

Attacks on freedom of opinion and expression and media freedom in Belarus: UK statement

Mr Chair,

On 3 September, I delivered a UK-Canada joint statement expressing concerns about media freedom in Belarus. In that and subsequent statements, the United Kingdom highlighted the credible reports of violence against journalists, the actions by the Belarusian authorities to hinder journalists and the blocking of the internet. Unfortunately, five weeks after our 3 September statement, we continue to have serious concerns about the situation in Belarus.

There is evidence that the Belarusian authorities are deliberately targeting independent journalists and media organisations. Last month 60 journalists were detained and fined for the alleged illegal production and distribution of media products, and for participating in unsanctioned protests, despite being identifiable by their media vests and accreditation.

On 1 October, the Belarusian Ministry of Information suspended the status of Tut.by, one of the oldest independent media outlets in Belarus. Launched on 5 October 2000, the award winning Tut.by celebrated its 20th anniversary this week and is the most popular news portal in Belarus. The suspension prevents Tut.by from deploying journalists across Belarus and exposes their staff to criminal and administrative prosecution for working without accreditation.

On 5 October, the Belarusian authorities revoked the accreditation of all foreign media and introduced new and excessively bureaucratic processes of reaccreditation. We ask the Belarusian Delegation to explain how the new procedures will be conducted in a transparent manner and will not penalise and discriminate against foreign media outlets which have published articles critical of actions taken by the Belarusian authorities.

Mr Chair

The UK remains extremely concerned by the growing frequency of attempts to deter, control and censor independent media through the use of arbitrary detentions and arrests, internet shutdowns and restricted practice towards accreditation. We call upon Belarus to meet its international commitments to uphold freedom of expression, including a free and independent media.

Mr Chair

Last week, the delegation of Belarus claimed that they had responded to all the concerns that have been previously raised by delegations. As the examples cited in my statement demonstrate, that cannot be correct. Previous responses cannot cover what is an ongoing threat to the freedom of the media in Belarus.

We have all freely signed up to our OSCE commitments, including on freedom of the media. We repeat our call on the Belarusian authorities to respond fully to our ongoing concerns, and to meet their OSCE commitments.

Thank you

Fraudulent calls alert

News story

The Attorney General's Office public enquiry number is being used fraudulently to target members of the public.



We have been made aware that some Attorney General's Office (AGO) phone numbers, including the public enquiry number (020 7271 2492) are being used by fraudsters to try and extract money from members of the public.

In most of the reported cases, the fraudsters claim they are calling from the AGO or HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), with the AGO public enquiry number showing in the caller ID. The callers have asked members of the public to pay a certain amount of money to either drop criminal charges or pay outstanding tax. The calls are NOT being made by the AGO or HMRC.

The AGO will never call you and ask you for your bank details or to pay us money over the phone.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from the AGO and asking for money, we ask you to hang up and report full details of the scam by email to: phishing@hmrc.gov.uk

Please include the following information which will help with the investigation:

- date of the call
- phone number used
- content of the call

If you've been a victim of a scam and suffered financial loss, report it to [Action Fraud](#)

Please also forward suspicious emails claiming to be from HMRC to phishing@hmrc.gov.uk and texts to 60599.

We have reported the scam to HMRC's Cyber Operations team, which works with the telecoms providers to close down numbers used in scams such as this one, and to block some of the most credible numbers from being spoofed.

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[Next steps for future tri-service recruiting programme revealed](#)

News story

The Armed Forces Recruiting Programme is engaging suppliers for a new recruitment model.



The Ministry of Defence has set out next steps in delivering a tri-service recruitment model for the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force.

The new model, which will be in place from 2024, will help ensure that the quantity and quality of candidates meet the needs of all three services, while providing a clearer route for people looking to join the armed forces.

From today, the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme (AFRP) will begin engaging suppliers as part of work to develop the recruitment model and raise the programme's profile across relevant industries.

The market engagement exercise will be followed by a market interest day, hosted virtually, to provide a forum for discussion.

A formal procurement process will take place later this year.

The AFRP is in the early stages, but the MOD is committed to implementing a more efficient system that will deliver value for money across all the armed forces, who recruit more than 20,000 personnel a year.

With such high numbers seeking to join, it is vital that defence continues to develop a world-class recruiting experience which inspires and motivates new talent, while meeting the needs of the single services and wider defence.

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[PM meeting with President Zelenskyy: 8 October 2020](#)



The Prime Minister met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Downing Street this morning ahead of signing the UK-Ukraine Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement.

The leaders welcomed the new Agreement, which lays the foundation for an intensified bilateral relationship in areas including trade, defence and political cooperation.

On trade, the Prime Minister and President expressed their shared wish to increase trade and investment between the UK and Ukraine. The Prime Minister stressed that reform and rule of law drive economic growth, and reiterated the UK's commitment to Ukraine's reform programme.

On defence, the Prime Minister welcomed NATO's recent decision to grant Ukraine Enhanced Opportunities Partner status. He offered the UK's support to Ukraine as they make progress on defence and security reforms.

The two leaders discussed the importance of working together to counter Russia's malign influence, both in Ukraine and in the wider region. They also expressed their shared concern about the situation in Belarus. The Prime

Minister outlined the steps the UK has taken in response to human rights abuses in the country, including the imposition of sanctions.

The Prime Minister and President resolved to cooperate closely on the response to coronavirus. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of the COVAX scheme as a way to pool global efforts to develop a vaccine, and encouraged Ukraine to join. They also agreed to work together to tackle the shared threat from climate change, particularly ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow.

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1. 9 October 2020

Added location and Ukrainian version

2. 8 October 2020

First published.

[Bolton drug driver is jailed for longer](#)

News story

Rizwan Ali has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.



A drug driver who knocked down and killed a man has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Rizwan Ali, 26, fraudulently hired a Range Rover using his brother's driving

licence on 17 August 2018. The following day he consumed cannabis and cocaine at a friend's wedding and later got in the Range Rover to drive home.

Ali drove through Bolton at speeds in excess of 60mph, where the speed limit was 30mph. He failed to see Colin Olawumi, 65, crossing the road until the last moment. Ali braked and tried to swerve but he could not avoid hitting him. Olawumi died at the scene.

Ali was sentenced to 3 years and 5 months' imprisonment 30 June 2020 at Bolton Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 8 October the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to 5 years' imprisonment.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

Ali killed an innocent victim through his dangerous driving and deserves a longer sentence. I am glad the Court of Appeal has increased his sentence today and I hope this gives some closure to the victim's family.

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