

# Foreign Secretary statement on Iran – 13 January 2020

Mr. Speaker, further to the oral statement on the 7 January by the Defence Secretary, I would like to make a statement on Iran, in response to the urgent question from my honourable friend.

I would first like to express my condolences to the loved ones of those tragically lost on Ukrainian International Airlines Flight PS752.

Our thoughts are with all of those affected during what must be a devastating time.

Among the 176 passengers who tragically lost their lives, were four British nationals, as well as 82 Iranians.

On the 9 January, we stated publicly, alongside our partners such as Canada and the United States that given an increasing body of information, we believed Iran was responsible for the downing of UIA Flight752.

Despite the initial denials, the Government of Iran acknowledged on the 11 January that they were responsible.

Now is the time for a full, transparent and independent investigation. This must be a collaborative endeavour, with a strong international component.

The families of the victims – including those in Iran – must have answers and must know the truth.

Mr Speaker, the UK is also working with the Canadian-led International Coordination and Response Group, consisting of countries with nationals killed in the plane crash.

This group will help with the issuing of visas and the repatriation of the bodies of victims.

Separately, Mr. Speaker, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Iran, Rob Macaire, was arrested over the weekend and illegally held for three hours.

On the 11 January, the Ambassador attended a public vigil to pay his respects to the victims of Flight 752.

He left shortly after arrival when there were signs that the vigil might turn into a protest. Let me be very clear about this.

He was not attending or recording a political protest or demonstration.

His arrest later that day, without grounds or explanation, was a flagrant violation of international law.

In response, we today will be summoning the Iranian ambassador to demand an apology and seek full assurances this will not happen again.

Given the treatment of the Ambassador, we are keeping security measures for the Embassy under review.

And we updated our travel advice on the 10 January.

As am sure the House will expect, we currently recommend British nationals do not travel to Iran, or take any flights to, from or within Iran.

On the diplomatic front, in the past week, I have met with our partners in Brussels, Washington and Montreal, including an E3 meeting yesterday evening in Paris.

I have spoken to Foreign Minister Zarif, and the PM spoke to President Rouhani.

We welcome the overwhelming international support for Her Majesty's Ambassador to Iran, and the rights to which all diplomats are entitled to under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Mr. Speaker, the regime in Tehran is at a crossroads. It can slip further and further into political and economic isolation.

But there is an alternative and the regime does have a choice.

The diplomatic door remains open.

Now it the time for Iran to engage in diplomacy and chart a peaceful way forwards. I commend this statement to the House.

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## [Embassy participates at Night for Equality in Chile](#)

As part of the Embassy's activities to support the promotion and protection of LGBT+ rights in Chile, a group of Embassy staff participated in the "Night for Equality" on 9 January, an event organised by [Fundacion Iguales](#), one of Chile's most important charities supporting LGBT+ rights.

This year's event coincided with the launch of the "EquidadCL" certification, the first of its type in South America that certifies workplaces as good places to work for members of the LGBT+ community. The British Embassy in Santiago is applying for this certification for two reasons:

- to ensure the Embassy's internal governance is strong within these areas to support its LGBT+ employees

- to promote the UK and the UK business environment as an accepting and safe model for the LGBT+ community

Echoing the work of the UK championing the rights of LGBT+ people, over the last few years the Embassy in Santiago has worked with Chile's main organisations, Movilh and Iguales, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination against LGBT community and to tackle discriminatory laws, including on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. In this regard, acknowledging that there is still much more to do in this field, the Embassy welcomes the passing of the "Gender Identity Law" in December 2019 by the Chilean Congress, which will enable many people to change their gender identity.

## **GREAT Campaign**

This year's event coincided with the launch of the "EquidadCL" certification, the first of its type in South America that certifies workplaces as good places to work for members of the LGBT+ community.

The activities to support the promotion of LGBT+ rights in Chile have received backing from the GREAT campaign, a cross-Government initiative aimed to display the best of the UK and encourage people to visit, do business, invest and study in the UK. It is the Government's most ambitious international promotional campaign ever, uniting the efforts of the private and public sectors to generate jobs and growth for Britain.

## **Further information**

If you would like to find out more about the Night for Equality, please contact [Ben Thompson](#), DIT Latin America and the Caribbean Enquiry Hub Manager, British Embassy, Santiago.

For more information about the events and activities of the British Embassy in Santiago, follow us on:

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**[Around 900,000 could receive increased Housing Benefit from April](#)**



The freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates that has been in place since 2016 has today (13 January 2020) been lifted by the Minister for Welfare Delivery, meaning that rates will rise by inflation from April.

There are around 1.4 million people in the private rental sector receiving Local Housing Allowance, and this change will provide an average of around £10 extra a month to affected households in the private rented sector.

And since 2011, the government has provided local authorities with over £1 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to protect the most vulnerable claimants. An additional £40 million was also made available for next year's Discretionary Housing Payment fund to help affordability in the private rented sector.

Minister for Welfare Delivery, Will Quince, said:

This government is levelling up opportunity across the UK, and this will be a welcome increase for around 900,000 people as we provide more money to help pay for housing.

We are committed to tackling all forms of homelessness – ending the freeze on housing benefits is just one part of achieving this. We have announced an additional £263 million to help councils provide better support to homeless people, and importantly, prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

We will continue to work with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and others across government, to find ways to support the cost of living in the rented sector.

This announcement follows a commitment to end the benefit freeze made in November, which means other benefits will also rise by inflation.

Millions of people on Universal Credit, as well as those on the old benefits system, will also see their payments rise by inflation.

Payments will increase automatically – they do not have to apply to receive the extra cash and should see a change in their housing payments after 1 April 2020.

## Contact Press Office

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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1. 14 January 2020 A figure within the copy has been revised to reflect the amount of people who will benefit from the increase.
2. 13 January 2020 First published.

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# London model ship builder helps chart the course of Qatar's history

## About the transaction: Premier Ship Models

Sector	Model ship builder
Project location	Qatar
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Premier Ship Models (PSM) is a business that designs and makes model ships for clients in the UK and abroad. They have sold to private customers and taken custom commissions from corporations and public institutions.

In 2018, PSM won a prestigious contract for six historic model ships for the new National Museum of Qatar, located in the capital Doha.

Under the terms of the contract, Premier Ship Models was required to provide a performance bond from its bank, which would have required a significant cash deposit from the company and would therefore have constrained the company's working capital.

With the benefit of a guarantee for the performance bond from UK Export Finance (UKEF), Premier Ship Models was able to secure this bond from Santander without interrupting its cashflow; the guarantee reduced the amount that Premier Ship Models had to pay for the deposit.

Fulfilling its mission to help UK companies to win, fulfil and get paid for export contracts, UKEF was instrumental helping Premier Ship Models to secure this deal, enabling them to recruit more staff and grow the business.

Rashid Lalloo, Director of Premier Ship Models said:

One of the biggest challenges that we, like a lot of SMEs, face is financing international growth, and UKEF has been vital in helping

us realise this success.

Craig Green, UKEF Export Finance Manager for Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire said:

Premier Ship Models are a great example of a small but strong UK business that have managed to grow thanks to the power of exporting. For over a hundred years UKEF has been helping UK exporters of all sizes win, fulfil and get paid for export contracts, and I am really pleased we have helped a British Company place models in Qatar's new National Museum.

We work with banks to provide flexible, innovative, and competitive financing solutions. We support UK exporters, international project sponsors and buyers of UK goods and services.

[Tell us about the project](#)

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## **Capacity Market auction determination: open letter from BEIS to National Grid, December 2019**

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Letter setting out Capacity Market auction parameters for delivery years 2020 to 2021, 2022 to 2023, and 2023 to 2024.