

Coronavirus preparedness in prisons

In March the government introduced temporary restrictions in prisons to prevent the virus taking hold – a decision that has saved the lives of staff, prisoners and children in custody, and protected the NHS.

These measures, backed by Public Health England, included:

- Putting in place an effective system in all prisons and youth custody establishments to limit the spread of the disease – meaning they now have distinct areas where vulnerable prisoners can shield, the symptomatic can isolate, and new arrivals can quarantine
- Creating an additional 1,200 temporary cells so people are better able to social distance and we can limit the spread of infection
- Making important adjustments to prison life – including placing prisoners in social ‘bubbles’ so they could safely spend more time out of their cells for vital education and work, introducing video calls with family and friends, and exercise.

In April, Public Health England endorsed this approach as being effective in limiting the spread of the virus, and ultimately in saving lives.

With new national restrictions in force, we are further bolstering our defences to reduce the risk of transmission.

These actions include:

- Introducing routine testing of frontline staff and prisoners who arrive from court or transfer from other jails to catch infections earlier, and hugely improve our ability to identify, contain and limit outbreaks where they occur.
- Making more Personal Protective Equipment available to staff who come into close contact with offenders, so they can protect themselves and the offenders in their care.
- Temporarily stopping social visits for adult prisoners in England in line with the new national restrictions. However, visits for compassionate reasons, visits to children in custody and official or legal visits will continue.

Prisoners will still be able to see friends and family via secure video calls, with this game-changing technology now in place at over 100 jails. Staff are also helping offenders to keep in touch through phone calls, with more than 1,200 mobile handsets distributed as well as extra phone credit.

Staff will continue to support prisoners with vital rehabilitation work, such as access to education and exercise as they have throughout the pandemic. Face-to-face education for children in custody will also continue, as it will for children around the country.

Prisons Minister, Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

The decisive action and tough decisions we took in March have undoubtedly limited the spread of the virus in our prisons and saved lives.

This is in no small part due to the tireless work of our dedicated officers working closely with outstanding NHS staff and public health experts.

Now, as the government takes further action to control the rapid spread of the virus, we too must take further steps in prisons and temporarily suspend social visits.

Our priority is to limit the spread of the virus and to protect the lives and wellbeing of those who live and work in our prisons and in youth custody.

The significant challenge continues but we now have more tools at our disposal – we have learned lessons and taken every opportunity to refine our strategy -and will continue to do so.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service national frameworks can be read on GOV.UK:

[International day to end impunity for crimes against journalists: joint statement](#)

Mr Chair,

I make this statement on behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists, namely Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Our Vienna-based Group has joined with similar Groups of Friends in UNESCO, the United Nations and Council of Europe in Paris, New York, Geneva and Strasbourg to issue a Joint Statement on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI) on 2 November.

We welcome the focus given to the Safety of Journalists across international organisations, including the OSCE. Our collective decision adopted in Milan in 2018 on Safety of Journalists was correctly hailed as a pioneering

decision. It recognized that for freedom of expression and media freedom, the ability of journalists to carry out their work under safe conditions, without fear of being subjected to repression, abuse and violence is of crucial importance.

In that Decision, we called on participating States to:

Take effective measures to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists, by ensuring accountability as a key element in preventing future attacks, including by ensuring that law enforcement agencies carry out swift, effective and impartial investigations into acts of violence and threats against journalists, in order to bring all those responsible to justice, and ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies.

However, despite our commitments to fight impunity, too few investigations into crimes committed against journalists and other media actors in the OSCE region currently lead to accountability for those responsible. The Moscow Mechanism Report, released today, is full of examples of reported human rights violations and abuses committed against journalists, media actors and free media that have gone uninvestigated.

Mr Chair, The impact of such failure to ensure accountability cannot be overlooked. The prevailing impunity results in a wider impact on media freedom where a climate of fear, intimidation and violence that can lead to self-censorship and enables further crimes against journalists, media actors and repression of the free media as a whole. The growing threat to the safety of journalists and other media actors and lack of accountability for crimes against journalists and media actors is felt more than ever.

Across the OSCE region incidents of intimidation of journalists and other media continue to multiply, and journalists continue to be subjected to violence and intimidation – from destruction of property to physical attacks and threats to themselves or their families. Many recent statements and reports to the Permanent Council have also noted alarming increase in incidents of detentions of journalists and media actors even when they are clearly identified as media representatives, as well as unreasonable restrictions on media accreditation and restrictions to Internet access.

Mr Chair,

The safety of women journalists continues to be a particular concern. Video testimony from women journalists from the OSCE region, produced by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) as part of their cooperation with the International Press Institute (IPI), are a reminder of the seriousness of the threats posed to women journalists. We commend the RFoM for its work in this area, and welcome the launch of the RFoM's Safety of Female Journalists Online Resource Guide, which coincided with this year's International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. It is another example of the excellent work of the Office of the RFoM in promoting

the safety of journalists in the OSCE region.

Mr Chair,

This organisation has played an important role in promoting commitments on media freedom and the safety of journalists. Whilst we should be proud of those achievements, we as participating States have a lot more to do in implementing what we have freely committed to by signing up to the Ministerial Council Decision in 2018.

It should be done not only by improving the investigation into acts of violence and threats against journalists and other media actors, in order to bring all those responsible to justice. We have also taken up the commitment to “condemn publicly and unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists”, “to immediate[ly] and unconditional[ly] release all journalists who have been arbitrarily arrested or detained, taken hostage or who have become victims of enforced disappearance”.

As participating States we have also committed to “encourage <...> law enforcement agencies to engage in awareness-raising and training activities related to the need to ensure safety of journalists “, as well as to “establish or strengthen, where possible, national data collection, analysis and reporting on attacks and violence against journalists”.

Mr Chair,

On the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists we call on all participating States to close the gap between existing commitments and national actions.

We have made clear on numerous occasions, both as a Group and as individual participating States, the importance of a free and independent media environment for a democratic and open society, accountable systems of government and the safeguard of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

Independent free media have an essential role to play in providing the public with accurate and candid information in situations of crisis, such as we face today with the coronavirus pandemic. We all should be reminded that by ending impunity and doing the utmost to protect journalists and other media actors we would safeguard one of the main cornerstones of the OSCE’s vision of comprehensive security.

[Transport secretary statement on](#)

Denmark

News story

From 4am Friday 6 November, people arriving in the UK from Denmark will need to self-isolate.



I have taken the swift decision to urgently remove Denmark from the government's [travel corridor list](#) as a precautionary measure given recent developments

Passengers arriving into the UK from Denmark from 4am on Friday 6 November 2020 (today) will need to [self-isolate](#) for 14 days by law before following [domestic restrictions](#) now in force.

I understand that this will be concerning for both people currently in Denmark and the wider UK public, which is why we have moved quickly to protect our country and prevent the spread of the virus to the UK.

Health authorities in Denmark have reported widespread outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in mink farms, with a variant strain of the virus spreading to some local communities. The Chief Medical Officer has therefore recommended that, as precautionary measure, all those returning from Denmark should self-isolate for 14 days.

People currently in [Denmark](#) may finish their trip, follow the local rules and check the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) travel advice pages on GOV.UK for further information.

While new lockdown rules mean leaving home in order to travel for holidays is no longer permitted, the government's travel corridor policy remains a critical part of the government's COVID-19 response as it mitigates the risk of importing infections from abroad.

[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 22\) Regulations 2020](#) (PDF, 391KB, 2 pages)

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Syria's failure to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention

Thank you very much Madame President. Let me congratulate you on taking up your position. It is good to have a fellow Commonwealth member in the chair.

May I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing and thank through you the OPCW Director-General for his 85th monthly report and the OPCW Technical Secretariat for its ongoing work implementing professionally and dispassionately the tasks assigned to it by the OPCW Executive Council and Conference of States Parties.

On 8 April 2020, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team issued its first report. In that report, it found the Syrian Arab Air Force responsible for three chemical attacks in Ltamenah in 2017 in which it used chlorine and sarin. These findings brought the number of chemical weapons attacks for which the UN and OPCW has found the Syrian regime responsible to seven. It was yet further evidence that Syria had retained a chemical weapons stockpile beyond the agreed date of destruction, as well as the intent and ability to produce and use them. It was yet further evidence that Syria's initial declaration was incomplete and a reminder of the real threat that this posed to Syrians and to the international non-proliferation regime.

In response, in a decision on 9 July 2020, the OPCW Executive Council requested that the Syrian authorities declare the facilities used for the Ltamenah attacks, declare the chemical weapons it currently possessed and to resolve the outstanding issues with its initial declaration. On top of the 6 years Syria has already had to do this, the Executive Council granted an additional 90 days.

It is with great regret that, as confirmed by the OPCW Director-General on 14 October, Syria failed to take the required steps. It is with further regret that that the Syrian regime did not even see fit to respond to the Director-General's letter notifying it of the action Syria been requested to take.

We strongly condemn the failure of Syria to comply with yet another Executive Council Decision. As recommended in that decision, the OPCW Conference of States Parties should now take appropriate action to address Syria's failure to comply with decisions of the Executive Council and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

That failure to comply with the 9 July decision represents yet another failure to comply with the fundamental terms of resolution 2118, the issue before the Council today. In that resolution, we decided that in the event of non-compliance, including the use of chemical weapons, we would impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter. For the Security Council not to take action would be a dereliction of its duty and undermines its authority.

It is incumbent on all of us to uphold the Security Council's authority under the UN Charter. Syria's continued non-compliance is a proven threat to international peace and security.

Turning to the Director-General's monthly report, I want to welcome the ongoing tireless work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, particularly in light of the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the work of the DAT, we welcome that the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) was able to travel to Syria at the end of September for further consultations and to resolve issues with samples collected in a previous deployment. Regarding the additional information and amendments to Syria's declaration referenced in last month's report, we understand that these are still undergoing assessment by the OPCW. We will wait for further reporting from the OPCW before welcoming any progress.

As the monthly report states, Syria's declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Executive Council decisions, and with resolution 2118. Further amendments to the Declaration are yet more evidence that the initial declaration was incomplete. I would like to stress once again, Syria needs to cooperate fully with the OPCW and make progress on all of outstanding issues.

I would like if I might to touch on some points raised by the Russian Ambassador. We in the UK are gravely concerned by the poisoning of Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny with a nerve agent from the Novichok group. I'll just remind colleagues on the Council that a similar chemical weapon, was used by in Salisbury, UK, resulting in death and severe injury. It is unacceptable that these weapons have been retained and even worse that they have been used. Under the Chemical Weapons Convention, any poisoning of an individual through the use of a nerve agent is considered a use of chemical weapons. And as the Council reaffirmed last November in a Presidential Statement, any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstance is unacceptable and is a threat to international peace and security and those responsible must be held to account. Russia must urgently conduct a full and transparent investigation into the use of a banned chemical weapon on its territory. We must not allow this behaviour to become normalised. Russia must fully cooperate with relevant institutions, including the UNSC.

I am afraid, Madam President, that it is not difficult to understand Russia's motives for constantly attacking and seeking to undermine the OPCW.

[Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised](#)

Committee 05 November 2020

Press release

UK statement following the fourth meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee between the UK Government and European Commission.



The fourth meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee was held today via video conference and co-chaired by officials from the UK Government and the European Commission.

A representative from the Northern Ireland Executive also attended as part of the UK delegation in line with the commitment made in the New Decade, New Approach deal.

The UK and the EU exchanged updates on the implementation of the Protocol. The Committee noted that an agreed approach had been reached on a phased process for implementing medicines regulation in Northern Ireland up to 31 December 2021, providing the additional time needed for businesses to prepare in relation to batch testing, importation and Falsified Medicines Directive requirements. Agreement has also been reached on the process for identifying Northern Ireland traders for VAT purposes and enabling them to reclaim VAT through existing IT databases when trading in goods with the EU; for transit procedures to be available in Northern Ireland and operate consistently with the Common Transit Convention; and on the elements of the Electricity Directive that will not apply in Northern Ireland.

The UK plans to set out guidance to businesses on these issues where relevant shortly.

The UK also noted the importance of agreed arrangements respecting Northern Ireland's place in the UK's customs territory and internal market, and supporting the smooth flow of trade. In this context, there remain significant outstanding issues to be resolved on the practical solutions necessary for trusted traders such as supermarkets, and on how to classify which goods are at a genuine and substantial risk of entering the EU market.

The parties agreed to an intensified process of engagement to resolve all

outstanding issues.

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