

Belarus regime flagrantly violated aviation law: joint statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, the United Kingdom and my own country, the United States.

On May 23 last year, the Lukashenka regime purposefully concocted a false bomb threat in order to force the pilots of Ryanair Flight 4978 to land in Minsk for the sole purpose of arresting and detaining opposition journalist Raman Pratasevich. Pratasevich remains under house arrest in Belarus and continues to be victimized as a prop in the Lukashenka regime's propaganda efforts. Meanwhile, Sofiya Sapega, who was traveling with Pratasevich on May 23, is serving a six-year prison sentence based on politically-motivated charges.

The Lukashenka regime flagrantly violated international aviation law to repress dissent, silence independent voices, and send an ominous signal to opponents that being outside the borders of Belarus was no guarantee of safety. It was a blatant act of transnational repression. We welcome the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) July 19 report on the incident and its condemnation of the Lukashenka regime's unlawful interference and misuse of civil aviation. Following a detailed investigation, the ICAO Council determined that the bomb threat against Ryanair Flight 4978 was "deliberately false and endangered its safety, and furthermore that the threat was communicated to the flight crew upon the instructions of senior government officials of Belarus."

We condemn the Lukashenka regime's continued efforts to brutally repress the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms and its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, including its acts of transnational repression targeting members of the democratic opposition, journalists, and civil society located outside of Belarus. We also condemn the Lukashenka regime's facilitation of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The regime must end its support to Russia's invasion and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty in line with its international obligations.

The Lukashenka regime has expressed no remorse for its actions regarding the Ryanair flight and has not cooperated meaningfully with international investigations into the incident. The Lukashenka regime continues to take repressive measures against political opponents, journalists, students, human rights defenders, strikers, civil society activists, and ordinary Belarusians – both those inside the country and those who have fled the regime's continuing crackdown.

Ahead of the 2nd anniversary of the fraudulent August 9 presidential election in Belarus – and against the grim backdrop of two years of the Lukashenka regime's violent crackdown against the pro-democracy movement – we reaffirm

our commitment to working with our partners to hold accountable those responsible for its human rights violations and abuses, as well as its acts of transnational repression. The forced diversion of Ryanair Flight 4978 not only violated international law, but endangered the lives of innocent passengers on board the plane that day. We call on Belarus to implement the [Moscow Mechanism Expert Mission's recommendation](#) to release all political prisoners immediately, including Pratasevich and Sapega, to stop its repression of the pro-democracy movement in Belarus, and to allow for free and fair elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

New government hub housing roles moved from London opens in Birmingham

- New hub houses 20 government departments, with space to accommodate 1700 staff
- Hub will house some of the 2100 Civil Service roles moving from London to the West Midlands by 2025, with 880 already relocated
- Consolidation of eight sites into one is expected to save £2 million per year

A new government hub which can accommodate up to 1700 civil servants has been hailed as an example of Levelling Up in action by helping spread more jobs to the West Midlands, as it was opened today (28 July).

Minister Rees-Mogg, responsible for Government Efficiency and Brexit Opportunities in the Cabinet Office, cut the ribbon on the building which will house 20 government departments and public bodies across nine newly refurbished floors. The government teams had previously been spread across eight different buildings, but consolidating them under one roof is expected to save the taxpayer around £2 million per year.

Civil Service roles are being relocated to Birmingham out of London via the Places for Growth programme, which will move 22,000 roles out of the capital by 2030. The government has committed to relocating more than 2,100 roles across the West Midlands by 2025 to Birmingham, Coventry, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton.

The new modern offices, built on the old site of the Theatre Royal and Woolworths at 23 Stephenson Street, form part of the Government Property Agency's strategy to consolidate the number of public buildings and concentrate them in town and city centres.

Minister for Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

The new Government Property Agency hub which I have opened in Birmingham today is a clear demonstration of Her Majesty's Government's commitment to the West Midlands.

This is good news for businesses in Birmingham, who will benefit from the increased footfall in the city centre, as well as for people from the area who will now have more opportunities to build a successful career in government.

This hub is an important part of our plans to create a leaner and more efficient public estate, which will save taxpayers' money and serve the entire United Kingdom.

It is expected that these jobs will provide a significant boost for local business and enterprise, with government research having shown that workers put around 50% of their salaries back into the local economy.

Six thousand roles have already been moved out of the South East and across the UK as part of plans to relocate 22,000 roles by 2030.

So far 880 Civil Service roles have moved to the West Midlands, with many based in the new hub. More than 400 roles in central government teams are now based in Birmingham, including teams in the Department for Transport, Cabinet Office and other departments.

Wolverhampton has also benefited from the relocation of around 200 roles at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities following the establishment of the department's second HQ in the city.

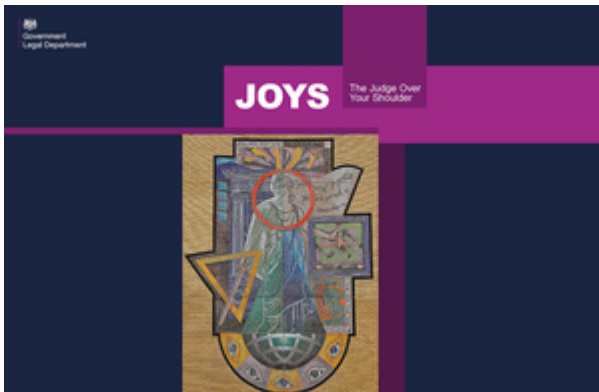
GPA Director of Capital Projects Clive Anderson said:

The Birmingham Hub represents another significant achievement for the GPA's Government Hubs Programme and our ambition to deliver great places to work across the UK.

The formerly disused retail space is now refurbished into a modern, digitally-connected and inclusive workspace for civil servants across government with greater energy efficiency and smarter ways of working.

The sustainability of 23 Stephenson Street has been rated 'Very Good', using intelligent lighting and energy sources to power the offices. The repurposing of the building will help the government deliver on its promises to make the public estate carbon neutral in line with wider government ambitions.

“The Judge Over Your Shoulder”



Today the 6th edition of [“the Judge Over Your Shoulder”](#), or JOYS for short, has been released. Since first publication in 1987 it is still a pivotal piece of guidance for civil servants on what to expect when working with government lawyers, allowing for effective collaboration and lowering the risk of legal challenge.

JOYS focusses on Administrative Law – the branch of law that governs the relationship between the government and citizens, and how it is applied. It is highly regarded across the legal profession and is an important resource for civil servants advising Ministers and supporting government decision making.

Last published in 2016, the new guidance has been modernised, updated and discusses the significant legal changes of recent years, including the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022. The cases considered reflect current legal positions as of May 2022, with insight provided by government lawyers. It also considers legal concepts, including consultation, proportionality and justiciability.

We encourage you to share the document with your Civil Service colleagues.

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The Judge Over Your Shoulder accessible PDF

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World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2022: joint statement to the OSCE

Thank you Chair.

I am honoured to deliver this Statement on behalf of Albania, Canada, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

The 30th of July is the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Millions of people globally are suffering because of this serious crime, and it is those most marginalized who are most affected.

The Russian Federation's illegal and unjustified war against Ukraine has caused the largest flow of refugees and displaced persons and the biggest humanitarian crisis we have faced in the OSCE region since the Second World War. Most of these refugees are women and children, who also make up the majority of those who fall victims to trafficking. Particularly concerning are the heightened risks unaccompanied minors and separated children face. This humanitarian crisis has the potential to become a human trafficking one.

The theme of this year's World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, "the use and abuse of technology", highlights that technology has significantly exacerbated exploitation and trafficking. The misuse of technology is central to the business model of exploitation, from traffickers using technology to advertise women and girls on adult services platforms, to people smugglers who may use technology to recruit victims and organise illegal migration.

There has been a frightening increase in online searches and demand for Ukrainian women and girls following the humanitarian and refugee crisis caused by Russia's war of aggression. Global online search traffic for "Ukrainian escorts" increased between 200% and 300% from February to March. In some countries of transit and destination, online searches for "Ukrainian porn" increased by 600%. Searches in Europe for terms such as "Ukrainian rape" went up by 300%, from being virtually undetected by search engines before 24 February.

This data, gathered by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, presents a startling picture of the seriousness of the situation and the urgency to respond to tech-facilitated trafficking and exploitation and the targeting of Ukrainian women and girls. It is also testimony to the fact that traffickers target and exploit those in vulnerable and precarious situations.

Technology can also provide important opportunities to respond to the needs of victims and survivors, to enhance prosecutions and to aid investigations, to raise awareness and lower the risks of trafficking. Therefore, it is essential to partner with tech companies to counter recruitment and exploitation facilitated by the internet and technology. An example of the great value of such partnerships is the upcoming [joint awareness-raising campaign](#) by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Thomson Reuters Special Services, that will increase awareness around risks of trafficking and improve the visibility of human trafficking hotlines.

The OSCE is a valuable platform for coordinated responses and knowledge sharing to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. We highly appreciate the excellent work of OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and Special Representative Valiant Richey and his office, including their quick and appropriate response to the unfolding situation in Ukraine. This applies to their valuable work on the project level and policy recommendations.

We cannot allow the crisis caused by Russia's war of aggression to put more people at risk of being trafficked. Our anti-trafficking efforts must be based on a victim-centred, trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, human rights-based approach, in partnership with civil society, businesses and tech companies. It is also essential to end impunity for cybercrime, and enhance internet safety for at-risk users, including children and young people, who are among those most engaged and connected online in today's world.

As long as Russia continues its war against Ukraine, the risks of trafficking continue. Russia must immediately and unconditionally stop its aggression.

The World Day Against Trafficking in Persons this year is a call to action for all of us to enhance efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking in all its forms, online and offline, and to protect those especially at-high risk, support victims and survivors, end impunity and ensure justice.

I thank you.

[Rare orchid rediscovered on MOD land](#)

Tristan Moss was out with other members of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) when he spotted the first Fen Orchid, which was in flower and seed, at the beginning of July. Other members of the society went on to find five further Fen Orchid plants.

Dubbed the 'crown jewel' of sand dunes, the orchid hasn't been seen on the site since 2003, despite being looked for over a number of years.

The recent rediscovery follows years of conservation management efforts between multiple organisations. Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) ecologists have been working with QinetiQ to implement a detailed programme of conservation management work at Pendine for almost 20 years, as part of the UK-wide MOD Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Condition Improvement Project. This project supports the management of the 82,000ha of SSSI across the Defence estate.

Work to restore the Fen Orchid started with excavations, known as 'scrapes', to remove nutrient-rich material from several dune slacks back in 2005. This process helps to prevent excessive vegetation growth and maintains a high water table with periodic flooding in the dune slacks – low lying areas in the dune system which provide habitats for rare and specialist species.

In recent years, further carefully planned restoration works have been completed, including scrub clearance and the re-blocking of a large ditch to help restore the sand dunes' hydrology. Since 2019, the Sands of LIFE (SoLIFE) project, led by Natural Resources Wales, has been responsible for renewed scrub clearance to clear re-grown invasive species and control scrub along the area's boundary to allow the dune slacks to remain open.

11-year old Tristan Moss (Copyright Chris Cheffings)

11-year-old Tristan Moss, who re-discovered the orchid, said:

I've been coming to BSBI meetings in Wales since I was a baby, re-finding the fen orchid made this the best year yet.

Oliver Howells, Senior Ecologist, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, said:

The recovery of this iconic species is the culmination of many years of work delivered by DIO and QinetiQ in partnerships with tenants, Natural Resources Wales and the Sands of LIFE project. It's a genuine success story and a great example of the long-term commitment needed to support nature recovery at this and other important wildlife sites.

Laura Bowen, Sands of LIFE Project and Monitoring Officer, said:

We are so pleased with the results from the scrub clearance programme that has been completed at Pendine. Scrub and rank vegetation will outcompete specialised, low-growing dune plants. Thanks to this completed work a range of plant species such as the Fen Orchid can thrive.

SoLIFE have worked closely with site managers, QinetiQ; DIO ecologists; and Natural Resources Wales' Ruth Harding, Senior

Environment Officer for Carmarthenshire to target key areas for restoration.

We would also like to thank our contractors AJ Butler Contracting, who work meticulously showing great care for sensitive environments, and BSBI, for undertaking essential monitoring surveys and making this fantastic find.

Jane Mercer, Managing Director of the Long Term Partnering Agreement at QinetiQ, said:

We ensure that we work effectively with partners including DIO, Natural Resources Wales, the Environment Agency and other organisations who look after the UK's wildlife, to protect the flora and fauna on our sites. We are delighted that the Fen Orchid has been rediscovered at Pendine, and will take steps to ensure it thrives.

QinetiQ is responsible for many sites with nature designations, and we take their management and long-term care very seriously, ensuring that our operational impact is minimal. We are proud to be part of the collective that is caring for and maintaining the UK's wildlife.

Richard and Kath Pryce, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), said:

Sixteen members of the BSBI were at Pendine as part of the annual Carmarthenshire recording week. It was eleven-year-old Tristan Moss who re-found the first Fen Orchid, which was in flower and seed. Following this, another five plants were found by the party, one in flower and seed and the other four, non-flowering.

"Several other rare species were recorded during the day including Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia densiflora*), Dotted Sedge (*Carex punctata*) and Adder's-tongue Fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*).

Continuing management will seek to further enhance the habitat at Pendine to encourage more Fen Orchids to colonise in future years. Thanks to the staff at the Pendine Establishment for allowing access to the party.