

UK Statement on Democratic Institutions at HDIM 2019

Delivered by Ambassador Neil Bush at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), 17 September 2019

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Mr Moderator

I fully align with the statement given by Poland on behalf of the EU, but would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

15 September marked International Day of Democracy – the theme this year was “participation”, recalling that at the heart of democracy are people. This reflects our OSCE commitments, notably from Copenhagen in 1990. In this we agreed that: “The will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government.”

Given the challenging global environment, it is very important to mark the International Day of Democracy. And to continue to support and encourage strong, functional democracies globally.

This is particularly true in the OSCE context as democracy, human rights and the rule of law contribute to long-term security and prosperity.

Advocating respect for these values is in all our national interests. There is a strong correlation between societies that are secure and prosperous, and those that enjoy open and participative democracy.

The UK supports democracy around the world – including the OSCE region – by standing up for those individuals who strive to defend these principles, locally and nationally, when they are under threat. Without the vigilance and bravery of human rights defenders, democracy can be undermined and weakened.

Human rights defenders play a crucial role in the democratic process, often putting themselves and their families at great personal risk to stand up for the rights of minorities and others.

To make clear our commitment, in July, we published the [“UK Support for Human Rights Defenders”](#) document, which sets out the type of support the UK Government can offer.

The strength of any democracy can be measured by its ability to cope with strong differences of opinion, and its respect for the right of all persons to exercise their fundamental freedoms that underpin democratic societies.

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[PM call with Chancellor Angela Merkel: 17 September 2019](#)



The Prime Minister spoke to Chancellor Angela Merkel this morning.

They discussed Saturday's attacks in Saudi Arabia and the need to work together, alongside international partners, to agree a collective response.

On the issue of Iran, they reaffirmed their commitment to a common approach and the importance of avoiding the further escalation of tensions in the region.

On Brexit, the Prime Minister reiterated that the UK and the EU have agreed

to accelerate efforts to reach a deal without the backstop which the UK Parliament could support, and that we would work with energy and determination to achieve this ahead of Brexit on the 31 October.

The leaders looked forward to meeting to discuss these issues further at the upcoming UN General Assembly in New York.

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[UN Human Rights Council 42: Interactive Dialogue on Syria](#)

The UK reiterates its support for the important work of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria. We are grateful for the latest update and share the Commission's deep concern about the human rights situation, particularly in Idlib, where 1000 civilians have been killed and 600,000 displaced as a result of the military offensive by the Asad regime and its backers.

The UK welcomes the UN Secretary General's Board of Inquiry to investigate the appalling attacks, including those on medical facilities. Hostilities have had a particularly devastating impact on children, who make up over half of Idlib's three million civilians. During the current offensive, 304 children have been killed and 55 schools have been struck. We join the Commission's call for all sides to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and to protect civilians.

We welcome the UN's efforts to negotiate sustained humanitarian access to Rukban camp. Any movement of camp residents should be safe, voluntary, and informed, in line with International Humanitarian Law. We are concerned by reports of violations, including arbitrary detention, against those who have relocated, and support a role for the UN in monitoring the relocation process.

Mr Pinheiro,

Given the continued reports of violations against former residents of the Rukban IDP camp, will the Commission consider investigating this further?