

# Arrest and detention of journalists and demonstrators in Belarus: UK statement

World news story

Delivered by Helen Teasdale, First Secretary at the UK Delegation to the OSCE, at the virtual OSCE Permanent Council on 21 May 2020.



The United Kingdom is concerned about the recent arrest and detention in Belarus of over 100 people, including independent journalists, social media actors, human rights defenders and peaceful environmental demonstrators. The UK shares the concerns expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media that the detainees include journalists, who have been subject to imprisonment and administrative fines when they were reportedly merely observing and covering public gatherings.

As the co-host with Canada of last year's Global Conference for Media Freedom, which Belarus attended, the United Kingdom wishes to underline the importance of freedom of the media and freedom of expression more broadly as an essential quality of a functioning democracy. People must be allowed to debate issues freely, to question their governments and to make decisions, informed by a strong and robust media.

The United Kingdom is monitoring the situation closely and supports the Representative on Freedom of the Media's call for the release of all those detained journalists, social media actors and all peaceful demonstrators, who were exercising their right to freedom of expression. The United Kingdom urges Belarus to uphold their OSCE commitments, including those from the Copenhagen Meeting of 1990, reaffirmed in the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration, on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including to ensure freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies.

We would welcome an update from the Delegation of Belarus on the number of detainees who have been released.

## [Detention of Yuri Dmitriev in the Russian Federation: UK statement](#)

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the ongoing detention of Mr Yuri Dmitriev, prominent historian and Head of Memorial's Karelia branch. We call for his release from pre-trial detention as an immediate first step.

The persecution of Mr Dmitriev began in December 2016, when he was detained in relation to his possession of nine photographs of his daughter. Acquitted in April 2018 of deeply questionable charges of child pornography, Mr Dmitriev was regrettably again remanded into custody in June 2018.

On 7 May, the Karelia Supreme Court upheld a lower Court's decision to prolong the detention of Yuri Dmitriev until 25 June 2020.

As has been previously stated at the Permanent Council, the case against Mr Dmitriev was widely seen as a politically-motivated prosecution, linked to his work as a historian and representative of Memorial, who has dedicated his life to investigating crimes committed during the Stalinist era. He has worked tirelessly over three decades to document mass graves in the Karelia region of North-West Russia and identify the individual victims within them. His arrest, in December 2016 came two months after the International Memorial Society was included on the register of "foreign agents" by the Russian authorities, and one month after Russian state media accused Memorial of helping – quote – "those who aim to destroy the Russian state". – unquote

No-one should be targeted as a result of their work to document and establish the truth about historical human rights violations.

We remind the Russian Federation of their OSCE commitments on Human Rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. In particular, we highlight the extensive OSCE commitments made in Copenhagen in 1990, including the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial; the reaffirmation of those commitments in the 1991 Moscow Document; and the Ljubljana Decision of 2005 on Upholding Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Criminal Justice Systems.

We also remind the Russian Federation of their commitments, freely entered into, in Helsinki in 1975 and in Copenhagen in 1990, to ensure "the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field" and "the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to seek, receive and impart freely views and information on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to disseminate and publish such views and information".

The Russian Federation has a responsibility to protect human rights defenders and to ensure that all individuals in the Russian Federation are able to know and act upon their rights. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of Yuri Dmitriev.

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## [New skills for Peter during covid-19](#)

News story

One of the few people to continue working in the Warrington Offices through the coronavirus pandemic is OneFM security officer Peter Houghton.



Peter, taking on new tasks during the pandemic

Peter, a familiar face in Hinton House at Warrington having worked on the loading area checking deliveries to the building for the past 15 years, is now learning new skills during the pandemic.

He said:

When we announced the reduction in numbers allowed into the building in March, I was given a different role of patrolling the buildings and more recently checking passes at one of our turnstiles as we slowly re-introduce staff into Hinton and Allday House.

Even though the building, that can normally house about 2,000 people, was virtually empty in late March and April apart from security, cleaners and occasional visitors, it didn't feel strange because it's just like working weekends when it's also very quiet.

I've enjoyed taking on new tasks and learning new skills such as using a work's computer as my job on the loading bay involves paperwork. However, guidance on computer use has probably not been

as straight forward as normal given social distancing rules.

I've found that staff coming back into work have fully respected and followed the new instructions that relate to the building and their work area. The noticeable change in Hinton for me is there's no canteen, and the booth areas are not available for use.

We are slowly re-introducing more people into the building but it's still very quiet, and I do wonder what will happen further down the line with certain activities – such as deliveries to the loading bay...

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## [M42 Junction 6 Improvement granted development consent](#)

Development consent has been given for improvements to junction 6 of the M42 to allow better movement of traffic on and off the A45, supporting access to Birmingham Airport and preparing capacity for the new HS2 station.

The key components of the scheme include:

- A new dual carriageway link between the Clock Interchange and a new junction on the M42 north of the Solihull Road allowing traffic travelling northbound to exit the M42 and traffic travelling southbound to join the M42.
- The new dual carriageway would be to the west of Bickenhill and would generally be below ground level and pass beneath the B4438 (Catherine de Barnes Lane), at both the north west and south west corners of Bickenhill.
- Improvements will be made to the Clock Interchange and the A45 between the Clock Interchange and the M42, including potential improvements to non-motorised user routes.
- Free flow links will be provided around the north west and the north east of the M42 junction 6.
- Improvements will also be included on the south east side of the M42 junction 6, the A45 westbound (east of the M42 junction 6) and the M42 junction 6 southbound slip roads to improve the performance around this quadrant of the junction.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by Highways England on the 02 January 2019 and accepted for examination on 30 January 2019. Following an examination during which the public, statutory

consultees and interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State on 21 February 2020.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

"This is the 85th nationally significant infrastructure project to have been examined and decided within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008. The Planning Inspectorate is committed to giving local communities the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them. Local people, the local authority and other interested parties were able to participate in a 6-month long examination. The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to local views before making their recommendation."

Highways England senior project manager, Jonathan Pizzey said: "We're delighted to receive the Secretary of State's decision, which represents a major step forward in developing a scheme to unlock congestion and promote economic growth in the West Midlands.

"The M42 is an important strategic route. Upgrading junction 6 will increase capacity, enhance safety and support planned development, improving access to HS2, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham Airport and future developments such as UK Central Solihull."

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation is publicly available on the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: [Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

Background information

Following the granting of planning consent, main construction work on the M42 junction 6 scheme is scheduled to start later this year.

The scheme will see a new 2.4km dual carriageway link road – aligned to the west of Bickenhill – between the A45 Clock Interchange and a new junction on the M42 south of junction 6 located north of Solihull Road.

Further information and updates will be available at the web page: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/m42-junction-6-improvement/>

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate, [National Infrastructure Programme of Projects](#) details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

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## Welsh Secretary commends Armed Forces' contribution to the fight against coronavirus in Wales

The Welsh Secretary has written to the head of the Army in Wales to thank him for the support provided by the UK Armed Forces across the country in the continued fight against coronavirus.

Simon Hart MP wrote to Brigadier Andrew Dawes CBE, Commander of 160th (Welsh) Brigade this week to commend the Armed Forces for their work in tackling the pandemic. Full-time soldiers and Reservists have been deployed in a variety of roles across Wales at the request of the civilian authorities to support different parts of the response to the coronavirus emergency.

The deployments have included driving and decontaminating ambulances for the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), building beds in Ysbyty Calon Y Ddraig (the Dragon's Heart Hospital) and advising and assisting NHS Wales to distribute essential PPE to frontline staff.

The Armed Forces have also helped set up dozens of testing centres across Great Britain, including in Llandudno. Soldiers are now collecting swabs for critical workers in Mobile Testing Units across Wales, helping to rapidly expand the UK's testing capability.

### **Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:**

The UK's Armed Forces are providing crucial support to our NHS, Welsh Ambulance Service and social care workers, helping critical care to continue across Wales.

Their continued efforts, alongside that of our extraordinary key workers, is testament to their selfless commitment to our country. I would like to extend my thanks to the Armed Forces personnel, and those they are working alongside, who are doing incredible work to keep our country going during these difficult times.

The support our soldiers and Reservists have provided in Wales shows, once again, that we are better tackling the coronavirus united across the four nations of the UK and making the best use of our shared resources.

### **Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey:**

Our Armed Forces are proud to continue to work alongside the emergency services, local councils and the NHS to support communities across Wales.

From testing, to distributing PPE to driving ambulances, our Armed Forces are demonstrating their versatility, expertise and willingness to assist in whatever way the people of Wales need.

Armed forces support to tackle COVID-19 in Wales includes:

### **Welsh Ambulance Service**

The Army has boosted its support to the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST). A deployment of 30 soldiers have been trained in ambulance decontamination, in addition to the initial 60 tasked with driving ambulances at the beginning of April.

### **British Army provides logistics advice to NHS Wales**

A logistics specialist supply team from The 4th Regiment, Royal Logistics Corp of the British Army has been deployed to assist NHS Wales in PPE distribution. The 30-person strong team has helped refine the essential equipment's distribution over 16 hospitals across seven regional health boards by providing logistical advice and training additional staff. A military mentoring and advisory team has also been deployed to assist with distribution of medical equipment across the country in order to best match demand.

### **Military unload PPE flown into Cardiff airport**

Around 30 Reservists from 3 Royal Welsh unloaded vital supplies of PPE that was flown into Cardiff airport from Cambodia and China. The Reservists were on hand to unload 2 million pieces of PPE for use by frontline health and care workers in Wales.

### **Oxygen distribution**

A military assistance team to assess vacuum insulated evaporator systems across NHS Wales to ensure oxygen supplies are where they are needed. Soldiers from each of the three services were trained to drive oxygen tankers at the Air Products facility in Port Talbot in order to support the NHS.

### **Planning**

Military planning and liaison personnel have deployed across Wales, including at the Welsh Government's Emergency Coordination Centre in Cardiff, the four Local Resilience Fora and the seven Local Health Boards.

### **Development of field hospitals and testing sites**

Military Assessment Teams have supported the NHS in Wales' development of

field hospitals, including at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff. There are also a total of seven testing centres across Wales involving military personnel as well as an increasing number of Mobile Testing Units.