

# News story: Lord Ahmed welcomes conclusions of UN Human Rights Council

This has been the first Human Rights Council (HRC) session since my appointment as Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister responsible for the Commonwealth and the United Nations. The UK will continue to work tirelessly to ensure it holds those responsible for the worst atrocities and violations to account, and will work with the other members of the HRC to address the worst global crises of our time and seek to strengthen safeguards and protections for the future. We are grateful to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office for their tireless efforts to promote and protect human rights around the world.

At this session the UK has, once again, played a leading role on a number of pressing human rights issues, including the situations in Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine and Eritrea. I am delighted that the Foreign Secretary's new Special Envoy for Gender Equality, Joanna Roper, was able to represent the UK at the annual full day discussion on women's rights, and I was also pleased to see the adoption of resolutions dedicated to the advancement of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

The human rights situation in Syria remains acute, as carefully detailed by the Commission of Inquiry. Attacks on civilians, obstruction of humanitarian aid, and forced displacement of civilians continue, in particular by the Syrian regime. It is vital that the Human Rights Council continues to take a strong and unified stance on Syria. We therefore welcome the Resolution the Council has adopted and call upon all parties to ensure that the rights of all Syrian citizens are respected.

I welcome the resolution on the Democratic Republic of Congo which mandates the establishment of an international investigation into the violence in the Kasai region. The Council is right to be seriously concerned by serious human rights abuses and violations that continue to take place. It is important that an impartial investigation now takes place, to complement national efforts to determine responsibility for these dreadful acts. I trust that the authorities in DRC will grant the access to the investigation to ensure that those who bear responsibility will be brought to justice.

The UK welcomes the adoption of a renewed resolution on Ukraine. We remain seriously concerned by the human rights situation in eastern Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea. It is crucial that this Council continues to discuss the detailed and objective reporting of the situation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This resolution will allow that to happen. I trust that the Russian de facto authorities will grant access to the High Commissioner and his Office so that they are able to undertake monitoring in illegally annexed Crimea, as called for in UN Resolution 71/205.

I thank the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea for her report to the Council. Of

particular concern were the issues of indefinite national service and shortcomings in the rule of law, including widespread arbitrary detentions. I encourage the Eritrean Government to continue to build upon increased engagement with the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights and engage the international community more widely on progressing human rights issues. I also urge the government of Eritrea to fully implement its constitution, and deliver on its past commitment to work towards gender equality – ending Female Genital Mutilation and early and forced marriage.

The June session of the Human Rights Council traditionally has a strong focus on promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls, and – as demonstrated by the many and varied contributions to the full day session on women's rights. It is vital that all states continue to engage and work together if we are to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. This session's resolutions recognise the considerable discrimination that many women and girls continue to face and show how the international community must work together to tackle it. We must all continue work to eliminate violence against women and girls and end all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

The Joint Statement expressing concern over democracy, governance and human rights in Maldives was an important step. I urge the Government of Maldives to engage constructively with the international community and to take steps that clearly demonstrate its commitment to freedom of assembly and expression, an independent judiciary and the protection of human rights defenders. The UK, and the other governments that signed the joint statement, stand ready to help.

Migration remains one of the great challenges of our time. We recognise the positive contribution of migrants and at the same time reaffirm the rights of states to manage their borders. We continue to believe that managing migration and security and meeting human rights obligations are not mutually exclusive aims, and that there are possibilities for exchanging best practice which will help develop human rights compliance globally and protect migrants and refugees.

This session also saw the first report from the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, whose work the UK strongly supports, and a report from the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The UK Government is committed to working together with international partners to eliminate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030, as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 8.7.

The Human Rights Council is a vital forum, enabling Member States to work together to support and uphold universal rights around the world. This session has, once again, displayed the importance of unity and solidarity in the face of adversity. Many of us have faced horrific terrorist attacks this year – with attacks in London, Manchester, Egypt, France, Belgium, Afghanistan and Iran in the last few weeks alone. Now, more than ever, we must all come together, regardless of faith, gender or race, and stand united

against those who seek to divide us.

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## **Press release: Probation Champion and Prison Officer of the Year 2017 Awards**

- Annual awards celebrate hard-working and dedicated staff from across HMPPS
- Ceremony follows creation of new frontline service HMPPS tasked with reforming offenders
- Government is investing £100 million to boost the frontline by an extra 2,500 staff

Prison and probation officers from across England and Wales are being celebrated for their contribution to reforming offenders and helping turn lives around.

The Probation Champion of the Year Awards and Prison Officer of the Year Awards are an opportunity to celebrate success, share best practice and shine a light on the great work being done by these staff to keep the public safe.

The annual awards are celebrated just months after the launch of [HM Prison and Probation Service \(HMPPS\)](#), a new frontline service that is focused on reforming offenders and cutting crime.

Prisons and Probation Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Our prison and probation officers work in a profession to be proud of, with responsibility for helping to keep the country safe and reforming offenders.

I regularly speak with staff and I am constantly struck by the commitment they show to changing lives and improving outcomes for offenders. It is vital that we celebrate them and mark out gratitude for the compassion and professionalism they show day in, day out.

I want staff to know that their work, experience and loyal service is valued. So many of them really are a shining example to the new recruits that are coming through the system.

Michael Spurr, Chief Executive of HMPPS, said:

I want to thank all staff working in probation and prisons for the amazing work they do on a daily basis.

Our nominees represent the best of a service where dedicated professionals go the extra mile everyday day to keep the public safe and to reduce reoffending.

These awards recognise work that so often goes unseen but is vitally important.

There are 8 categories in both the Prison Officer of the Year Awards and the Probation Champion of the Year Awards, which look to reward those with outstanding achievements in areas such as diversity, reducing reoffending and safer custody.

Gareth Key, from Gateshead, was given the overall title of Probation Champion of the Year on Wednesday. He was nominated by the father of an ex-offender who has now sadly passed away. The nomination was for treating their son with decency whilst helping them stay on the right path and steer him them out of trouble.

A member of staff at HMP High Down was awarded the title of Prison Officer of the Year at the annual awards. Iain Foskett, who has worked at HMP Highdown for 13 years, was nominated by his line manager for his commitment helping support staff at the prison, actively promoting positive relationships between staff and prisoners, and taking the time to mentor joiners.

The Prison Officer and Probation Champion of the Year Awards come at a time when we are expanding our workforce by recruiting 600 probation officers over the next 12 months and an additional 2,500 new prison officers by 2018.

The Probation Champion of the Year Awards took place on Wednesday 21 June and the Prison Officer of the Year Awards on 22 June.

This last year saw the highest level of new joiners (band 3-5 officers) since March 2010 and prison officer numbers have increased for the first time since March 2016:

- appointed 75 mentors for new starter prison officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time
- started targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need
- developed a new graduate scheme that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the service
- launched a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the Prison Service after leaving the military
- introduced a pay increase for Band 3 Officers on Fair and Sustainable (F&S) terms at 31 difficult-to-recruit prisons
- prison officers have the opportunity to earn over £30,000 depending on location of prison and hours contract; plus public sector pension and other benefits
- creating 2,000 new senior promotion opportunities for valued and experienced prison officers to progress into
- substantial investment in marketing and targeted recruitment to generate

even more interest in these valuable roles

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## **News story: Re-cast EU Insolvency Regulation comes into force**

The [Insolvency Amendment \(EU 2015/848\) Regulations 2017](#) come into force on 26 June 2017 and facilitate the functioning and operation of the [EU Insolvency Regulation](#) in the UK.

The re-cast EU Regulation introduces changes to the existing rules on jurisdiction, cooperation, and the recognition and enforcement of insolvency proceedings across the EU.

Further [Guidance](#) (PDF, 293KB, 5 pages) on the re-cast regulation is available.

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## **Press release: DVLA takes home top digital prize**

The category for [Digital Public Service Innovation of the Year](#) recognises a public sector product or service that has shown an innovative approach and has seen measurable impact and outcomes.

Last night (Thursday 22 June) DVLA won the category for their [online medical service](#).

This service allows drivers to tell DVLA online about a health or medical condition that could affect their ability to drive. Drivers can now report more than 200 single conditions such as vision, diabetes, and epilepsy by using the service, helping to reduce the processing times for licensing decision for those driving with a medical condition.

This is the second year that DVLA has taken home the title of Digital Public Service Innovation of the Year at these awards. Last year the agency received the award for its [Share Driving Licence](#) service which allows customers to share their details easily and safely.

DVLA, which has some of the government's flagship digital services, is aiming to become a hub for digital motoring, creating online services for customers that make things simpler, better and safer.

Oliver Morley, DVLA Chief Executive, said,

“I am tremendously proud of the work done across DVLA to provide more choice for our customers. To take home one of the top awards at Digital Leaders DL100 is a significant achievement and recognises the innovate approach we take to deliver new and improved services.

“We’ve made significant progress in developing digital services in recent years and I look forward to the opportunities ahead of us.”

### **Notes for editors:**

1. Digital Leaders is an initiative that has created a shared professional space for senior leadership from different sectors promoting effective, long-term digital transformation. For more information on what they do, visit: [www.digileaders.com](http://www.digileaders.com)
2. The DL100 Awards honour the highest achievements from the past year, celebrating teams and individuals who are blazing a trail within the digital space.

### **Press enquiries:**

All press enquiries should be directed to:

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## **[Press release: Oxford flood alleviation scheme online consultation opens up](#)**

The Environment Agency is calling on communities to have their say on benefits and features that will make up the £120 million project to reduce flood risk to all homes and businesses in Oxford.

The consultation will be open from 22 June to 20 July 2017, and will allow the public to input into design features; ranging from the 7 bridges along the route of the scheme, to options for benches and cycle racks on footpaths. The scheme is a major project which will involve lowering parts of Oxford’s floodplain to increase capacity for floodwater, as well as widening and deepening some of the rivers and streams that run through it.

Speaking ahead of the launch of the consultation, Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme will be a major feat of engineering and is one of the biggest projects we are working on across the country. I am very proud of our partnership approach, which is so important to building the scheme and keeping this iconic city moving during times of flood, for businesses, commuters and communities of Oxford.

Cllr Yvonne Constance, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, added:

This is a really important issue for people in Oxford and beyond. The plans for the flood alleviation scheme are now very advanced and we want to hear what our residents think.

As the lead local flood authority, Oxfordshire County Council strongly supports the Oxford flood alleviation scheme and we encourage local communities, residents and businesses to take this opportunity to get involved in the consultation.

The project team spoke to over 200 members of the public at drop-in events throughout Oxford in May, where they shared information about the progress of the scheme and the many benefits it will bring. You can [go online](#) from 22 June to 20 July to view this information, see how they've been progressing with the scheme and to complete the consultation.

The project team will be available to help members of the public who don't have access to the internet to complete the online consultation at the following libraries:

- Kennington Library, OX1 5PG: 2pm to 7pm on Friday 30 June
- Oxford Central Library, OX1 1AY: 12pm to 6pm on Thursday 6 July
- Botley Library, OX2 9LP: 9:30am to 2pm on Tuesday 11 July

The Environment Agency is working with local partners: Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, Thames Water, the Oxford Flood Alliance, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, and the University of Oxford, on the scheme to reduce flood risk to all homes and businesses in Oxford, as well as to major transport routes into the city.

For further information please visit:

[Oxford FAS web page](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

or contact the project team at [oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk).