

## News story: Middle East Minister Alistair Burt issues stark warning as the number of people affected by humanitarian crises doubles over decade

The UK has renewed calls for the international community to reform the global humanitarian system to ensure aid continues to get to the 100 million people in desperate need of help right now.

Speaking on a visit to the Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum in Saudi Arabia, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt warned that the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has doubled over the last ten years. By 2030 more than half of the world's poor could be living in countries affected by conflict.

He demanded that global leaders act now to better support those affected by brutal and relentless conflict.

Alistair Burt said: "Whilst the number of conflicts is in decline, those that persist are becoming more complex, harder to resolve and lasting significantly longer. From Syria to South Sudan, merciless conflicts rage on and over the last few years, we have seen that people who are forced to flee their home countries become refugees for over ten years on average.

"The UK's focus is on bigger, better and faster humanitarian responses. We are already improving preparedness in emergency including investing in financial programmes such as disaster risk insurance schemes that help provide cheaper, faster and reliable finance when crises hit. But this is not enough, and international coordination is vital if we are to continue getting aid to those most in need together with an urgent examination of the failure of current intended processes to prevent, or bring to a conclusion, the conflict doing so much damage.

"Alongside this we must all take a longer-term approach to protracted crises, including supporting those countries and communities which host significant numbers of refugees who have fled relentless violence. This will help foster stability and security which is firmly in all our interests."

Mr Burt's comments come on a visit to Saudi Arabia's launch of the inaugural Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum. The UK welcomes this initiative by Saudi Arabia, permitting global leaders to discuss a range of humanitarian demands.

The Minister raised the dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen with his counterparts, reminding all parties of the need for permanent unhindered

access to the critical ports of Hodeidah and Saleef to ensure lifesaving food, fuel and medical supplies continue to enter the country. He also pressed for renewed engagement with a political process, underlining that there is no military solution to the conflict.

#### Background

- The Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, hosted by King Salman, is the first conference of its kind pulling together high level humanitarian representatives from across the Middle East region and further afield.

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## **Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Abe: 26 February 2018**



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

This morning the Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Abe of Japan. The leaders noted the positive impact of the Prime Minister's visit to Japan last year and the significant progress made in a range of areas. In particular they welcomed the meeting between UK and Japanese Foreign and Defence Ministers and the first UK-Japan Industrial Policy Dialogue, both of which took place in December last year.

The Prime Minister updated Prime Minister Abe on her meeting with senior Japanese business leaders at Downing Street earlier this month and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to ensuring the UK remains welcoming to Japanese companies.

They discussed the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, and in particular North Korea, where they agreed on the need for the international community to continue to work together to maintain pressure on North Korea to cease its destabilising activity. The Prime Minister reiterated that the UK will continue to support all

efforts to maintain and properly implement sanctions.

Published 26 February 2018

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## [News story: Royal Navy and Royal Marines join major French deployment](#)



847 Naval Air Squadron stand to attention next to one of two Wildcat helicopters. They have deployed for five months with the Jeanne D'Arc. Crown Copyright.

Around 40 Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel and two Wildcat helicopters have joined the French naval task force, Jeanne D'Arc, for a five-month mission. The ship's port calls will include Jakarta, Bali, Darwin, Saigon and Singapore. British personnel will take part in amphibious exercises and Defence Engagement. This builds on the UK's very successful participation in last year's Jeanne D'Arc mission.

The UK's contribution to France's annual Jeanne D'Arc naval deployment demonstrates a shared commitment from both countries to enhance their maritime cooperation in home waters and around the world, in support of global security and prosperity and protection of freedom of navigation. This priority was agreed at the UK-France Summit in January 2018.

The deployment is part of the UK's wide-ranging programme of bilateral defence cooperation with French forces, which includes the development of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, a rapidly deployable joint UK-French force that can respond to crises.

British and French forces also operate together as members of NATO, with France agreeing to contribute troops to the UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia in 2019.

Published 26 February 2018

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## **News story: Devon dredging and disposal licence suspended**



The MMO has suspended a marine licence for maintenance dredging of Exmouth Marina and disposal of related materials at the Sprey Point disposal site.

John Tuckett, Chief Executive Officer said:

“We are aware of concerns about Teignmouth beach and are working with other agencies to look into these.

“As a responsible marine manager we have taken a precautionary approach and suspended a marine licence for maintenance dredging of Exmouth Marina and disposal of related materials at the Sprey Point disposal site. This is until we are clear that materials found on Teignmouth beach are an aesthetic issue only.

“We are confident that an assessment carried out as part of the licence application process and in line with OSPAR guidelines, showed that the material is suitable for disposal at sea.”

Further details about the marine licence are available on the [MMO's public register](#) (case reference MLA/2016/00372) and in a previous [update provided by the MMO](#).

Published 26 February 2018

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## **Speech: Foreign Secretary statement on**

# the current situation in Syria

Mr Speaker, I'm grateful to the Hon Member for Barrow and Furness for raising this vital issue. In seven years of bloodshed, the war in Syria has claimed 400,000 lives and driven 11 million people from their homes, causing a humanitarian tragedy on a scale unknown anywhere else in the world.

The House should never forget that the Asad regime – aided and abetted by Russia and Iran – has inflicted the overwhelming burden of that suffering. Asad's forces are now bombarding the enclave of Eastern Ghouta, where 393,000 people are living under siege, enduring what has become a signature tactic of the regime, whereby civilians are starved and pounded into submission.

With bitter irony, Russia and Iran declared Eastern Ghouta to be a “de-escalation area” in May last year and promised to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

But the truth is that Asad's regime has allowed only one United Nations convoy to enter Eastern Ghouta so far this year – and that carried supplies only for a fraction of the area's people. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in Eastern Ghouta in the last week alone and the House will have noted the disturbing reports of the use of chlorine gas.

I call for these reports to be fully investigated and for anyone held responsible for using chemical weapons in Syria to be held accountable.

Over the weekend I discussed the situation with my Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu, and Sa'ad Hariri, the prime minister of Lebanon. Earlier today, I spoke to Sigmar Gabriel, the German foreign minister, and I shall be speaking to other European counterparts and the UN Secretary General in the coming days.

Britain has joined with our allies to mobilise the Security Council to demand a ceasefire across the whole of Syria and the immediate delivery of emergency aid to all in need.

Last Saturday, after days of prevarication from Russia, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2401, demanding that “all parties cease hostilities without delay” and allow the “safe, unimpeded and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid”, along with “medical evacuations of the critically sick and wounded”.

The main armed groups in Eastern Ghouta have accepted the ceasefire, but as of today, the warplanes of the Asad regime are still reported to be striking targets in the enclave and the UN has been unable to deliver any aid. I will remind the House that hundreds of thousands of civilians are going hungry in Eastern Ghouta only a few miles from UN warehouses in Damascus that are laden with food. The Asad regime must allow the UN to deliver those supplies, in compliance with Resolution 2401, and we look forward to Russia and Iran to making sure this happens, in accordance with their own promises.

I have invited the Russian Ambassador to come to the Foreign Office and give an account of his country's plans to implement Resolution 2401. I have instructed the UK Mission at the UN to convene another meeting of the Security Council to discuss the Asad regime's refusal to respect the will of the UN and implement the ceasefire without delay. Only a political settlement in Syria can ensure that the carnage is brought to an end and I believe that such a settlement is possible if the will exists.

The UN Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, is ready to take forward the talks in Geneva and the opposition are ready to negotiate pragmatically and without preconditions. The international community has united behind the path to a solution laid out in UN Resolution 2254 and Russia has stated its wish to achieve a political solution under the auspices of the UN.

Today, only the Asad regime stands in the way of progress. I urge Russia to use all its influence to bring the Asad regime to the negotiating table and take the steps towards peace that Syria's people so desperately need.