

UK calls on Russia to end unlawful control of Crimea on sixth anniversary of annexation

- UK Foreign Secretary condemns Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea as UK stands at forefront of international action.
- UK supports Crimean human right defenders and UN Human Rights monitors to expose Russia's human rights violations.

On the sixth anniversary of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, the Foreign Secretary has reiterated the UK's condemnation of Russia's actions and has again called for Russia to release all Ukrainian political prisoners, withdraw its military forces and end its unlawful control of the peninsula. The UK is also developing its own sanctions policy, having worked closely with partners on EU sanctions against Russia for the past six years, ensuring it will continue to play a leading role in international sanctions now that it has left the EU.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK will never recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. We stand with the international community in our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We will continue to be a force for good in the world by supporting human rights defenders and monitors to expose Russia's regime of human rights violations in Crimea.

The human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated in the last six years. Muslim Crimean Tatars and followers of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine are persecuted for their religious beliefs. And those who reject Russia's unlawful control of Crimea face harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearances, with about 90 political prisoners currently imprisoned on sham charges.

The UK is working to improve the human rights situation for civilians living in Crimea. We support human rights defenders and the Crimean Prosecutor's Office to record abuses and seek justice for victims and we've spent £800,000 since 2018 to support the work of UN human rights monitors in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

Further information

Courts during coronavirus pandemic: Robert Buckland statement

The rule of law is vital to a functioning democracy and even at times like these, it is essential that our independent courts are able to administer justice. Despite an unprecedented public health emergency, the Prime Minister and I are clear that our courts across England and Wales have a critical role to play and should go on sitting.

We will continue to deliver justice to victims of crime, and as best as possible, keep our courts open. However, as I have agreed with the Lord Chief Justice, we need to adjust working practices to ensure our court system continues to function, even with a reduced capacity to hear some cases at this time. We must also take appropriate steps to comply with [public health guidance](#) and to minimise the risk of COVID-19 to court staff and users.

With staff absences and courts already impacted, we have to prioritise which types of hearing take precedence. We also need to avoid the disruption that can result from juries being unable to see out the trials they are required to participate in.

I have discussed with the Lord Chief Justice his plans to continue to list those future court cases due to be heard from the summer and beyond as normal. And for those trials already underway, they should all proceed as planned with all participants expected to attend court and discharge their duties. Consistent with wider government advice, we make an exception only for those who are unwell or showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or self-isolating as a household. In all other types of court hearings steps are being taken to enable as many hearings as possible to be conducted with some or all of the participants attending by telephone, video-link or online.

For the minority of Crown Court cases that have been listed for trial shortly, but which have not yet commenced and which are also expected to last for more than three days, I have been in close discussion with the Lord Chief Justice in relation to his decision that these cases should now be postponed.

I recognise the impact that this will have on those witnesses and victims who will have to wait longer to see justice delivered in their cases. We will also make arrangements to extend custody time limits for defendants held on remand in these cases.

However I believe on balance this move is preferable to proceeding as normal when there is a growing likelihood that juries selected to hear such cases may not be well enough to attend, leading the trial to be aborted and the whole process further delayed.

These changes will be temporary and we estimate that three quarters of Crown Court trials will be able to continue despite this restriction. Those cases that have a trial date delayed will be heard at the earliest available

opportunity. I am also committed to working with the senior judiciary to address any backlog that develops this year so delays overall do not increase, and I welcome the plans that I have heard from all those involved in our justice system to make sure that we can increase capacity in the system to ensure justice is as swift as possible.

We will keep the situation under review and continue to listen to feedback from lawyers, court staff and users about how COVID-19 is affecting them and their availability. The judiciary and I will issue future statements after considering the most current advice from Public Health England and then explain how this impacts those who are often under a legal obligation to attend court. I am particularly grateful to all the staff, legal professionals, judicial office holders including magistrates, that have worked to keep our courts running so far, and I know their commitment to the administration of justice will help this continue.

Our Crown and Magistrates courts provide a vital public service and until instructed otherwise, we expect all lawyers, magistrates, jurors, witnesses, defendants and court staff to continue to attend court as required, so the interests of justice can be served.

The VMD remains open for business

The VMD would like to assure our stakeholders, in the light of the enhanced precautions to reduce the risk and impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19), that we continue to provide our services to regulate veterinary medicines.

However, with immediate effect we will postpone or reschedule inspections of premises due in the coming weeks. We are also making alternative arrangements for our stakeholder meetings including holding them by telephone conference.

In line with government advice we have changed our working practices so that most of our staff will be doing this working from home. Our staff will be contactable as usual and we will continue to operate our switchboard. However, if you have any difficulties contacting us by phone, please email your individual VMD contacts or our general email address at postmaster@vmd.gov.uk which is monitored throughout the day.

We will work closely with you to keep you informed and to minimise the impact on the services that we provide.

Updated data protection impact assessment template and guidance launched

The Surveillance Camera Commissioner (SCC) and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) have been working together to update the SCC surveillance camera specific data protection impact assessment (DPIA) template. The new template and associated guidance notes are jointly issued by the Commissioners to fully reflect updated data protection requirements as set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) as well as comply with the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Where organisations are operating surveillance cameras in public places they are required to carry out a DPIA. Organisations who are introducing new surveillance camera systems or upgrading existing systems can use the template to help them ensure they are complying with relevant legislation.

Tony Porter, Surveillance Camera Commissioner, said:

Ensuring that surveillance camera systems protect communities rather than spy on them is essential in building public trust around the use of overt surveillance cameras. This joint effort between my office and the Information Commissioner's Office will help ensure that where surveillance cameras are deployed tools are available to help organisations meet legal requirements around privacy and human rights.

Elizabeth Denham, Information Commissioner, added:

Surveillance systems can cause unnecessary intrusion into people's daily lives. It is therefore imperative that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is carried out so the risks to people's rights and freedoms are reduced. The work we have done with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner on this guidance will help to remind organisations of their responsibilities and help them to maintain systems that comply with the law.

The [DPIA template is available on the SCC website](#).

UK Government sets out way forward on the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland

- A new independent body focused on providing information to families and swift examinations of all unresolved deaths from the Troubles
- End to the cycle of reinvestigations that has failed victims and veterans for too long
- Ensuring that Northern Ireland veterans receive equal treatment to their counterparts who served overseas.

This new approach seeks to put victims first with information recovery and reconciliation as the overarching goal – with a way forward that delivers for all those affected by the legacy of the Troubles and enables all sides of the community to continue to reconcile and prosper.

Following careful consideration of all views in an extensive consultation, the proposals provide a framework for all communities in Northern Ireland to move towards a brighter future, fulfilling the Government's commitment to help victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland towards reconciliation with the pain and trauma of the past and ending vexatious claims against veterans.

Reconciliation and information recovery for victims who suffered during the Troubles form a key part of the proposals. A new independent body will conduct swift, final examinations of all the unresolved deaths. Only those cases where there is new compelling evidence and a realistic prospect of a prosecution will be investigated. Once cases have been considered there will be a legal bar on any future investigation occurring. This will end the cycle of reinvestigations for the families of victims and veterans alike.

A central resource for people from all backgrounds – and from throughout the UK and Ireland – will also be created to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

Victims who suffered unimaginable pain as a result of the Troubles are at the heart of our approach to help Northern Ireland move on from its past towards a brighter future.

I hope that by giving as many families as possible information on

how their loved ones lost their lives, we can help ease the difficult process of reconciliation.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Armed Forces for their service in Northern Ireland. That's why these proposals also put an end to repeated reinvestigations where there is no new compelling evidence and deliver on our promise to protect veterans from vexatious claims.

As set out in the New Decade, New Approach agreement, the UK Government will now begin an intensive period of engagement with the Northern Ireland political parties, and the Irish government, to discuss these proposals in detail.

These proposals build on our work to establish a victims' payment scheme to provide acknowledgement and a measure of financial support to those seriously injured in the Troubles.