

# UN Human Rights Council 49: UK closing statement

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 49th session on Friday 1 April, adopting important resolutions on South Sudan, Syria, Iran, Belarus, Myanmar, and Human Rights Defenders, among many other pressing issues.

At the start of the session, the Foreign Secretary delivered the UK national statement, in which she condemned Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. I welcome the Council's establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate Russia's actions in Ukraine, which will play an essential role in documenting and drawing international attention to the most grievous human rights violations and abuses, and in ensuring accountability. I also welcome the decision of the UN General Assembly to suspend Russia's membership of the Human Rights Council – it is unconscionable that Russia should remain a member as evidence continues to emerge of egregious acts by Russia's invading forces in towns such as Irpin and Bucha. The UK stands with the people of Ukraine, and calls on Russia once again to end its war and withdraw its troops.

I welcome the Council's adoption of the resolution on South Sudan. The renewal of the mandate for the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan is a strong signal of the international community's support to help South Sudan and address serious human rights concerns. Comprehensive monitoring and reporting is an important part of the country's path to reconciliation, particularly with a view to potential elections. I urge South Sudan to continue its cooperation with the Commission and work with the international community to help end the suffering of the South Sudanese people.

This month marks the 11th anniversary of the Syrian conflict. It is deplorable that the Asad regime continues this brutal assault against its own people. I am pleased that the Council has once again adopted the resolution on Syria. The resolution highlights the Commission of Inquiry's latest findings, confirming over a decade of appalling atrocities including enforced disappearances, torture and sexual violence. It is right that the resolution mandates the Commission to continue assessing the human rights concerns. We must not forget the plight of the Syrian people.

The human rights situation in Iran continues to be of concern. The UK remains deeply concerned about increases in executions, high rates of child forced marriages and excessive use of violence against peaceful protestors. We are working closely with the United States to secure Morad Tahbaz's permanent release and departure from Iran. It remains in Iran's gift to release any unfairly detained British nationals. I welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, which signals the international community's continued commitment to ensuring inalienable human rights are respected. Iran should now permit an in-country mission by the Special Rapporteur to enable him to fulfil his mandate.

I am pleased that the Council has once again adopted a resolution on Myanmar. The resolution rightly condemns last February's coup in the strongest terms. It highlights the severe deterioration in the human rights environment, including human rights violations against the Rohingya and other minorities. We continue to stand with the people of Myanmar and call for an end to violations and abuses.

I welcome the adoption of the resolution on the Human Rights situation in Belarus. While he has rightly faced widespread condemnation for his support for Russia's unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine, it is important that the international community also continues to hold Lukashenka and his regime to account for the human rights violations perpetrated daily against the Belarusian people

Human Rights Defenders play a crucial role in society, often at great risk to themselves. The UK welcomes the resolution on Human Rights Defenders and its reinforcement that they should be treated as civilians and protected in conflict scenarios. Sadly, this role is not universally respected and the treatment of women human rights defenders working in peace and security is of particular concern.

I also welcome the renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DPRK and the adoption of the resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua and the technical co-operation with Georgia.

The Human Rights Council continues to play an essential role in promoting human rights. The UK remains strongly committed to supporting the Council and the wider international community in championing human rights and holding to account those who violate or abuse them.