

UK statement on the arrest of Osman Kavala in Turkey

Mr Chairman,

The UK adds its voice to those expressing concern over the continued detention of Mr Osman Kavala, Chairman of Anadolu Kultur. Mr Kavala was originally taken into custody in October 2017, and placed in detention on 1 November 2017. In February 2019, sixteen months later, Mr Kavala was first informed of the charges against him after the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office issued an indictment relating to the 2013 Gezi Park protests.

On 10 December 2019, the European Court of Human Rights ordered Mr Kavala's release, finding that his continued incarceration constituted arbitrary detention. Mr Kavala remained in detention.

Last week, on 18 February, Mr Kavala and eight other defendants were acquitted of all charges. The Court ruled that "there was no concrete and material evidence which would determine that the charged crimes had been committed." The Court further ruled for the release of Osman Kavala, who had at that point spent 840 days in prison.

However, within hours of the verdict, the Istanbul chief public prosecutor's office issued a new detention order for Mr Kavala, as part of a separate investigation into the 2016 coup attempt. Mr Kavala was charged with "attempting to overthrow the constitutional order" and detained before he could be released.

We support the statement of 19 February by the Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic. In it, she noted that the allegedly new charges "have no credibility" and that the arrest amounts to ill-treatment. We also share the concerns over Mr Kavala's re-arrest expressed in the letter from the Council of Europe Secretary General to the Justice Minister of Turkey of 21 February.

We urge the Turkish authorities to ensure every person's right to a fair trial, and to uphold the principle of the presumption of innocence and judicial independence, as agreed in the Copenhagen Document of 1990. As well as the commitment, made in Vienna in 1989, to ensure "that no one will be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile".

We would welcome an update on this case, and on the postponed hearing of Amnesty International Honorary Chair Taner Kilic in the Buyukada case. We also seek assurance from the Turkish authorities of their commitment to the rule of law, including the independence of the judiciary.

UK statement on the murder of Boris Nemtsov

Mr Chairman,

27 February marks the fifth anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov in Moscow. Mr Nemtsov was shot as he walked across Bolshoi Moskvorestky Bridge, close to the Kremlin. At the time of his death, Mr Nemtsov was a member of the Yaroslavl Regional Duma, and was recognised as a leading figure within the Russian opposition. Mr Nemtsov had previously served as a Member of the Russian Parliament, Governor of the Nizhny Novgorod Region and Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

We extend our sincere and continued condolences to Mr Nemtsov's family and friends on the anniversary of this tragic event.

We welcome the report by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Rapporteur, Ms Margareta Cederfelt, into the murder, published last week. This comprehensive document draws on the many investigations by international bodies to date, and identifies a number of remaining issues. Ms Cederfelt summarises the key criticism of the investigation and trial into Mr Nemtsov's murder as allegations of:

- An incomplete investigation leading to a criminal case with numerous inconsistencies.
- A judicial process in which the defendants were subjected to torture
- An unclear role of the security services in the investigation
- No answers as to who ordered the assassination of Mr Nemtsov and why

As Ms Cederfelt notes,

“the murder of a politician is not only devastating for their loved ones – but it is also an attack on democracy... it is crucial that attacks on politicians are subject to thorough, impartial and transparent investigation.

We agree that any investigation should be carried out by the Russian authorities, and we urge Russia to renew efforts to identify the person or persons who ordered the murder of Boris Nemtsov five years ago. Holding the instigators of this horrific crime to account would go some way to ending the culture of impunity for attacks on political activists, journalists and human rights defenders in the Russian Federation. It would also act as a demonstration of Russia's adherence to OSCE principles and commitments, including the rule of law.

UN Human Rights Council 43: Item 2 Joint Statement by the Core Group on Sri Lanka

Thank you Madam President

This statement is on behalf of Canada, Germany, North Macedonia, Montenegro and the UK, the Core Group on Sri Lanka.

We thank the High Commissioner for her update on Sri Lanka.

In 2015, Sri Lanka co-sponsored resolution 30/1, which provided a framework to address the legacy of conflict and build the foundations for sustainable and inclusive peace. Sri Lanka committed to delivering progress on accountability, reconciliation and human rights with the support of the Council and reaffirmed those commitments through two further resolutions. As the High Commissioner's report highlights, these resolutions have their origins in Sri Lanka's domestic processes.

These resolutions are hugely significant for Sri Lanka and for this Council. They marked the end of a period of confrontation with voted resolutions and an international investigation. They heralded the start of a partnership and a sense of common purpose between Sri Lanka and the Council.

From 2015, important steps have been taken, as recognized in successive Council reports. We join the High Commissioner in welcoming the significant progress in institution building including through the establishment of the Office of Reparations and the Office on Missing Persons. Fulfillment of the mandates of these offices would bring hope to those left behind following tens of thousands of cases of enforced disappearances over many years.

Following the resolution, human rights defenders, academics and journalists have had more freedom and experienced less intimidation. However, we share the High Commissioner's concern at the growing number of reports of harassment and surveillance of human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations. The protection of civil society, independent media and human rights institutions from intimidation remains critical to fulfill Sri Lanka's commitment to a free and open democratic society, both in the build up to, and beyond the upcoming Parliamentary elections.

We are deeply disappointed and concerned that the government has changed its approach to the resolution. We remain profoundly committed to resolution 30/1 and its principles of reconciliation, accountability, intercommunal harmony, and justice for victims of conflict.

We urge the government of Sri Lanka to advance all of these principles and to

ensure a prosperous and inclusive Sri Lanka for which the rule of law and ending impunity are a fundamental basis.

We encourage the government of Sri Lanka to continue cooperation and dialogue with the Council, the OHCHR, and UN human rights mechanisms, to facilitate progress towards a lasting peace where the rights of all of Sri Lanka's people can flourish.

Thank you Madam President

UK immigration stats: Indian student visas up by 93%

This represents the largest number of visas issued to Indian students over the last eight years and continues the strong upward trend in student visa numbers since 2016. Indians are currently the fastest growing nationality for student visas.

Indian nationals also received over 57,000 Tier 2 skilled work visas last year. This accounts for over 50% of all skilled work visas granted globally – meaning more were granted to Indians than the rest of the world combined.

The UK continues to be a popular destination for Indian holidaymakers. More than 515,000 Indian nationals received visit visas last year – an 8% increase compared to the previous year.

In 2019, 95% of Indian nationals who applied for a UK visa were successful, an increase of 5% on the previous year.

Jan Thompson, Acting High Commissioner to India, said:

This phenomenal increase in student visa numbers is testament both to the UK's world leading education system and to the exceptional talents of Indian students. We couldn't be prouder that the best and brightest continue to pick the UK, making the living bridge between our countries stronger each day.

Barbara Wickham, Director India, British Council, said:

It is exciting to see so many Indian students trusting the UK as the destination for their education and furthering their careers. This bodes very well for both countries' continued focus on realising their knowledge ambitions in a fast changing world.

These statistics follow a series of visa policy announcements by the UK, including the establishment of a new Graduate route (allowing eligible students to stay in the UK for two years post study) and the introduction of a new points-based immigration system.

Further Information

- All figures in the Q4 2019 report relate to the year January 2019 to December 2019. The full statistical release can be found online on the [Gov.uk](#) website here: [student visas](#), [visit visas](#), [skilled work visas](#).
- Migration statistics are updated quarterly to provide insight into UK visa trends. Upcoming releases will cover a 12-month period in the following format:
 - Q1 2020: April 2019 – March 2020 (released May 2020)
 - Q2 2020: July 2019 – June 2020 (released August 2020)
 - Q3 2020: October 2019 – September 2020 (released November 2020)
 - Q4 2020: January 2020 – December 2020 (released February 2021)
- The new Graduate route, announced last year, will allow eligible international students – including those from India – to stay in the UK for two years after completing their studies to work or look for work. Graduates will also be able to switch into skilled work once they have found a suitable job. It will be introduced from the summer of 2021.
- Earlier this month, the UK launched a new Points-Based Immigration System – a new single global system that will treat EU and non-EU citizens equally, giving top priority to those with the highest skills and the greatest talents, including scientists, innovators and academics. For more on the new immigration system, which takes effect from 1 January 2021, [click here](#).

Media

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Aviation update: 27 February 2020

Our airports are national assets and their expansion is a core part of boosting our global connectivity. This in turn will drive economic growth for all parts of this country, connecting our nations and regions to international markets, levelling up our economy and supporting a truly global Britain.

We are also a government that is committed to a greener future. This government is acting to tackle climate change and we are the first major economy in the world to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050.

The Court of Appeal ruled today (27 February 2020) that when designating the [Airports National Policy Statement](#), which was backed by Parliament, the previous government did not take account of the Paris Agreement, non-CO2 emissions and emissions post 2050.

We have always been clear that Heathrow expansion is a private sector project which must meet strict criteria on air quality, noise and climate change, as well as being privately financed, affordable, and delivered in the best interest of consumers. The government has taken the decision not to appeal this judgment. The promoters of the scheme will be able to seek permission from the Supreme Court to appeal if they wish.

As part of its judgment, the court has declared that the Airports National Policy Statement is of no legal effect unless and until the government carries out a review under the [Planning Act 2008](#).

The court's judgment is complex and requires careful consideration. We will set out our next steps in due course.

We want Britain to be the best place in the world to do business and as a government we are committed to investing in transport and wider infrastructure as part of levelling up economic opportunities across the country, including investing in the strategic road network, proceeding with HS2, and committing £5 billion of funding to improve bus and cycle services outside London.

We fully recognise the importance of the aviation sector for the whole of the UK economy. The UK's airports support connections to over 370 overseas destinations in more than 100 countries facilitating trade, investment and tourism. It facilitates £95.2 billion of UK's non-EU trade exports; contributes at least £14 billion directly to GDP; supports over half a million jobs and underpins the competitiveness and global reach of our national and our regional economies. Under our wider "making best use" policy, airports across the UK are already coming forward with ambitious proposals to invest in their infrastructure.

We are committed to working closely with the sector to meet our climate change commitments. Our global aviation emissions offsetting scheme,

sustainable aviation fuels, greenhouse gas removal technology and eventually, electric net-zero planes, will all help play their part in the aviation sector decarbonising. We also welcome Sustainable Aviation's industry led commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the range of innovative action this will unlock to achieve this outcome. We are investing nearly £2 billion into aviation research and technology, and this year my department will publish an ambitious plan of actions setting out how we will decarbonise transport and support the UK achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

It is critical that vital infrastructure projects, including airport expansion, drive the whole UK economy, level up our regions, and unite our country.