

[Press release: Foreign Secretary welcomes Syrian opposition agreement in Riyadh](#)

Speaking following the successful conclusion of the talks in Riyadh, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I welcome the news that the Syrian opposition in Riyadh have reached agreement on a new line-up and negotiating team ahead of negotiations in Geneva next week, moving forwards with their commitment to peace in Syria.

I congratulate Nasr al-Hariri on his election as Chief of the Negotiating Committee, and Saudi Arabia on hosting a highly successful event in Riyadh to bring the Syrian opposition together. The Syrian opposition have worked hard and shown considerable flexibility in its efforts to unify and broaden their platform. I welcome the opposition's broad commitment to engage in political negotiations without preconditions. The regime and its backers now need to show the same commitment – they no longer have any excuse for their failure to engage.

There is now an opportunity for upcoming talks in Geneva to generate serious momentum and create the inclusive political transition necessary to end this conflict.

[Speech: UK is committed to eliminating violence against women and girls](#)

Thank you for agreeing to include us – the British Deputy High Commission in Kolkata – as a partner for this event today.

I congratulate Sister Monica Suchiang – Director, Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre and her team for organising this two-day conference. And for bringing together participants from across India and overseas.

But I'm not happy that we are discussing this subject in the year 2017. It is an abhorrent crime.

Victims of human trafficking are subject to terrible mistreatment and exploitation. Those who engage in it don't recognise the dignity or worth of human beings. People are not commodities.

We should bring to justice those who perpetrate these crimes and exploit other human beings, often at the most vulnerable points in their lives, for personal or commercial gain. We should not tolerate it.

It's not just about individual human beings. Human trafficking erodes the security and cohesion of communities. It undermines the prosperity of nations.

Forced labour and human trafficking is a global problem. Traffickers respect neither borders nor jurisdictions. As such it requires a global response. It is shocking to say it but there are approximately 40 million victims worldwide.

This is not a problem for others – we estimate there are between 10,000-13,000 victims in the UK.

The UK Government is committed to the eradication of all forms forced labour and human trafficking by 2030, as unanimously adopted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 (SDG 8.7).

The British Prime Minister has made tackling this issue a top foreign policy priority. She is advocating better international coordination to deliver commitments made under the UN Sustainable Development Goal.

Governments and international agencies should prioritise interventions and resources to tackle the issues and support victims.

Here in India, my government has supported a number of projects around these issues. They include:

- paralegal training programme for 660 Dalit human rights defenders in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana and Maharashtra
- capacity building of law enforcement agencies when dealing with victims of Human Trafficking
- The British Department for International Development has undertaken various programmes to support the empowerment of people who are vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour.

The Poorest Areas Civil Society programme (PACS) works through local civil society organisations to support over 9 million of the poorest people to access their entitlements, thereby reducing their risk of forced labour.

The Orissa Girls Incentive Programme supported nearly 1.3m disadvantaged adolescents (including over 600,000 girls) to stay in school and reduce their risk of early marriage and trafficking.

DFID's regional programme with the ILO, Work in Freedom (WIF), supports safe migration and government capacity building at national and state level. Over

90,000 women have benefited from training to help them make informed migration decisions, and so reduce their risk of being trafficked from India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

In India, I know there is a draft Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, which would set up an organised crime investigative agency to rescue and rehabilitate victims of trafficking and investigate human trafficking cases. I hope that disagreements on the scope of the bill can be resolved soon.

Human trafficking often preys on the most vulnerable in society – that is women and girls.

Today also happens to be the International day on elimination of violence against women. Violence against women and girls is an issue that the UK is committed to eliminating.

It is also the first day of the UN-led 16 Days of Activism with the theme of 'Leave no-one behind'.

What to do?

We need to continue to collaborate and cooperate with one another and together and end these abhorrent crimes once and for all.

We need to promote cooperation amongst the full range of stakeholders: the private sector, civil society, and law enforcement and other frontline agencies.

We need to improve understanding of the issues amongst the general public and amongst communities vulnerable to exploitation.

We need to work to ensure better victim safeguarding coordination to connect victims to appropriate support and reintegration services to reduce the risk of re-exploitation.

[SDG 8.7 – Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms]

[Press release: The UK steps up to lead global drive to tackle violence](#)

against girls and women

Britain is leading the global push to eradicate violence against women and girls in all its forms around the world, announced International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt on International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

Ms Mordaunt set out a new package of UK support to protect women and girls in some of the world's poorest countries from practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage and domestic and sexual violence.

This extra UK aid is expected to help around 750,000 women and girls globally over the next three years, by increasing access to crucial services like legal assistance, healthcare, counselling, safe spaces for survivors and working with communities to prevent and break the cycles of violence.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

It is truly shocking that violence against women and girls remains one of the most systemic, widespread human rights violations worldwide. The high rates of this crime across the world are a global scandal.

I am proud to say that the UK is leading international efforts across more than 30 countries to eliminate violence against women and girls in all its forms – from ending Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage, to preventing and addressing domestic and sexual violence.

Today we are stepping up our leadership – working closely with women leaders and grassroots charities – to help even more survivors in some of the world's poorest countries overcome the traumas of violence and tackle the root causes of this crime.

DFID will provide up to £12 million to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women (UNTF) over three years. This vital UK aid will support local, national, regional and cross-border efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender based violence in conflict areas.

Aldijana Sisic, Chief of the UN Trust Fund said:

This year's commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women comes at a unique moment coinciding with the unprecedented mobilisation of millions of voices of survivors of violence behind the #MeToo movement.

Violence against women is not inevitable and it can be ended with a

comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. This is why the UN Trust Fund welcomes the renewed contribution of the UK as well as its ongoing global leadership and support for preventing and ending violence against women and girls and its root causes.

The UK is already leading international efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls in all its forms. UK aid is pioneering 15 innovative approaches to prevent gender based violence across 12 countries, reaching an estimated 100,000 people. For example, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, DFID is helping support schools to better protect children. In Bangladesh, the UK is working with businesses and grassroots organisations to end harassment of women workers in garment factories.

Notes to editors:

- DFID will provide up to £12 million over three years (December 2017 – December 2020) to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women (UNTF).
- Last year, the Trust Fund supported projects in 77 countries and regions around the world, which directly benefited 250,000 women and girls.
- DFID is leading international efforts across 30 countries to tackle violence against women and girls in all its forms; from ending Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage to preventing domestic abuse.
- In Uganda, UK aid is preventing and responding to domestic violence by changing stigma, discrimination and attitudes about the acceptability of violence. The Raising Voices' SASA! Programme is galvanising local community action, providing training and establishing community charters, by-laws and protocols in churches or mosques. This is leading a transformation in efforts to stamp out domestic violence, with women in the target communities now 52% less likely to experience physical violence from a partner.
- The independent aid watchdog (ICAI) carried out a comprehensive review of DFID's efforts last year towards eliminating violence committed against women and girls. It gave DFID's performance the highest 'green' rating, recognising the crucial contribution UK aid makes around the world.

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on the attack in Egypt

I strongly condemn the horrendous and sickening attack on a mosque in Egypt's North Sinai. My thoughts are with the people of Egypt and the families of all those affected by this terrible and cowardly act.

I have been in touch with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry to offer my

condolences and underline the UK's full commitment in standing with Egypt in its fight against terrorism.

[News story: Huddersfield trafficker who tried to escape justice has jail term extended](#)

Nisa Ul Haq, 41, was the leader of an organised crime group that trafficked Pakistanis to the UK to work in a West Yorkshire clothing factory. The gang were convicted on 3 December 2015 following an investigation conducted by Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team.

While her co-conspirators attended Leeds Crown Court for sentencing in January 2016, Ul Haq, who had been granted bail by a judge, failed to appear and a warrant was issued for her arrest. She was sentenced in her absence to 5 and a half years imprisonment for trafficking, facilitating illegal immigration and attempting to pervert the course of justice.

After months on the run, Ul Haq, who had worked as an immigration solicitor, was caught on 2 August 2016 as she flew into Manchester Airport from Pakistan using her sister's passport.

Paul Airlie, Deputy Director of Border Force North, said:

Ul Haq tried to use the passport at one of the ePassport gates. Having been rightly rejected by the gate's facial recognition technology she was directed to one of my officers where a fingerprint check confirmed her true identity and she was arrested.

This was an excellent example of how cutting edge technology and expertly trained Border Force officers work so effectively together, ensuring that a serious offender faced the consequences of her crimes.

The case was passed to the CFI team and Ul Haq was charged with possession of an ID document with improper intention. She was transferred to prison, via Leeds Crown Court where 5 months was added to her 5 and a half year jail term for breach of bail, while the investigation continued.

Today (24 November) she appeared at Leeds Crown Court via video link and admitted the ID document offence. She was immediately jailed for a further 4 months, leaving her overall prison sentence at 6 years and 3 months.

The CFI investigation showed that Ul Haq used her sister's passport to obtain

a visa from the Pakistani Consulate in February 2016. She used the passport and the fraudulently obtained visa to travel to Pakistan.

Rachael Luther, of Immigration Enforcement's CFI team for the North East, said:

Having committed appalling crimes, Ul Haq then lacked the courage to face the consequences of what she had done and went on the run. However, as this case shows, we are patient people, we keep the pressure on and we never stop looking.

The victims of the trafficking operation that Ul Haq and her co-conspirators ran were promised £18,000 a year jobs at a firm in Huddersfield, but once in the UK they were forced into low paid work and threatened with removal back to Pakistan if they did not comply. Many of the victims sold their homes and possessions in Pakistan to raise funds to pay Ul Haq £14,000 in visa arrangement fees.

At the sentencing in January 2016, 2 co-conspirators, Hajrah Sarfraz and Mohammed Sarfraz, of Victoria Road, Huddersfield, were jailed for 3 and a half years and 3 years respectively for trafficking.

Ul Haq, of The Fairway, Fixby, took £150 a week from each worker's pay packet in the form of "taxes" while they worked 12 hour days at her company Ezaah Tailorz, Lockwood Road, Huddersfield. This amount eventually rose to £300 a week. The victims took home just £60 a week in wages.

Investigators discovered that seven workers had come to the UK from Pakistan to work for Ul Haq since 2006.

Rachael Luther added:

This was a shocking case where the victims were promised the opportunity of a lifetime, but quickly found themselves exploited into what was effectively a life of slave labour.

Modern slavery has no place in the UK and we are determined to identify the criminal gangs behind this evil trade.

I would urge anyone who has information about potential trafficking or exploitation offences to report their concerns immediately.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit their [website](#).