

UN Human Rights Council 45: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria

Thank you, Mr Pinheiro, Commissioners,

The UK reiterates its strong support for the Commission's work and shares its concern about the dire human rights situation in Syria.

The report highlights the continued patterns of killings, arbitrary detention, and sexual and gender based violence committed by the regime. Such repression was exactly the catalyst for protests prior to the conflict. Despite nearly ten years of war, the regime has not mended its ways, and continues to violate international humanitarian law, and international human rights law.

The Commission's findings that the Syrian National Army and affiliated armed groups abused human rights in northern Syria are concerning. There is a disturbing pattern of looting, property confiscation, detention, torture and gender based violence against the local population. Furthermore, as the Commission states, destruction of UNESCO heritage sites and other cultural property violates international humanitarian law.

Reducing the number of humanitarian aid cross border entry points has exacerbated the needs of the Syrian population. This, coupled with the rise in Covid cases, is of grave concern. We agree with the Commission that all parties must allow humanitarian access, abide by international law and respect current ceasefires.

Commissioners,

The situation of human rights across the whole of Syria remains appalling. As we approach the tenth anniversary of this conflict, it is imperative to support an inclusive political settlement and end the suffering of the Syrian people.

Thank you.

Rare Fellowship for Dstl Scientist

News story

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the profession, Dstl's Dr

Bryn Hughes has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering



In recognition of his outstanding and continuing contribution to the profession, Dstl's Dr Bryn Hughes has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

It is a huge accolade with only 1600 Engineering Fellowships world-wide with Bryn's award is among 53 announced today at the academies' AGM.

Sir Jim McDonald FEng FRSE, President of the Royal Academy of Engineering, said:

The new Fellows are among the most talented and successful engineers working in the field today, leaders in areas from transport and our essential data infrastructure to lifesaving developments in medical research. We look forward to working with them and benefiting from their ideas and insight as we strive to inform public debate and provide.

Dr Bryn Hughes is described by his peers as an outstanding engineer who has made numerous contributions to the UK's defence and security. He has brought together various aspects of engineering to develop new sensors for use in harsh environments, worked to raise awareness of national IT security linked to critical infrastructure, and delivered a modern manufacturing capability. All of these achievements have necessitated a deep understanding of specific engineering techniques and methods, as well as wider system engineering, to deliver solutions that are technically robust and meet challenging end user requirements for secure operation.

Speaking about his award, Dr Hughes said:

I am hugely excited and humbled by this honour, especially by being put forward by my peers. This honour also acknowledges the great people that I have had the privilege of working with throughout my career and who have helped me in any achievement that I may have made.

The Royal Academy of Engineering is a charity that harnesses the power of

engineering to build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone.

Dstl's Chief Officer, Andy Bell said:

It is wonderful to see the expertise of our staff recognised in this way. Bryn is a highly regarded, not just here at Dstl, but around the world. It is a great achievement for Bryn and I congratulate him on behalf of all at Dstl.

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[New trial to offer streamlined use of GOV.UK](#)

- New GOV.UK accounts will make it easier for people to find and use government services
- People with accounts will not have to fill in their personal details multiple times on separate services
- Those who do not want accounts will still be able to access all services and strict data protection measures will be in place

From October, a limited number of people will be given the chance to create their own personal accounts to use on parts of GOV.UK, the government's website.

The accounts will make it easier for people to find the services they need and will mean they don't have to repeatedly fill in the same pieces of information, such as names and addresses, to access different government services.

Cabinet Office Minister, Julia Lopez, said:

People expect a modern and efficient service when they log on to GOV.UK and allowing people to set up their own accounts will make finding services and interacting with the Government much easier.

I know how annoying it can be to have to input the same information into a website several times or fail to get an important update because you haven't registered for a particular alert – having a GOV.UK account will prevent that.

If the initial trial is a success, it will be rolled out to allow more people to create GOV.UK accounts if they want to. Those who do not want to create an account will still be able to access the full range of Government services online.

The trial is designed to bring the Government website in line with other services, such as shopping, banking and entertainment websites, which allow people to log in to them to provide tailored services.

As well as providing a more seamless service, the trial will also help guide people around GOV.UK by using the information they provide to point them to services which may be relevant to them.

The trial will also allow users to say how they want their data to be used and guarantee that the necessary safeguards are in place to protect their information.

The head of GOV.UK, Jen Allum, said:

Using accounts on GOV.UK will be beneficial to many people, allowing them to find the services they need much more quickly, and helping them to find out about things they didn't realise were of benefit to them too.

But we know some people will not want an account, so we are making sure that they will still be able to access all services. And we will have strict rules in place to make sure everyone's data is kept safely and used properly.

GOV.UK was created in 2012 to replace 2,000 separate Government websites. Since its creation, the site has had more than 20 billion views.

An average of approximately 5million users now access GOV.UK every day.

The trial of GOV.UK accounts is due to begin at the end of October and will run for an initial period of three months.

Civil news: tender opportunity for housing and debt work

News story

We are opening a tender for 2018 standard civil contract holders on 22 September 2020 for the delivery of housing and debt work in 15 procurement

areas.



A tender opened on 22 September 2020 for the delivery of housing and debt services in 15 procurement areas. It closes at 5pm on 22 October 2020.

These are the areas:

1. Bury
2. Calderdale
3. City of Kingston upon Hull
4. Dorset
5. Doncaster
6. East Riding of Yorkshire
7. Hartlepool
8. Leicestershire and Rutland
9. North Hertfordshire
10. Shropshire
11. Somerset
12. South Tyneside

13. Warrington & Halton

14. Wigan

15. Wirral

There is no limit on the number of contracts that can be awarded in a procurement area.

Who can bid?

This opportunity is open to 2018 Standard Civil Contract holders. You can tender if you meet the requirements for one of 2 routes:

Route 1

You meet the full minimum requirements to hold authorisation in the housing and debt category of law. This includes employing a full-time equivalent (FTE) supervisor who meets the housing and debt supervisor standard.

Route 2

You currently hold authorisation to deliver family, community care or mental health contract work. You are able to meet the 'exceptional circumstances' housing and debt supervisor standard.

Length of contracts

Contracts will be offered from 1 December 2020 until 31 August 2021.

How do I tender?

Tenders must be submitted using the LAA's e-Tendering system.

Tender deadline

The tender opens on 22 September 2020 and closes at 5pm on 22 October 2020.

Further information

[Civil tender activity 2020](#) – to find out more and download the Information For Applicants document

[e-Tendering system](#) – to submit your tender

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The Single Justice Service: engaging defendants

Successful outcomes benefit defendants, prosecutors, enforcement agencies, magistrates, the court service and taxpayers.

Background

The [Single Justice Service](#) (SJS) enables magistrates' courts to deal with low-level crimes and offences (such as speeding, fare evasion, or not having a TV licence) in a way that is quick and efficient for everyone involved – including the defendant – while still being fair and rigorous. It includes an online digital case management system for summary cases.

Almost 1 million summary cases in England & Wales were dealt with by the service in the 12 months before July 2019.

Before its introduction, engagement rates from defendants in summary cases were low, with the majority of defendants not responding to plea notices. This impacted courts and enforcement agencies because defendants who didn't respond to notices often rejected judgments on the grounds of being unaware of the case.

Appeals against fines for summary cases were common and costly. To reduce appeals and simplify the process, we re-designed plea notices (Single Justice Procedure Notice – SJPN) so they are more engaging and easier for defendants to understand.

Consulting stakeholders

We worked with public user organisations, prosecuting agencies and legal professional representative bodies throughout the design process.

Organisations we consulted include:

- Justice
- HMCTS' defendant's voice engagement group
- several police forces including the Metropolitan Police
- the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
- Television Licensing
- the Bar Council
- the Law Society
- the Chartered Institute for Legal Executives (CILEx).

We also worked with behavioural scientists and designers before user experience researchers tested the new notices with the public to understand

the effectiveness of the notices in real-life situations.

Clarity for defendants

We added an introductory covering letter to which explains clearly to defendants:

- why they have received the notice
- what they need to do
- the consequences for not responding.

Notices had previously stated that a response was required within 21 days of the date of issue. The re-designed notice includes a specific date for responding as well as guidance for submitting a plea online. Further detailed information in plea notices include:

- an outline of the case
- evidence provided by the prosecutor
- the specific laws that may have been contravened
- potential penalties.

Impact

We've been testing the new notices with the DVLA, TV Licensing and the Metropolitan Police and early results have been very positive.

Responses to notices in television licensing cases increased from 20% to 27% between January and February 2020. There was a similar increase to a pilot in the Midlands.

The Metropolitan Police reported a 75% increase in online pleas since the new notices were introduced. Since the implementation of redesigned notices, the average number received has increased by over 200 every week.

What is next?

We are planning to introduce a new notice for all TV Licensing cases in November 2020, followed by the same for Transport for London.

Further information

[Single justice procedure notices](#)

[HMCTS Reform projects explained](#)

[HMCTS engagement groups](#)

[Engaging with our external stakeholders – our approach and plans](#)