

Israel and OPTs: UK expresses concern over announcement of new Israeli settlements



An FCO spokesperson said:

We are concerned by Israel's announcement of 1,737 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, in addition to those announced earlier this week in the E1 area. The UK's position is clear: settlements are illegal under international law and are damaging to peace efforts.

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Upholding the UN Charter in order to end the violence in Syria

Mr President, thank you. We welcome the attendance and briefing by the Secretary-General today and of course by Undersecretary-General DiCarlo. We share the Secretary-General's concern at the gravity of the situation, the real risk of escalation, and echo his call for an immediate ceasefire.

This Council has met so often over the past few weeks to express its horror at the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Idlib. Indeed, we met only yesterday to discuss the suffering of the Syrian people caused by the merciless and disproportionate campaign being waged by the Syrian regime and its Russian backers: the 948,000 people displaced in the last three months; the men, women and children living in tents and the open air; the children freezing to death and killed in attacks on hospitals, schools and makeshift

camps. We called in the name of humanity for those waging this offensive immediately to cease hostilities. And yesterday we warned of the recklessness and brutality of the Syrian and Russian offensive and the risk they escalate this conflict further.

It is therefore with deep concern and regret that because of those reckless and reprehensible attacks on Turkish positions only hours after the conclusion of yesterday's meeting, it has been necessary to call another meeting today. But meet we must. As members of this Council we all have a duty under the United Nations Charter to take primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and therefore to seek to prevent further escalation of what is already a dangerous and fraught situation. And it is clear that the only way forward is an immediate cessation of hostilities and provision of humanitarian relief. I hope all members of this Council will agree with that today.

Mr President, let me say that we were shocked and appalled to hear of the tragic deaths of at least 33 Turkish soldiers as a result of those attacks yesterday. We condemn those attacks. We express our deepest condolences to the Turkish government and people, with whom we stand in solidarity as allies today.

Mr President, we are gravely concerned about the impact on civilians of a further escalation in hostilities. The bombing and shelling and fighting not only directly cause civilian suffering, but they also hamper the aid effort, magnifying the scale of this disaster. It is the civilians, in desperate need of food, water, healthcare and assistance to survive the cold of winter, who suffer most. It is vital that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners continue to be able to deliver cross-border aid and that humanitarian and medical actors are able to provide assistance to all those in need in the north-west in safety.

Mr President, as we have said before, it is clear that the Astana format is not capable of achieving a lasting ceasefire. The fatal flaw in the Astana format is Russia's uncritical support for the Syrian regime and its continued disregard for previously agreed ceasefires and agreements, as well as its disregard for international humanitarian law and the fate of Syria's people. We must therefore support the UN and Special Envoy Pedersen in securing a ceasefire in northwest Syria in close consultation with the relevant parties and the UN Security Council. We call on all Member States to work with and support the UN in this goal.

Mr President, responding to Syria's and Russia's increased offensive against the Syrian people, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said today that "there is no justification for such blatant disregard of international law or basic human decency". Syria and Russia must immediately turn off this offensive. Russia should prioritise the Syrian people and the safety of the region over the interests of the murderous cabal at the heart of this conflict.

Thank you, Mr President.

CMO for England announces a new case of novel coronavirus: 28 February 2020



One further patient in England has tested positive for COVID-19.

The virus was passed on in the UK. It is not yet clear whether they contracted it directly or indirectly from an individual who had recently returned from abroad. This is being investigated and contact tracing has begun. The patient has been transferred to a specialist NHS infection centre at Guy's and St Thomas'.

The total number of cases in England is now 18. Following confirmed cases in Northern Ireland and Wales, the total number of UK cases is 20.

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PM call with President Vucic of Serbia: 28 February 2020



The Prime Minister spoke to President Vucic of Serbia this afternoon.

The two leaders agreed on the importance of the UK-Serbia relationship and the Prime Minister said he looked forward to building on the friendship between our countries.

The Prime Minister supported the resumption of dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. He welcomed Kosovo's partial withdrawal of tariffs on goods from Serbia and encouraged a positive response. He said the UK would continue to press for a full lifting of tariffs.

On the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Prime Minister urged President Vucic to use his influence to calm tensions.

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[£20m could provide Welsh communities with new railway stations](#)

- Part of UK Government's £500m drive to reverse Beeching cuts of the 1960s, which closed more than 2300 stations
- Two new stations in Wales have already been opened through the fund – Pye Corner opened in December 2014, and Bow Street in Ceredigion is due to open this year.

Towns and cities across Wales could see new stations constructed and disused links restored to their former glory, the UK Government Rail Minister has confirmed today (28 February), thanks to a £20m fund to boost rail connections across the country.

This forms just one part of the UK Government's £500m drive to reopen former routes and stations closed during the Beeching cuts, and marks our commitment to levelling up transport infrastructure across the country to improve links between communities and unlock economic growth for towns, cities and regions, so that everyone is able to access to opportunities they need to thrive.

Welsh passengers have already benefited from funding to build two new stations, in Newport and Ceredigion.

Local authorities can bid for the funding, with communities across Wales encouraged to apply.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Disused railway stations have been emblematic of left behind towns

for too long. We're determined to reconnect communities and improve journeys, and the thousands of passengers already using Pye Corner is proof of the importance of investing in our railway.

This new funding will both restore local stations to their former glory, and build new ones, establishing vital links for communities and strengthening connections across our union.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

Investing in transport and improving services for people is a vital step forward in increasing opportunities across Wales and better connecting all parts of the country.

Building new stations in Wales will drive economic growth in every corner of the country, promoting regeneration and the creation of new jobs.

The new £20m funding is the third round of the 'New Stations Fund', and follows the launch of the £500m 'Reversing Beeching Fund', which aims to bring back the rail connections needed to level up access to opportunity and support local economies to flourish.

£40m of funding has already been invested in building ten new stations across England and Wales, including Pye Corner in Newport, which attracted 125,692 passengers in 2018/19. Funding has also been allocated to build a station in the village of Bow Street, in Ceredigion, which will help reduce traffic congestion into Aberystwyth.

Ends