

UN Human Rights Council 51: UK statement on Russia resolution

Thank you, Mr President,

What a timely moment to be debating this resolution as others have noted the Nobel Committee has recognised the work just this morning on the memorial of Ales Bialiatski and for the Centre of Civil Liberties and I quote their phrase in so doing that they recognise their “outstanding effort to document war crimes human rights abuses and abuse of power”. Yes, indeed.

We would like to thank our 26 European allies for showing leadership on this issue and bringing a resolution to the Council that is a measured, proportionate and necessary response to the alarming human rights situation in Russia. The truth is that President Putin uses repressive legislation to restrict freedom of speech and assembly; he crushes dissent through arbitrary detention and violence; and he has created a climate of fear and intimidation in order to deter civil society and activists from speaking out against the authorities.

Since Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, repression and attacks against individuals exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms have only increased.

Repression at home enables aggression abroad. Putin’s Government tries to silence those who speak out against the war and detain those who try to avoid being abroad to die in the towns and fields of Ukraine. The increasing violence abroad in turn necessitates more brutal repression at home.

We have heard arguments in this house today that the response proposed in this resolution is somehow disproportionate, or that steps should be ‘more incremental’. But the reality is that the action being proposed in this Council in response to the human rights crisis in Russia is considered; it is deliberate; and it is entirely appropriate.

Mr President, as Russia increases repression against its own citizens, the countless number of Russian people who have suffered – and continue to suffer – are looking to us, in this room, right now, to demonstrate that we stand in solidarity with them. To demonstrate that we will not ignore their struggle, or their grief. And that this Council can help them to establish the truth and provide hope to those working to protect human rights.

For these reasons the United Kingdom will vote Yes on the draft resolution before us, and we urge our fellow members of this Council to do the same.