

[Press release: FCO statement on the sentencing of Sheikh Ali Salman in Bahrain](#)

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, said:

I am very concerned about the life sentence handed down by the Appeals Court of Bahrain today to Sheikh Ali Salman, in addition to the sentence he is currently serving. I understand that Sheikh Ali Salman now has the right of appeal against this latest sentence.

The UK continues to encourage the Government of Bahrain to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
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[Speech: Supporting Libyan Authorities](#)

in Efforts to Build the Rule of Law

Mr President,

I would like to start by congratulating you on China's assumption of the presidency of the Council for November. We wish you all the best for the month ahead.

Mr President,

I would like to thank the Prosecutor for briefing the Council on her sixteenth report on the situation in Libya to the Security Council. The UK remains fully supportive of the ICC's work on Libya to tackle impunity and ensure those responsible for the most serious crimes of international concern in Libya are held accountable.

Mr President,

The Prosecutor's latest report highlights once again the troubling situation in Libya. The United Kingdom has been clear that the status quo is not a sustainable option. The continued political divisions in Libya benefit no-one except certain armed groups, bent on criminality, who have created an environment of lawlessness, intimidation and fear in which ordinary Libyans continue to suffer. The increase in violence in and around Tripoli since August, and the ongoing sporadic violence which has continued since the cease-fire on 4 September, highlights this. These innocent civilians, including many children, deserve better. There is an urgent need to break the political deadlock and bring peace to Libya. To this end, it is vital for all parties to engage in good faith with the UN-led political process and Special Representative to the Secretary-General, Ghassan Salamé.

We must ensure that all those committing human rights violations and abuses in Libya, including unlawful killings, do not evade justice. The United Kingdom has strongly supported resolutions at the Human Rights Council on increasing accountability, and calling for those committing acts in Libya amounting to war crimes or other breaches of international humanitarian law to be investigated and held to account. We call on all parties to cooperate with the ICC including through the execution of arrest warrants. The United Kingdom is grateful for the Prosecutor's update on the cases against Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al Werfalli and Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled and notes that the Prosecutor's Office believes that al Werfalli is no longer in LNA detention, and is currently at large in Libya.

The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with other Member States, the Office of the Prosecutor and the Libyan Prosecutor General's Office in the investigation of the appalling reports of crimes against migrants, including those perpetrated by militia and armed groups in Libya, and those involving international migrants transiting through Libya. These crimes allegedly include torture, killings, sexual violence and even enslavement of migrants. We are deeply concerned that the number of migrants in detention

centres has continued to rise and the United Kingdom will continue to provide assistance to those who find themselves in such centres. In response to the heightened risk of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence in Libya, we have also provided specific support to assist in the protection for women and girls. We acknowledge the importance of the Office of the Prosecutor integrating a gender perspective into its work, based on its Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom is a strong principled supporter of the ICC. We will continue to provide our full support to the Prosecutor and her team. It is crucial that Member States and relevant international organisations work to assist the Libyan authorities in their efforts to build the rule of law in Libya. We, along with our international partners, will continue to work with Libya to provide it with the support it needs to meet the challenges it faces.

Thank you Mr President.

Press release: Gulf security tops agenda at Chiefs of Defence meeting

UK Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Nick Carter and Omani Chief of Staff SAF Lieutenant General Ahmed bin Harith al Nabhani co-chaired the meeting that discussed issues of mutual security, including maritime security, and defence reform.

Chief of Defence Staff General Sir Nick Carter said:

As Chiefs of Defence we share a long-standing friendship, respect and understanding of the regional challenges in the Gulf.

The UK is committed to sustaining security in the region and will continue to work in partnership with our allies to uphold the stability on which it depends.

At the meeting, the Chiefs gave their assessment of the current issues affecting maritime security and discussed proposals for increasing cooperation and information sharing. They also commended the fact that for first time all three Coalition Maritime Forces Task Forces are under command of GCC nations.

In addition, the Chiefs shared their experiences of defence reform as the UK and many regional partners are currently undergoing, or considering, reform and modernisation programmes.

They also discussed the common challenges, how to tackle them collectively, and how the constantly evolving security context and risks drive defence's objectives and procurement choices.

The meeting follows the success of Exercise Saif Sareea 3 which saw over 70,000 UK and Omani personnel live, work and train side by side over the past five weeks. It also marks the beginning of a wide-ranging defence engagement programme which will see the UK Armed Forces work with every single one of our Gulf partner nations in a combination of engagements in the air, on land, and at sea in the coming months.

Speech: When we speak for ourselves, we flourish – and our status in the WTO is no exception

As part of our work to set up the UK's own trade policy for the first time in over 40 years, we are currently establishing our independent goods "schedule" at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The UK is a full and founding member of the WTO and our status is no different from that of, say, Canada or Japan. But under the EU treaties, EU member states have agreed to speak with one voice on trade. In the WTO that means the Commission represents the member states. It also means the UK's rights and obligations are bound up with those of the other EU member states in common "schedules". One for goods and one for services, these are the official WTO documents that describe the tariffs, quotas, subsidies, and regulatory commitments that underpin our position in the multilateral trading system.

Before we leave the EU, the UK needs to separate its schedules from the EU's. As part of this process, WTO members have a chance to respond. A small number expressed reservations and would like to discuss further. Last week, I announced that the UK intends to open negotiations at the WTO to address these concerns. This has been purposefully misunderstood by those wishing to stop Brexit as evidence that our WTO strategy isn't working.

They are wrong. It's not unprecedented for a WTO member to trade on schedules that have not been approved by every other WTO member. In fact, the EU hasn't had an up to date certified goods schedule since 2004, and certainly doesn't have an updated services one.

The government's policy since October 2016 has been to establish the UK's independent position in the WTO by March 2019 so that we are prepared for a range of possible Brexit outcomes. That remains our policy, and last week's announcement is evidence that it is on track, not that it has failed.

Under WTO procedures, if changes to a country's schedule are of a purely technical and formal nature, members can use a process called "rectification" to make those changes. That is why we decided to replicate, as far as possible, the UK's existing rights and obligations. We have replicated thousands of tariffs lines in our EU schedules into our UK-only schedules.

We always knew agricultural quotas and subsidies would be different. You cannot copy and paste a quota or subsidy for the EU into the UK schedule: it would represent a major change to our agricultural trade on the one hand, and a major increase in the UK's rights to subsidise agriculture on the other. The UK and the EU came up with a methodology last year for dividing the EU's existing agricultural quotas and subsidies, based on existing trade flows with third countries. We knew there would be objections, because the countries that rely most on these quotas – the US, New Zealand, the major Latin American exporters – have been telling us, and the EU, from the outset.

We nevertheless used this methodology in our goods schedule and submitted it to the WTO membership, for 2 main reasons. First, we believe this represents a fair reproduction of the rights under the EU's existing schedule. And second, our priority was to first establish the UK's separate schedule in the WTO and only then to use other WTO processes that exist to address any objections to specific elements of it.

The objections we have received were therefore neither unexpected, nor a failure of our strategy. We have always been open to having more detailed discussions with partners once we had established our own schedule. That is why I have announced our intention to launch negotiations on these objections.

This process is unlikely to be fully complete by the time we leave the EU. But objecting WTO members cannot veto the UK trading on our uncertified goods, or services, schedules after next March. In the unlikely event of a "no deal" between the UK and EU, we will be able to take full control of our trade policy in March 2019 based on the schedule we have set out.

As the Director General of the WTO has said, the consequences of no deal would not be a walk in the park but nor would it be the end of the world. There will be difficult moments, but the UK will be ready to take back full control in the WTO from next March.

News story: New UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres open

From today (Friday 2 November), people applying for work or study visas, settlement or citizenship from within the UK will be able to make appointments to use new, modernised and efficient service centres.

The first centre will open in Manchester on Friday 9 November 2018 and will be followed by new centres in Birmingham, Glasgow, Cardiff, Belfast and Croydon. In addition, there will be 50 enhanced service centres nationally, which will be available to customers for a charge, and a premium lounge located in London.

The modernised service will mean that most people applying in the UK will be able to submit their biometric information including photos, fingerprints, and signatures as well as their supporting evidence at a single appointment.

The current system requires an individual to make an application, send their documents to UKVI, who retain them until the application is completed, and enrol their biometrics separately.

To help improve peace of mind for customers using the centres, it will now be possible, in the majority of cases, to take digital copies of evidence meaning that people won't have to hand over important documents, such as passports, while their applications are processed.

The Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

We are committed to delivering a modern, convenient and easy to use service for UKVI customers.

These new service centres located across the country are a key part of our vision for a system that supports its customers and provides peace of mind whilst they are making an application.

The majority of people will now complete their applications online via an intuitive and easy to use system before attending one of the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres (UKVCAS), which will be delivered by commercial partner Sopra Steria.

Customers will be led through an online application process making it clear what they need to do, what supporting evidence they will need and where they need to go to complete their application.

Free appointments will be available for everyone, however, customers will also have the option to purchase added value services such as same day

appointments and [On Demand services](#).

In addition, there will also be 7 dedicated Service and Support Centres (SSC), which will transform the experience for people who need more support with their applications.

Experienced frontline Home Office staff will help those who need extra support to better understand their circumstances and if necessary, take the appropriate safeguarding action.

These SSCs will be in Belfast, Cardiff, Croydon, Glasgow, Liverpool, Sheffield and Solihull, and will open in January 2019.

[Further information on these services](#).