability
- available surveillance and genome sequencing data
- evidence of in-country community transmission of COVID-19 variants
- evidence of exportation of new variants to the UK or other countries
- travel connectivity with the UK

The government has made it consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus and has taken the decision to add these destinations to the red list.

Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) and Mauritius will be removed from England's red list. The flight and maritime ban from Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) will also be removed, following evidence that shows the risk of importing a variant of concern from these destinations has reduced. Portugal has put steps in place to mitigate the risk from its links with countries where variants have become a concern, and now has genomic surveillance in place.

This means that passengers arriving into England from these destinations will no longer be required to quarantine in a government approved facility. However, they must [self-isolate for 10 days](#) on arrival to the UK at home and take a COVID-19 test on day 2 and day 8 and will be able to end self-isolation early through [Test to Release](#). Passengers from these destinations who arrived before 4am on Friday 19 March must stay in their hotel for the remainder of their 10-day quarantine period.

The government continues to work with the hospitality sector to ensure it is ready to meet any increased demand – with over 58,000 rooms on standby, which can be made available to book as needed.

British nationals currently in the countries on the red list should make use of the commercial options available if they wish to return to England. Commercial routes that will enable British and Irish nationals and residents to return to England continue to operate.

British nationals in these countries should check Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) [travel advice](#) and follow local guidance. The FCDO will continue to offer tailored consular assistance to British nationals in country in need of support overseas on a 24/7 basis.

Government asks for views on Covid-19 certification

The Government is seeking views on the role of Covid-status certification in the UK's recovery from the pandemic, particularly from organisations and individuals with relevant expertise as well as those it would impact.

As set out last month in the Prime Minister's Covid-19 Roadmap, the Government is looking at whether certification could help to reopen the economy, reduce restrictions on social contact and improve safety.

Covid-19 status certification involves using testing or vaccination data to confirm in different settings that people have a lower risk of transmitting Covid-19 to others.

The review – which is being led by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – is considering the ethical, equalities, privacy, legal and operational aspects of a possible certification scheme, and what limits, if any, should be placed on organisations using certification.

The Government has today published a [call for evidence](#) to ensure that the review considers a broad range of interests and concerns.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove said:

This review into Covid-status certification is an important part of our plan to help reopen the country and return to normal. However, we recognise that there are complex issues of ethics, privacy and inclusion that need to be fully considered. That is why I want to get as many views as possible on Covid-status certification and its potential implications to help inform the review.

The Government has committed to concluding its review into Covid-status certification ahead of Step Four of the four-stage lockdown easing plan, which will happen no earlier than 21 June.

The Government has also today published the [Terms of Reference](#) for the Covid-status certification review. The Terms of Reference document will set out, in broad terms, the objectives and scope of the review, and also the timetable for reporting.

Surge testing to be deployed in targeted areas in Harrow and Southwark

Press release

Further targeted areas will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the potential spread of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa.



Working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to a highly targeted area within Southwark (SE5) and in parts of Harrow (HA2 and HA3), where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

The increased testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing and, in combination with the public following current lockdown rules and Hands Face Space advice, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help increase our understanding of COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

Enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern. This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period in order to determine the route of transmission.

People living within the targeted areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone so they can get tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to them at home.

Those without symptoms should visit the [local authority website](#) for more information.

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