

# Foreign Secretary's statement on Belarus: 24 September 2020

With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement regarding the situation in Belarus.

As the House will recall, on 9 August, Belarus held Presidential elections which were neither free nor fair. The election campaign was itself characterised by the imprisonment of opposition candidates and the arrest of hundreds of their supporters.

On polling day, on 9 August, witnesses reported extensive fraud and falsification of results.

Local independent observers were barred from witnessing the count, including members of the British Embassy who were threatened and then removed from a polling station.

The Belarusian authorities prevented independent international monitoring of the electoral processes by refusing to cooperate with OSCE election monitors.

And, as a result, thousands of Belarusians took to the streets in, what can only be described as, peaceful protest. They challenged Lukashenko's claim to have won 80 percent of the vote and they demanded fresh elections. And they have been peacefully protesting in huge numbers right across Belarus ever since.

The world has watched, frankly, in horror at the response of the Belarusian authorities. They launched a campaign of violence, intimidation and harassment against peaceful protestors. We have seen horrific scenes of militia attacking demonstrators and dragging them away.

UN human rights experts report that the authorities have beaten those they held in detention and they've threatened female protestors with violence, including rape.

The Belarusian authorities have targeted journalists, including the BBC, and shut down the internet in order to hide their actions.

Opposition leaders set up a Coordination Council to organise peaceful protests.

In response, the authorities abducted, imprisoned and expelled all but one of the Coordination Council's Board members. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya has been exiled to Lithuania. And the prominent campaigner Maria Kolesnikova has been imprisoned and charged with destabilising the state.

Only yesterday, Lukashenko was sworn in at a hastily organised and unannounced ceremony. Frankly, hiding his inauguration from the people of Belarus only serves to reinforce Lukashenko's lack of legitimacy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the UK, the West and the world cannot sit idle while the Belarusian people's democratic and human rights are violated so brutally in clear violation of Belarus's obligations as a member of the OSCE.

So, for our part, the UK has worked with our key international partners first to promote a peaceful resolution, but also to condemn the actions of the Belarusian authorities and to hold those responsible to account.

I discussed the situation and our response with the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany at Chevening on 10 September. I also discussed the issue and the situation with Lithuanian Foreign Minister when he visited London last week.

I've also just returned from Washington where I agreed with Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo to coordinate the UK and the US response. The Minister for Europe has spoken to Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and Svetlana Aleksevich.

So now, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me be clear on the UK's position and our approach.

First of all we don't accept the results of this rigged election.

Second, we condemn the thuggery deployed against the Belarusian people.

We have led the way, working with 16 of our international partners, so that on 17 September, we [triggered the Moscow Mechanism in the OSCE](#), which initiates a full and independent investigation into both the electoral fraud and human rights abuses carried out by the Belarusian authorities.

It is absolutely critical that those responsible are held to account.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are willing to join the EU in adopting targeted sanctions against those responsible for the violence, the repression and the vote rigging in Belarus, although the EU process has now been delayed in Brussels.

Given that delay Madam Deputy Speaker, given Lukashenko's fraudulent inauguration, I have directed the FCO's sanction team to prepare Magnitsky sanctions for those responsible for the serious human rights violations, and we are coordinating with the United States and Canada to prepare appropriate listings as a matter of urgency.

Next, Madam Deputy Speaker, we must support and strengthen civil society and the brave media outlets struggling to shine a light on the repression that we are seeing inflicted by the Belarusian authorities on its people.

The government has already been working with our partners in Belarus to this effect. But we must do more.

So I have doubled our financial support to human rights groups, independent media organisations and community groups, providing an extra £1.5 million over the next 2 years.

That includes £800,000 of support for journalists, in particular, in Belarus. That UK funding will help train journalists, it will provide support to those detained by the authorities, and it will also help replace equipment that's been destroyed or confiscated.

We will apply all the tools at our disposal to hold Lukashenko and his regime to account. And we call on him to engage in serious and credible dialogue with the opposition, via mediation if necessary, in order to facilitate a peaceful outcome to the current crisis. And one which reflects, and respects, the will of the Belarusian people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if the authorities in Belarus fail to respond, based on the outcome of the OSCE investigation, which we have triggered, we will consider further actions with our international partners.

Our vision for Global Britain means standing up for democracy and human rights. That's what we are doing in Belarus.

And I commend this statement to the House.

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## [New legislation protects national security capability to fight serious crime](#)

New legislation which underpins the work of MI5, police and other public authorities tackling serious crimes has today (Thursday 24 September) been introduced to Parliament.

Undercover operatives and agents play a crucial role in preventing and safeguarding victims from the most serious crimes, including terrorism and child sexual abuse. In order to gain the trust of those under investigation, there are occasions where they need to participate in criminality themselves. This is a longstanding capability which remains critical for national security.

The [Covert Human Intelligence Sources \(CHIS\) Bill](#) provides a clear and consistent statutory basis for a limited number of public authorities to continue to authorise participation in criminality, in carefully managed circumstances.

It provides certainty to public authorities already using this critical capability and confirms a common set of safeguards which they are bound by, including compliance with human rights.

Security Minister James Brokenshire said:

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the men and women who put themselves in often dangerous situations in order to protect our national security and keep the public safe.

In the course of this vital work, it may be necessary for agents to participate in criminal activity in order to gain the trust of those under investigation.

This is a critical capability and is subject to robust, independent oversight. It is important that those with a responsibility to protect the public can continue this work, knowing that they are on a sound legal footing.

DG MI5, Ken McCallum said:

Throughout MI5's history, human agents have played a critical role in helping protect the UK from terrorist threats and hostile activity by states.

Since March 2017, MI5 and Counter Terror Police have together thwarted 27 terror attacks. Without the contribution of human agents, be in no doubt, many of these attacks would not have been prevented.

In some situations, it is both necessary and proportionate to authorise agents to be involved in some managed level of criminal activity, in order to win or maintain the trust of those intent on harming the UK and gain the critical information needed to save lives.

This power, carefully used and independently overseen, is vital so we can continue to meet our duty to keep the public safe.

National Police Chiefs' Council CHIS lead, DAC Graham McNulty, said:

We welcome the creation of an express power, which will ensure policing can continue to deploy this vital tactic against the most harmful offenders.

From terrorists to violent gangs and organised criminals who seek to harm the most vulnerable in society, this bill will help us disrupt their activities and keep our communities safe.

NCA Director General Lynne Owens said:

The NCA leads the UK's fight to cut serious and organised crime, focusing on the most determined criminals who dominate communities through violence linked to drugs and firearms supply, who abuse the

vulnerable and who threaten the UK's economic security and institutions. Law enforcement has long used CHIS to help thwart the most serious criminal threats to our nation and its partners.

Only when it is absolutely necessary and proportionate, will we authorise our CHIS to be involved in a limited form of criminal activity. This is done with great care and scrutiny. Without this capability we will not be able to bring to justice criminals and their groups who conspire to harm the UK and its citizens.

We welcome this new legislation which puts this crucial capability on a firm foundation.

Chief Executive of the Medicines and Healthcare Regulation Authority, June Raine said:

Patient safety is our first priority. Our Enforcement team works closely with the police in tackling pharmaceutical-based crime, seizing both the products that pose a risk to the public and the proceeds of the crime.

These powers clarify and strengthen our ability to uncover links to serious organised crime, when deemed necessary and proportionate.

Robust independent oversight is provided by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Sir Brian Leveson, who carries out regular inspections, publishing a public annual report on the findings.

This capability is supported by the Courts, with the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, in their recent supportive judgment on the use of CHIS participation in criminal conduct, noting that: "the policy...has been exercised with scrupulous care by the Security Service so as to discharge its essential functions in protecting national security, whilst giving proper regard to the human rights of persons who may be affected by the activities of agents".

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner has also commented in his annual report that, with regards to MI5, "in every case that we examined...the activity authorised was proportionate to the anticipated operational benefits".

The public authorities that will be authorised under the Bill are:

- UKIC
- Police
- NCA
- Home Office (immigration and borders functions)
- HMRC
- HM Forces and their police
- Ministry of Justice (HMPPS)
- Competition and Markets Authority

- Environment Agency
- Financial Conduct Authority
- Food Standards Agency
- Gambling Commission
- Medicines and Healthcare Regulation Authority
- Serious Fraud Office

[View the Bill's factsheet.](#)

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## **British High Commissioner visits Peshawar to underline UK's long-standing relationship with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

On his first visit, he met Ministers, parliamentarians, and development experts – discussing how the UK will continue a commitment which has already lasted more than 10 years.

The British High Commissioner was joined on his high-level visit with Country Development Director Annabel Gerry.

British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner, CMG, said:

The UK will continue working closely with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in future to help provide basic services like education and health, and build resilience against things like COVID-19 and flooding.

There is a great chance now to secure a more peaceful Afghanistan and this means greater regional trade, and closer connections. We also support inclusion and diversity, working to ensure women are part of the economy and girls have a full 12 years of education.

Dr Christian Turner and Annabel Gerry held meetings with the Chief Minister KP Mehmood Khan and KP Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department Kamran Khan Bangash. They also met with a group of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-focussed development experts.

They also met KP Finance and Health Minister, Taimur Saleem Jhagra, and Lt Gen Nauman Mahmood, XI Corps Commander. They held a meeting with members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to discuss political developments in the province, and ended with a visit to Peshawar Museum.

## Notes to editors:

1. The UK Government is providing a portfolio of programmes to support the Provincial Government's plan to deliver education, health, infrastructure (including schools and bridges), economic development, public finance management and local government reforms, rule of law, support to civil society, and to respond to humanitarian needs.
2. The UK's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Programme (KESP) supports the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GoKP) to deliver better quality education for more children. It aims to improve learning outcomes for all children, with an increasing focus on girls and marginalised groups.
3. Key results of UK aid in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:
  - a) KESP directly supports over 100,000 children to gain a decent education and benefits all 4.73 million children in public schools in KP.
  - b) It has supported the establishment of 1,800 community schools for girls (2,201 total schools), providing education to an additional 100,000 students (A total of 123,000 – of whom 65% are girls).

## For further information

For updates on the British High Commission, please follow our social media channels:

Contact  
British High Commission, Islamabad  
Tel: 0300 500 5306

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## [Civil news: HPCDS guidance updated as courts restart work](#)

### News story

Revised Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme guidance now available to support changes to housing possession work as courts restart possession listings.



The Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand in London, home to Central London County Court

We're making guidance changes because new arrangements are now in place for the resumption of possession work in courts.

The changes affect the operation of Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes (HPCDS). As a result, we are revising the following HPCDS resources:

- provider guidance
- client monitoring form
- reporting spreadsheet

Amendments have also been made to HPCDS contract terms to accommodate these changes.

This includes the removal of the requirement to undertake a proxy means assessment for HPCDS clients.

The revised contract and guidance and forms are now available on GOV.UK. The revised reporting spreadsheet will be available by the end of September.

### **Why is this happening now?**

The stay on all new and existing housing possession proceedings against residential tenants came to an end on 20 September 2020.

A judicial working group appointed by the Master of the Rolls has introduced changes to how possession proceedings will operate in court from the 21 September 2020.

The changes include setting out new case management and listing arrangements to better manage volumes in the system.

You can find out more by visiting the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website. This has guidance documents on the new arrangements and a statement from the



Master of the Rolls – see below.

## **Further information**

[Standard Civil Contract \(Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme\) 2013](#) – to view amended contract terms

[Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes \(HPCDS\)](#) – revised guidance and forms

[Resumption of Possession Cases](#) – statement from the Master of the Rolls with accompanying guidance

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## **Government to explore new ways of delivering ‘sat nav’ for the UK**

- Government to look at wider range of options for a UK satellite navigation and timing capability, critical for energy networks and communications to maritime, aviation and defence
- the government will explore cutting-edge ways to deliver vital ‘sat nav’ services to the UK – including use of satellites at different orbits
- this will boost the UK’s thriving space industry and expertise, paving the way for greater independence from foreign systems

New options for a UK satellite navigation and timing capability programme to support the nation’s critical infrastructure will be explored by the government, it was announced today (Thursday 24 September).

The Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing Programme (SBPP) will explore new and alternative ways that could be used to deliver vital satellite navigation services to the United Kingdom which are critical for the functioning of transport systems, energy networks, mobile communications and national security and defence, whilst boosting the British space industry and developing the UK’s own capabilities in these services.

This will follow the work of the UK’s Global Navigation Satellite System (UK GNSS) programme, which is due to conclude at the end of the month.

UK GNSS is an exploration programme which has developed outline plans for a conventional satellite system as an alternative to American GPS or the EU’s Galileo. The programme will now be reset as the SBPP to build on this work to consider newer, more innovative ideas of delivering global ‘sat nav’ and secure satellite services to meet public, government and industry needs.

Satellite navigation is a sophisticated technology that works by beaming signals from space that devices such as smartphones can use to determine their location and time – otherwise known as position, navigation and timing (PNT).

This could include technology that supports people's everyday lives, such as emergency services to locate incidents, financial services companies to regulate exchanges on the UK stock market, or energy networks to ensure households receive power. Satellite navigation systems are also necessary to unlocking future technologies such as driverless cars, smart cities and artificial intelligence – transforming the way people live, work and travel.

Capitalising on the ingenuity of British businesses and academics, the programme will explore the use of different kinds of satellites at various levels of orbit by exploiting technologies offered by companies at the cutting-edge of innovation such as OneWeb, Inmarsat and Airbus.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Satellites underpin so many of the services that we all use every single day, from precise train timetables on our phones and satnavs in our cars.

Through our Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing Programme, we will draw on the strengths of the UK's already thriving space industry to understand our requirements for a robust and secure satellite navigation system. This includes considering low orbiting satellites that could deliver considerable benefits to people and businesses right across the UK, while potentially reducing our dependency on foreign satellite systems.

A Cabinet Office Study examining the need for a UK space-based system for secure positioning, navigation and timing concluded that any solution would need to examine more options and further work is needed to determine what form a potential system takes so it provides value for money.

In order to meet UK industry and government needs for resilient global navigation and timing while also providing value for money to the public, the new SBPP will consider collaboration with international allies to share satellite navigation services, costs and technology.

Graham Turnock, CEO UK Space Agency said:

Our work to date has developed cutting-edge UK expertise in satellite navigation spacecraft, antenna design and control systems, while supporting high-skilled jobs.

Now is the time to drive this work further to look into wider, more innovative ways of delivering this important national capability – to help protect our critical infrastructure and put the UK at the

forefront of the development of new space technologies.

Currently, the UK is entirely dependent on foreign systems for these critical navigation services. SBPP will enable the UK to build on its thriving space industry, home to global players such as Inmarsat, Airbus, Surrey Satellites (SSTL) and others, to become a global leader in space navigation technologies, developing new opportunities for businesses in the UK and overseas and creating new highly skilled jobs.

The government has made clear its ambitions for the UK to become a globally competitive space power and is taking action through the newly established National Space Council, emerging National Space Strategy and the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, to create the conditions for a strong, secure and innovative space sector that delivers for the British people.

A government-backed study from London Economics estimated that sustained disruption to existing satellite navigation capabilities would likely cost the UK economy £1 billion per day. Investment in space technology and services will enable the UK to build back better, unleashing the country's global competitiveness and underpinning growth and high-skilled jobs.

- In 2018, the government announced an 18-month programme led by the UK Space Agency to develop a conventional Global Navigation Satellite System, which could meet UK security requirements and support the UK's sovereign space and cryptography sectors
- the UK GNSS Programme in its current form will conclude on 30 September 2020
- work completed by the UK GNSS Programme so far has developed cutting edge British expertise in areas such as spacecraft and antenna design, satellite and ground control systems, systems engineering and simulation, which have wider applications across the space sector, in addition to supporting specialist UK jobs and industrial GNSS capability