

Press release: Prime Minister's statement on the death of Helmut Kohl

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

It is with great sadness that I learned of the death of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl. As the First Chancellor of a unified Germany since 1945 he was a giant of European history. On behalf of the people of the United Kingdom I pay tribute to the role he played in helping to end the Cold War and reunify Germany.

We have lost the father of modern Germany and my deepest sympathies and condolences are with his family and with the German people at this sad time.

Press release: Foreign Secretary hosts further talks with Gulf counterparts on diplomatic tensions

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has held talks with Gulf counterparts this week about ongoing tensions in the region.

Mr Johnson met with the Foreign Minister of Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Thani, on Monday (12 June) to discuss the diplomatic row between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Today (Friday 16 June), the Foreign Secretary met Khalid bin Ahmed al Khalifa, the Foreign Minister of Bahrain; Adel Al-Jubeir, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia; and the Deputy Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, at the Foreign Office in London.

On Tuesday (13 June), Boris Johnson spoke to Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Khaled al-Saba, by phone, thanking him for the leading role Kuwait is playing in mediating the current row.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated his concerns about the ongoing tensions, urging Gulf ministers to deescalate the situation and find a swift resolution through mediation.

He called on all Gulf states to refrain from any escalation which could have serious repercussions on the lives of ordinary people in Qatar and beyond. He

made clear that the UK is concerned by the collective action taken by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain against an important ally, and urged them to ease the restrictions currently in place on Qatar.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated that Qatar must engage with its neighbours in the region on their concerns about extremism, and build on the progress already made to address the scourge of radicalism and terrorism in the region, in partnership with its Gulf allies.

Alistair Burt, the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, also spoke with a number of Gulf interlocutors today.

The UK and the US remain in close contact as they both make efforts to calm tensions in the region.

News story: David Mundell in Peterhead and Aberdeen

Scottish Secretary David Mundell has visited north-east Scotland today to meet fishermen's representatives in Peterhead and businesses in Aberdeen.

Following on from his reappointment this week as Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr Mundell visited north-east Scotland today to hear the priorities of fishermen and other north-east businesses ahead of EU exit.

In Peterhead Mr Mundell toured the fish market, spoke to traders and fishermen, then met representatives from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

In Aberdeen he met small and medium-sized businesses from a number of sectors – including tourism, food and tech – at a roundtable hosted by Aberdeen and Grampian Chambers of Commerce.

News story: Support for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster

During a meeting with survivors of the fire, she announced a £5 million fund would be made available to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs.

The proposals followed a visit by the Prime Minister to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, where people who had escaped the blaze said they had been left with no possessions or money.

The PM then chaired a meeting of a cross-Whitehall group of senior ministers and officials to agree a full range of help, which she set out to a group of residents, victims, volunteers and community leaders during a visit to the Clement James Centre near Grenfell Tower.

The package includes:

- a commitment that victims who lost their homes in the disaster must be rehoused at the earliest possible opportunity and that we should aim to do this within 3 weeks at the latest
- a guarantee to rehouse people as close as practically possible to where they previously lived, meaning they can continue to access the same public services, such as their local school or local GP – this rehousing would be in the same borough and, if not, a neighbouring borough
- until people are rehoused, the cost of temporary accommodation will be met on their behalf
- the government will also provide any necessary financial assistance to families who have been rehoused so children and their parents do not incur any extra costs in travelling to their local school
- the new £5 million Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund, made immediately available and given to the local authority to distribute – this could be used to cover loss of possessions, funerals and emergency supplies
- confirmation the Treasury will work with banks to ensure that those affected by the disaster who lost possessions like bank cards still have access to their accounts
- the Department for Work and Pensions are working with local job centres to ensure that those affected have access to the benefits and pensions they would normally receive

The Prime Minister also gave reassurance to the victims of the fire that they will be consulted on the terms of reference for the upcoming Public Inquiry. This will allow them to help shape the scope of the Inquiry so they can get the answers they are seeking.

The victims and their families will receive state funding for legal representation at the Public Inquiry.

In addition, the PM announced significant central government support to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

It includes sending in a team of experienced central government civil servants from the Department for Communities and Local Government, which has been embedded into the local council to assist with efforts.

The Bellwin scheme has also been activated – meaning that any immediate and uninsurable extra costs incurred by the council in the aftermath of the disaster will be met by the government.

To reassure people living in similar buildings that they are safe in their homes, the PM announced the government is:

- checking at speed with local authorities whether all high-rise buildings in their area have complied with recent fire orders, where work has been deemed required following an inspection
- identifying all high-rise buildings owned or managed by Housing Associations or Local Authorities and conducting a fire safety review of all buildings similar to Grenfell Tower – the government will also work with the devolved administrations on this issue

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

“The individual stories I heard this morning at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital were horrific. I spoke with people who ran from the fire in only the clothes they were wearing.

“They have been left with nothing – no bank cards, no money, no means of caring for their children or relatives. One woman told me she had escaped in only her top and underwear.

“The package of support I’m announcing today is to give the victims the immediate support they need to care for themselves and for loved ones. We will continue to look at what more needs to be done.

“Everyone affected by this tragedy needs reassurance that the Government is there for them at this terrible time – and that is what I am determined to provide.”

Government response: Statement on charitable giving: Grenfell Tower Fire

The Charity Commission has been working with the charities involved, as well as the key online giving platforms, to help them coordinate their response, ensuring that the victims know how to access help for their urgent, immediate needs, and to help ensure that charities and independent local organisations with strong links to the community are working together to develop plans for supporting the community in the long term. Those who have suffered in this horrendous tragedy are entitled to feel confident that the funds raised in their name reaches them and their community now, and in the weeks, months and years ahead