

News story: FCO launches its Annual Human Rights report for 2016

Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy puts human rights centre stage of foreign policy.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has published its [2016 Annual Human Rights Report](#). The report covers the period from January to December 2016 and for the first time includes a dedicated section on modern slavery – a key UK Government priority.

This report focuses on how the Government is working to protect and promote human rights around the world. It also sets out our 30 Human Rights Priority Countries (HRPCs).

The key themes include:

- modern slavery;
- rights of women and girls;
- torture and the death penalty;
- LGBT rights;
- and the increasing pressure faced by civil society organisations.

The Minister for Human Rights, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, said:

In too many countries across the world, human rights and rule of law are neither respected nor valued as they should be.

Standing up for human rights is not only the right thing; it also helps to create a safer, more prosperous and progressive world.

This report documents the serious concerns we have about the human rights situations in a range of countries and also highlights our work protecting and promoting the value of universal rights and democracy.

Safeguarding, promoting and defending human rights internationally is an important UK priority and our Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy supports crucial frontline work.

British diplomats put human rights at the heart of everything they do, working in partnership with foreign governments and civil society – particularly in our 30 HRPCs – to promote safer, more inclusive, prosperous societies.

Video available [here](#)

News story: Sentinel-5 Precursor satellite ready for launch

Sentinel-5 Precursor, part of a joint European Commission–ESA undertaking which aims to supply geo-information products and services based on the use of data from space, is set to leave Airbus's site in Stevenage.

The satellite will provide essential atmospheric chemistry data to the Copernicus programme before the Sentinel-5 instrument becomes operational in 2021 on the MetOp Second Generation satellite.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

The UK-built Sentinel-5 Precursor satellite and the success of the Copernicus Programme demonstrates what we can achieve through collaboration with our European partners and the UK's vital role in the programme thanks to our earth observation expertise.

We've been clear that we want our companies and universities to continue participating in key EU space programmes, and through our Industrial Strategy and ongoing investment in the UK space sector, we are ensuring we have the infrastructure and skills in place to support our ambition to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030.

Data from the Sentinel satellites benefits the UK public sector in areas such as emergency response or flooding; farming and environmental management; air quality; marine planning and fisheries. The same data also enables commercial applications that help our wider economy function more efficiently and effectively, growing our space sector at the same time.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

The whole of the Copernicus programme is a fantastic success for the UK. It has a global vision, providing near real-time measurements of Earth on an unprecedented scale.

Copernicus has been a major work programme for UK space technology

companies, building and testing instruments and satellites. This industrial contribution helps us maintain and expand UK skills and capability, but also strengthens the whole programme, as ESA can rely on UK expertise to make sure these 'state of the art' spacecraft have the best and brightest of Europe's space sector behind them.

Sentinel-5 Precursor features the TROPOMI (TROPOspheric Monitoring Instrument) instrument, developed by Airbus DS Netherlands for the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Netherlands Space Office. TROPOMI will measure ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, methane and other atmospheric pollutants at a higher resolution than previous instruments. Having more accurate atmospheric data will enable improved climate models and pollutant tracking and forecasting.

Colin Paynter, Managing Director of Airbus Defence and Space in the UK, said:

For Sentinel-5 Precursor we used the commercially successful AstroBus platform, enabling us to meet challenging delivery and cost efficiency targets. This mission will give Europe a new way to measure global pollution levels in much greater detail.

Sentinel-5 Precursor is due for launch on a Rokot rocket from Plesetsk Cosmodrome, Russia, in September 2017.

[News story: ASLEF meeting constructive, strikes remain suspended](#)

Strikes remain suspended after Transport Secretary holds constructive talks with ASLEF union.

Planned strike action by ASLEF members on Southern Rail remains suspended after the Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, held constructive talks with the union. The talks were aimed at re-starting the negotiations between the company and the union.

The union called off strikes on Southern Rail on 1, 2 and 4 August 2017 and lifted a ban on overtime and rest day working to meet the Transport Secretary.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We're doing everything we can to resolve the situation on Southern and get passengers the high quality rail services that they deserve.

I was pleased to have a constructive meeting with ASLEF today and I hope it paves the way for the reopening of negotiations between the union and Southern so we can sort out this situation and get services back to normal for passengers.

[Press release: Wolverhampton father who planned fatal robbery will spend longer in prison](#)

Colin Raymond Cooke, who conspired with his son Paul Cooke to commit a robbery that resulted in the victim's murder, has had his prison term extended following a referral by the Attorney General.

Mr Cooke Snr, 62, was sentenced in May before the Crown Court at Wolverhampton to 7 years imprisonment for the robbery offence, with 30 months imprisonment to be served concurrently for helping his son to avoid the police after committing a murder.

Repeat offender Paul Cooke was released from prison in May 2015. He visited his father later that day and the two plotted to rob the home of Cooke Snr's friend, who they knew hid cash in his home. The next evening, Paul Cooke entered the victim's home and stabbed him to death, making off with all the cash he and his accomplice could find.

The victim's decomposing body was not found until a month after the murder. DNA underneath the victim's fingernails linked the murder to Paul Cooke and an unknown male.

Mr Cooke Snr proceeded to dispose of his son's phone in an effort to hide him from the police.

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP argued that the original sentence given to Cooke Snr was unduly lenient. The Court of Appeal has today increased his total sentence to 11 years and 6 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Attorney General said: "This was a well planned robbery, where an innocent person has lost their life. The offender has also shown no remorse in the death of his friend. I am pleased the Court of Appeal has increased the sentence."

Press release: Strategic Defence and Security Review Implementation

The government has initiated work on a review of national security capabilities, in support of the ongoing implementation of the [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) (NSS & SDSR) which was published in November 2015.

The work will be led by Mark Sedwill, the National Security Adviser, with individual strands taken forward by cross-departmental teams, and will be carried out alongside continued implementation and monitoring of the 89 principal commitments set out in the NSS & SDSR.

The national security capability review will include examination of the policy and plans which support implementation of the national security strategy, and help to ensure that the UK's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible, to address current national security challenges. The review will also be informed by work which has already been commissioned in response to recent national security-related incidents.

The government is committed to report annually on progress in implementing the NSS & SDSR, and published its First Annual Report on implementation in December 2016. Further progress on implementation of the NSS & SDSR, and related work, will be reported in the Second Annual Report after the end of the second year of implementation.

As detailed in the [First Annual Report](#), the government will set out in subsequent annual reports where a significant change of approach in implementing the NSS & SDSR is considered necessary as a result of changes to the national security environment.