

UN Human Rights Council 41: Cambodia

Thank you, Madam Vice-President,

The UK welcomes Cambodia's engagement in the UPR process.

We recognise that some positive steps have been taken by the Cambodian Government including: the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights; the removal of the requirement for NGOs to give the local authority three days' notification of activity; and the commitment to end human trafficking and forced labour.

We welcome Cambodia's support for our recommendation to improve and expand identification and protection procedures for victims of these crimes.

We are also encouraged by Cambodia's support of our recommendation to implement a coherent resettlement policy and simplified process for granting communal land titles. The UK notes Cambodia's acknowledgement that its land allocation system is flawed. We welcome policies on proper land use and registration and ask that these be transparent and equitable.

However, we remain gravely concerned by restrictions placed on freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), the forced closure of media outlets, and the provisions of the Criminal Code that criminalise defamation and restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are troubling. We are disappointed that our recommendation on these critical issues was only noted.

We urge Cambodia to release Kem Sokha and to ensure that he, and the remaining 108 banned former CNRP politicians, can freely engage in political activity. While we welcome the amendment of the Political Party law in January 2019, we are concerned that the provisions require individuals to request permission to return to politics, leaving them open to arbitrary decision making.

Thank you, Madam Vice-President.

Approved Document B 2019 edition: circular 02/2019

The purpose of this Circular is to:

- announce the approval and publication of the updated [Approved Documents](#)
- draw attention to the transitional provisions for the above changes

The changes made to the Approved Documents apply only to buildings and building work in England.

The new approved documents will come into force on 30 August 2019.

Please see the Circular for full details of transition period.

Solicitor General welcomes modern slavery conviction

Three people have today been sentenced as part of the UK's largest ever modern slavery prosecution.

Ignacy Brzezinski, 53, Wojciech Nowakowski, 42, and Jan Sadowski, 29 were today convicted of charges relating to multiple counts of human trafficking into and within the UK, forced labour and money laundering at Birmingham Crown Court.

Brzezinski was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, Nowakowski to 6 and a half years, and Sadowski to 3 years.

The conviction comes following the second trial under Operation Fort, the largest case to go to prosecution under modern slavery legislation in the UK, and one of the largest ever labour exploitation prosecutions in Europe.

Under Operation Fort, 88 alleged victims provided statements, with many others identified as potential victims. Victims were largely vulnerable Polish nationals lured to the UK by an organised crime group with offers of work, free or subsidised accommodation, food and travel.

Upon arrival in the UK, victims were housed in very poor accommodation and given little, sometimes expired, food. They were made to claim benefits, which were siphoned by the group, and forced to work for as little as £10 a week. The group kept the victims' bank cards and Polish identity cards, or copies of them, to prevent them from leaving, and threatened or assaulted those who suggested it.

Following the sentencing, Solicitor General Lucy Frazer QC MP said:

"Eradicating modern slavery in the UK is a government priority and I welcome the conviction of this modern slavery ring which took advantage of vulnerable people for their own gain. The CPS and West Midlands Police must be commended for their commitment to eradicating modern slavery in the UK via the criminal justice system."

Notes to editors

There are 3 trials under Operation Fort. Five defendants have already been convicted on multiple counts of trafficking, forced labour and money laundering following the first trial. The second trial is detailed in this press notice. The third depends on the extradition of 4 more individuals from Poland.

[Company directors convicted after 2 major fires](#)

Suspended prison sentences handed to company directors following major fires and pollution incident in Kidderminster

[Company directors convicted after 2 major fires](#)

Two former directors of Lawrence Skip Hire Ltd were given suspended prison sentences and community punishment orders at Worcester Crown Court yesterday (Thursday 4 July 2019).

The court heard that waste management failures at the company led to 2 major fires and a pollution incident categorised by court sentencing guidelines as being at the highest level.

David Lawrence, 52, of Seymour Road, Kidderminster was the company operations director and designated technically competent manager. He was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, and ordered to complete 180 hours of unpaid work.

Andrew Gibson, 55, of Wood Lane, Lichfield, was the company chairman and sales director. He was sentenced to 4 and a half months imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, and ordered to complete 90 hours of unpaid work.

The directors ran a waste recycling facility under the trading name of Lawrences Recycling and Waste Management Ltd at The Forge, Stourport Road, in Kidderminster, under an environmental permit. They claimed the site was the largest indoor waste management facility in Europe.

History of the site

Between August 2012 and December 2012, the company stored excessive quantities of waste at the site in breach of the environmental permit, despite warnings given to the company by the Environment Agency. These failures to properly assess the risk of fire and manage the waste appropriately on the site culminated in a serious fire, when waste self combusted at the company premises in December 2012.

In spite of that fire and further warnings from the Environment Agency and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, the company continued to accept and store thousands of tonnes of waste to avoid the cost of disposal and in a way that put the environment at risk. These further failures led to a second fire at the site in June 2013.

The fire in December 2012 burned for nearly a week. The fire in June 2013 burned for 8 weeks and resulted in a major impact to the environment and local community. The smoke had a significant impact on air quality and affected the operation of businesses around the site. Water used to fight the fire was contaminated by the burning waste and it flowed into the nearby Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The contaminated water that entered the canal in June 2013 resulted in the deaths of 3,000 fish and threatened drinking water supplies. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service described the fires as 2 of the biggest firefighting operations it had ever had to deal with.

Aerial view of one of the fires

The company did not have buildings insurance after the first fire, and went into administration in September 2013, leaving the Environment Agency, Fire Service, Wyre Forest District Council and Worcester County Council to pay thousands of pounds to demolish the building, extinguish the fire and control pollution until the site was eventually sold.

In passing sentence, His Honour Judge Cartwright, found that both Lawrence and Gibson had been negligent in the lead up to the fire in December 2012. The judge found that in the lead up to the fire in June 2013, both men had ignored warnings even from their own employees, about the risks to the environment, concluding that Lawrence had acted recklessly given that in his position the waste was 'before his eyes' and Gibson had continued to act in a negligent manner and continued to encourage customers to send their waste to the site.

In mitigation, the court noted that both Lawrence and Gibson had pleaded guilty and were of good character, with no previous convictions.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency spokesperson said:

These directors operated their waste recycling facility in a way that blighted the community with flies, vermin and odour, and put people's health and businesses at risk by not adequately assessing

and controlling the risks of fire. They continued to operate with flagrant disregard after the first fire with no insurance and no fund set aside to manage these risks, leaving the taxpayer to pick up the bill when an incident occurred and creating misery for their neighbours.

We have pursued this case on behalf of the community and multi-agency partners. These directors now have criminal records as a result of the environmental offences they committed and have to payback the community through unpaid work orders.

You can call the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or look [online](#) to find out how to responsibly manage any waste your business produces.

We can all play a part in helping to prevent waste getting into the hands of criminals. If you suspect that a company is doing something wrong, you can call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.