

Press release: Boris Johnson meets Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has today (10 February) visited Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where over a million Rohingya Muslim refugees are living in crowded and unsafe refugee camps

Over 688,000 people have fled from their homes in Burma's Rakhine State into Bangladesh since August 2017, joining around 340,000 Rohingya who had previously fled.

The Foreign Secretary toured a camp which is home to 500,000 refugees – equivalent to a city the size of Leicester.

He met Rohingya families and community leaders to learn about the persecution they have suffered, and hear first-hand about the challenges that life in the camps presents. He listened to their views, heard about their hopes for the future, and the conditions they believed needed to be put in place for any return to take place.

Mr Johnson visited a UNICEF child-friendly site where he saw the efforts being made to keep young people safe. He sat down with some children on the site to talk about their drawings. He was also briefed on gender-based violence by caseworkers.

Tomorrow (11 February) Mr Johnson will hold talks with Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the crisis and press for the end to the suffering in Rakhine and the safe and voluntary return of the refugees.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I have seen for my own eyes the horrendous living conditions the Rohingya people are having to endure and it has only further strengthened my commitment to working with international partners to improve the lives of these people in 2018.

I pay tribute to the hospitality and compassion shown by the government of Bangladesh, who are facing an enormous challenge in providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya community.

While I welcome steps by both the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments towards ensuring that these people can return home, it is vital that the Rohingya refugees must be allowed to their homes

in Rakhine voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, under international oversight, and when the conditions in Burma are right.

Notes to editors

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Government response: Charity Commission statement on Oxfam

The Charity Commission has made the following statement in response to concerns raised in the media regarding Oxfam:

The allegations reported in the media have absolutely no place in society, and are made all the more shocking by the alleged involvement of charity workers. Charities are rightly held to the highest standards.

In August 2011, Oxfam made a report to the Commission about an ongoing internal investigation into allegations of misconduct by staff members involved in their Haiti programme. It explained that the misconduct related to inappropriate sexual behaviour, bullying, harassment and the intimidation of staff. The report to us stated there had been no allegations, or evidence, of any abuse of beneficiaries. It also made no mention of any potential sexual crimes involving minors. Our approach to this matter would have been different had the full details that have been reported been disclosed to us at the time.

We have written to the charity as a matter of urgency to request further information regarding the events in Haiti in 2011 to establish greater clarity on this matter. This includes a timeline of events, information about when the charity was made aware of specific allegations and the detail of the investigation's findings and conclusions. This information will be considered as part of an ongoing case regarding the charity's approach to safeguarding.

It is important that charities engage with the regulator frankly and openly. We must fully understand the allegations that have been made to ensure that we have confidence in the charity's approach to safeguarding now and in the future.

A report of the Commission's ongoing case into Oxfam from December 2017 can be found on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

Press release: Mark Field begins trip to Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Australia

His first stop will be Honaria, the capital of the Solomon Islands, where he will meet the Governor General Sir Frank Kabui, and the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Hon. Rick Houenipwela to discuss trade and the UK-Solomon Islands bilateral relationship post-Brexit.

The Minister will then travel to New Zealand, where he will meet the Mayors of Auckland and Whangarei, as well as taking part in a roundtable discussion with the Regional Chamber of Commerce. In Wellington, he will meet the Minister for External Trade, Minister for Environment and Minister for Economic Development among others, and attend an England vs New Zealand cricket match at Westpac stadium.

In Australia, Mark Field will visit Sydney, Canberra and Perth. In Sydney the Minister will have a tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens, where he will learn about the Garden's science activities and research links with London's Kew Gardens. He will also meet the New South Wales Minister for Innovation.

In Canberra the Minister will discuss UK-Australia cooperation on key regional issues with the Minister for International Development and the Pacific. In Perth he will be visiting Pawsey Supercomputing Centre to explore opportunities for collaboration on high-performance computing, and hear about the centre's involvement in the Square Kilometre Array.

Rt Hon Mark Field, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific said:

This is my first visit to the Pacific region since becoming Minister at the Foreign Office, and I am delighted to be here.

The UK enjoys a historic relationship and modern partnership with the Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Australia. We have strong ties and an enduring friendship with this region, built on friendship and shared values.

Our strong security, prosperity and people-to-people links are more

relevant than ever as work towards advancing our common interests both in the region and further afield.

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Press release: Police trial new Home Office mobile fingerprint technology

An app on an officer's phone, combined with a handheld scanner, will mean police will be able to check fingerprints against both criminal and immigration records by connecting to the two live databases (IDENT1 and IABS) via the new Biometric Services Gateway.

West Yorkshire Police (WYP), who worked with the Home Office to trial the new system, will begin an initial roll out of 250 scanners to officers in the coming weeks – the app is already available to its 5,500 frontline officers. It is expected that another 20 forces across the country will roll out the system by the end of this year.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

The Biometric Services Gateway is just one of a series of national systems the Home Office is designing with policing to give officers information at their fingertips faster than ever before.

By cutting out unnecessary trips to and from the police station, mobile technology is really helping to save valuable time and allowing officers to do what they do best – cutting crime and keeping us safe.

It's clear that by embracing technology the police can improve efficiency and, if all forces delivered the level of productivity from mobile working as the leading forces, the average officer could spend an hour a day extra on the frontline.

The Biometric Services Gateway, enabled by Home Office technology, will also

lead to significant costs savings, with the new system available at a fraction of the cost of those currently in use. The scanners used by WYP cost less than £300 – 10% of the cost of current mobile fingerprint systems.

To ensure the information accessed from the Biometric Services Gateway remains secure, fingerprints are not stored and are automatically deleted from the device once they have been checked.

As well as identifying a person of interest who may be withholding their name, the technology enables officers to rapidly identify someone experiencing a medical emergency and make contact with their next of kin.

Early examples of the new system in action include a firearms unit, who detained a driver after a short pursuit and were able to identify him as a disqualified driver, despite him giving false details. He was issued with a summons for three offences and his vehicle seized. The armed response unit returned to patrol within ten minutes, and without the mobile fingerprint scanner this could have resulted in the unit being out of action for four hours taking the individual to a custody suite.

West Yorkshire Police, Assistant Chief Constable Andy Battle said:

The introduction of these fingerprint devices is a significant step forward for West Yorkshire Police and marks another milestone in our technological ambitions.

As we have already experienced in the trial, the combination of these digital solutions bring tangible benefits to policing our communities.

It means we can submit fingerprints of suspects from the street to a live time national database and receive results in less than a minute.

We have seen first-hand, for instance, how this rapid identification has enabled speedy and accurate medical treatment based on the records available. Its use also allows relatives to attend hospital to see their loved ones when time is of the essence.

From an operational perspective, they quickly open investigative leads into serious crimes and can often reveal the associates of an otherwise unknown victim.

Likewise, they can immediately identify suspects who attempt to give false details and will prompt people to be more forthcoming in the first place.

The added benefit is that they provide greater value for money, which means we can increase their usage across the organisation.

West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Mark Burns-Williamson and National APCC lead on Forensics and Biometrics said:

The introduction of the Biometrics Services Gateway shows how West Yorkshire Police is once again leading the way with new technology and builds on the investment and introduction of the handheld mobiles that all frontline officers use.

Using this advanced technology means officers are out on the street providing that visible presence rather than dealing with suspects in custody and could eventually enable the introduction of new automated systems, further ensuring officers are freed up to provide reassurance in our communities.

It is important that we continually improve our services to make sure the needs of our communities are at the heart of delivery. Investing in this cutting edge technology forms a crucial part of that picture, ensuring the public of West Yorkshire are safer and feel safer, but crucially testing this proof of concept so that the overall benefits can be rolled out across policing nationally for everyone's benefit.

Press release: Foreign Secretary meets Bangladesh Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to discuss the Rohingya, the Commonwealth and trade

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson today (9 February) met the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed in Dhaka.

During their hour-long meeting they discussed the upcoming Commonwealth Summit taking place in London in April and additional trade opportunities between the two countries once the UK leaves the European Union. They also discussed the importance of free and fair elections, and the Foreign Secretary encouraged Prime Minister Hasina's continued commitment to women and girls, including her efforts to achieve gender equality.

In a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Abdul Hassan Mahmud Ali, the Foreign Secretary raised the ongoing Rohingya crisis. During the meeting Foreign Secretary Johnson welcomed the Government of Bangladesh's commitment to the voluntary, safe and dignified return with international monitoring for the Rohingya community to their homes in Burma when the conditions are right.

Mr. Johnson also reiterated the UK's support to the international Rohingya humanitarian response. He also invited the Foreign Minister to attend the London Illegal Wildlife Trade conference in autumn.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for their hosting of the Rohingya refugee community during this terrible humanitarian crisis. I am pleased that Bangladesh has once again confirmed its commitment to voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingya community in Bangladesh when the conditions in Burma are right.

The UK is committed to the international humanitarian Rohingya response, and we are the largest bilateral donor to the crisis. UK Aid is making a real difference with £59 million helping to provide the food, water and shelter that is still so needed.

But our partnership with Bangladesh goes beyond the Rohingya crisis, as we continue to work together on vital bilateral and global issues such as girl's education, the illegal wildlife trade, and human rights.

Further information