

## Press release: Minister for Europe calls for investigation into persecution of LGBT community in Chechnya

Sir Alan Duncan has called on the Russian Government to ensure those responsible for human rights abuses in Chechnya are held to account.

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The Minister for Europe's remarks come following further disturbing reports of the continued persecution of LGBT people in Chechnya, concerns which previously surfaced in 2017.

The most recent reports suggest that a further 40 individuals have been detained, alongside two deaths in custody following torture. These must be investigated urgently.

FCO Minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

The persecution of LGBT people in Chechnya is utterly appalling. Recent reports indicate that two people have died in custody following torture, and a further 40 remain in detention – all simply for their sexual orientation. Persecution for being LGBT, in any country in the world, is abhorrent.

The Russian authorities must protect their people from these human rights abuses, and conduct a credible investigation into these reports immediately. There should be no climate of impunity for those who commit these abuses.

We and the international community have repeatedly called for the Russian Government to conduct an investigation and hold those responsible for human rights abuses in Chechnya to account, including through the 2018 OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

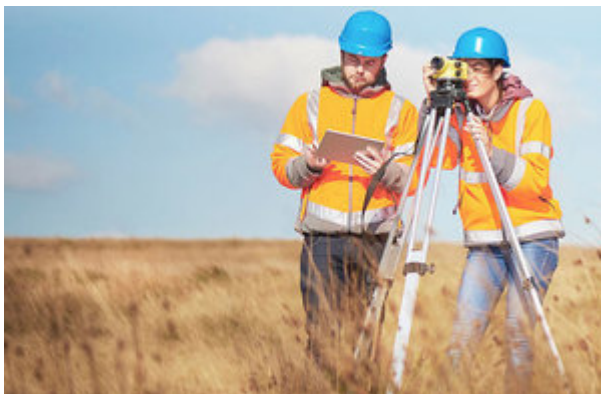
All decent people very much hope that Chechnya can put an end to this sort of barbaric persecution and step into the modern world of civility and tolerance.

Following similar reports in 2017, the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, invoked by the UK and 15 other countries in 2018, set out recommendations to Russia. We urge the Russian Government to implement these recommendations as a matter of urgency, and to uphold its international human rights obligations to its people.

## Further information

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## [News story: Welsh Government launches policy to deal with radioactive waste](#)



Engineers at work – Peirianwyr yn gweithio

Geological disposal is one of the UK's largest ever environmental protection projects, which will provide a safe and secure long-term solution for the disposal of higher activity radioactive waste.

In support of the [Welsh Government's policy announcement](#), RWM has published information for communities including:

In addition, we have also launched a consultation on how we will evaluate sites in Wales:

A community meeting – Cyfarfod cymunedol

Anyone interested in learning more about geological disposal and what it could mean for their community should visit our [website](#) or contact RWM via [gdfenqcymru@nda.gov.uk](mailto:gdfenqcymru@nda.gov.uk)

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## Press release: St Helens estate agent jailed for 4-and-a-half years

Estate agent from St Helens has been jailed for four-and-a-half years after carrying out fraud offences and perverting the course of justice.

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## Press release: St Helens estate agent jailed for 4-and-a-half years

Richard Charles Hall (45), from Ecclestone, St Helens, was sentenced on Monday 14 January at Liverpool Crown Court following a joint investigation between the Insolvency Service and Merseyside Police. In total, he was found guilty of seven offences.

Across two trials, in October and December 2018, the court heard that Richard Hall traded as an estate agent through the company Brooklands Sales and Lettings Limited.

However, Richard Hall defrauded several people to the value of more than £40,000 through his business dealings.

Richard Hall also dishonestly sold Brooklands Sales & Lettings Ltd in May 2014, claiming he owned the full company, despite having received investment from a third party. Furthermore, Richard Hall sold the business just two months before he was made bankrupt for a second time.

The court then heard that Richard Hall had first been made bankrupt in 2012, with the restrictions lifted in 2013. But when he was made bankrupt for a second time in July 2014, he attempted to undermine the Official Receiver's investigations into his affairs.

He tried to conceal a bank account from the Official Receiver and his shares in Brooklands and once investigators found the account, they discovered Richard Hall was operating a sole trader company called Brooklands Sales alongside the company he had sold unbeknownst to the new owners of Brooklands.

He then continued to thwart the Official Receiver's investigations into his bankruptcy. He told investigators that he never held shares in Brooklands, even though his name was on the public Companies House register.

And at court, he produced banking material intending to convince the Court that he had paid back monies for the sale of Brooklands.

His Honour Judge Watson QC commented that there should be a high degree of trust and integrity in estate agents but that in this case, Hall had lied and exploited others, while abusing his position of trust and responsibility.

The Judge added that Hall deliberately withheld important information from the Insolvency Service by concealing property then deliberately tried to pervert the course of justice

Prior to his sentence, Richard Hall had received a suspended prison sentence in 2013 for possessing an offensive weapon in a public place and in 2015 he was also convicted of a battery offence.

John Fitzsimmons, Chief Investigator of Criminal Investigations for the Insolvency Service, said:

Richard Hall's behaviour has been deceitful and calculating throughout, whether that was defrauding landlords or undermining the Official Receiver from doing their job.

This has been an extensive investigation covering many areas of criminality and we welcome the sentence handed down by the courts, which we hope serves as a warning to those who think they can renege on their responsibilities toward the Insolvency Service when bankrupt.

Detective Inspector Steve Ball, Merseyside Police, said:

We are pleased that Richard Hall has been sentenced and hope it brings some comfort to the victims of his crimes that he is now behind bars.

Hall played on peoples trust, defrauding them of large sums of money and exploiting them for his own financial gain. This sentencing brings to an end an extensive investigation carried out together with the Insolvency service and I hope it reminds the public that we will always act on information about fraud to bring offenders to justice.

Victims may sometimes feel embarrassed about coming forward but I want to reassure people that we will treat any allegations with sensitivity and compassion, through specialist officers and alongside our partners.

If you have, or are being subjected to fraud, or feel like you, or someone you care for, is being scammed, please get in touch.

The first trial took place at Liverpool Crown Court on 9 October 2018 in connection with the landlord frauds. Richard Hall was found guilty of three fraud offences.

The second trial, also at Liverpool Crown Court, followed on 10 December 2018 and was held in connection with a further fraud offence, two counts of obstructing the Official Receiver by perjury and doing an act with intent to pervert the course of justice.

The Insolvency Service administers the insolvency regime, investigating all compulsory liquidations and individual insolvencies (bankruptcies) through the Official Receiver to establish why they became insolvent. It may also use powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK. In addition, the agency deals with disqualification of directors in corporate failures, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: