

Foreign Secretary calls on Human Rights Council to address human rights violations in Myanmar, China, Belarus and Russia

Press release

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will call on the United Nations Human Rights Council to address systematic human rights violations in these countries.



- the UK returns to the UN Human Rights Council as a voting member
- Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will call for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to be given urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang
- the UK will lead resolutions on Sri Lanka, Syria and South Sudan

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will today call on the UN Human Rights Council to address systematic human rights violations in Myanmar, China, Belarus and Russia.

When he addresses the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (11:30am), the Foreign Secretary is expected to say:

On China:

- the situation in Xinjiang is beyond the pale. The reported abuses – which include torture, forced labour and forced sterilisation of women – are extreme and they are extensive. They are taking place on an industrial scale
- UN mechanisms must respond. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent fact-finding expert, must – and I repeat must – be given urgent and unfettered access to Xinjiang

On Belarus:

- last year's rigged Presidential elections and Mr Lukashenko's brutal crackdown against those calling for change has resulted in a human rights crisis. There is no other way to describe it
- this Council must continue with a comprehensive investigation of human rights violations, including accusations of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment
- the UK will support initiatives to keep Belarus on the Council's agenda for as long as it is necessary, and until the Belarusian people are able to enjoy their democratic rights and their fundamental freedoms

On Myanmar:

- the position in Myanmar gets worse. The violations and abuses are well-documented, including arbitrary detention and draconian restrictions on freedom of expression. That crisis presents an increased risk to the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities
- the military must step aside. Civilian leaders must be released. And the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar must be respected
- that is why at this session we will again co-sponsor the resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, so he can continue his essential work

On Russia:

- we face a truly dire and shocking situation from a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council
- it is disgraceful that Alexey Navalny, himself the victim of a despicable crime, has now been sentenced on arbitrary charges. His treatment and the violence inflicted on peaceful protesters can only further reinforce the world's concerns that Russia is failing to meet its international obligations
- we call on other members of the Council to consider whether Russia's actions are in line with its international human rights obligations and the values that we seek and that we have pledged to uphold

The Foreign Secretary is also expected to update members and observers on the substantive steps the UK has taken to address these issues and urge others to follow suit, including the introduction of [business restrictions against supply chains using forced labour in Xinjiang](#) and implementing [sanctions against Alexander Lukashenko, 3 members of the Myanmar military regime, and those responsible for Alexey Navalny's poisoning](#).

The Foreign Secretary's speech comes as the UK returns to the Geneva based Human Rights Council as a voting member. As an elected member of the Council, the UK will focus on promoting action for girls' education, championing freedom of religion and belief, defending media freedom, and being a passionate advocate for the values of liberal democracy.

At the upcoming session, which runs from Monday 22 February until Tuesday 23 March, the UK will lead resolutions on Syria, as we mark the tenth anniversary of the conflict; Sri Lanka, as we press for progress on post-conflict accountability, reconciliation and human rights; and South Sudan, as we seek to address the human rights situation and continue to support the revitalised peace agreement.

- the 46th Session of the Geneva based UN Human Rights Council will run from 22 February to 23 March 2021
- meetings are [can be watched live](#). This is the first of 3 sessions this year
- the [UN Human Rights Council](#) is made up of 47 United Nations member states which are elected by the UN General Assembly
- the UK was re-elected to the Council in October 2020. Members of the Council serve for a period of 3 years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving 2 consecutive terms

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[**NDA innovation competition winners have been announced**](#)



The 'Sort and Seg' innovation competition

The 'Sort and Seg' innovation competition, worth £3.9 million in total, was launched in July 2020. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) – in partnership with Magnox Ltd, Sellafield Ltd and Innovate UK – set the challenge of coming up with proposals for using autonomous technology to sort and segregate mixed radioactive wastes at the UK's oldest nuclear sites.

The first phase of the competition is now complete and contracts, worth up to £60k each, have been awarded to 14 consortia that will now come up with feasibility studies for their proposals, including robotics, advanced sensors and artificial intelligence.

The NDA's Head of Innovation, Sara Huntingdon, said:

The reaction to 'Sort and Seg' has been incredible – we have received the best response we've ever had for this kind of competition.

It's really exciting that most of the successful organisations are bringing in experience and ideas from other sectors and I'm really looking forward to working together with our partners and with all the winners to see how these ideas develop.

Competitions like this are an important way of engaging our supply chain, encouraging diversity of thinking and finding innovative techniques and technologies from other sectors to help deliver the NDA's decommissioning mission and help meet the aims of the Nuclear Sector Deal.

Derek Allen, Innovation Lead, Energy Clean Growth and Infrastructure Lead at Innovate UK, said:

We are delighted to be working with the NDA again to help drive innovation into the nuclear decommissioning supply chain and deliver things faster, cheaper and safer.

The response to the competition was excellent and some really exciting projects have been funded. There are some great examples of technology transfer and I look forward to seeing these innovative projects progress over the next few months.

The initial feasibility studies will be delivered in May, with the winners competing for a number of contracts – each worth up to £900k – for 15-month 'demonstrator projects'.

- AB5 Consulting Ltd
- Jacobs Clean Energy Ltd
- A.N. Technology Ltd
- Atkins Ltd
- Barrnon Ltd
- Cavendish Nuclear Ltd
- Chilton Computing Ltd
- Create Technologies Ltd
- Delkia Ltd
- EDF Energy R&D Centre Ltd
- Forth Engineering (Cumbria) Ltd
- Nuvia Ltd
- Red Marine Engineering Ltd
- Veolia Nuclear Solutions Ltd

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[Track worker struck by a train near Surbiton](#)

News story

Investigation into a track worker struck by a train near Surbiton station,

south-west London, 9 February 2021.



Aerial view of the area.

At around 11:35 hrs on Tuesday 9 February 2021, a track worker was struck and fatally injured by a passenger train near Surbiton station, south-west London. The train, which was travelling from London Waterloo to Salisbury, was travelling at around 76 mph (112 km/h) on the down fast line.

The track worker was part of a group of four staff who were undertaking a planned inspection of switches and crossings (points). The work was planned to take place while the lines were open and with arrangements in place to protect staff from train movements.

Our investigation will aim to identify the sequence of events which led to the accident and will include consideration of the actions of those involved, the planned protection arrangements, the planning of the work relating to the inspection of switches and crossings where lines are open to traffic, and any relevant underlying factors.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, the British Transport Police or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

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Prime Minister to publish roadmap for cautiously easing COVID restrictions

The Prime Minister will today set out the government's roadmap for cautiously easing lockdown restrictions in England.

Cabinet will meet virtually this morning to discuss the plan, the Prime Minister will give a statement to Parliament in the afternoon, and host a televised press conference in the evening.

He will set out the latest data on infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths, as well as early data showing the efficacy of vaccines.

The roadmap for leaving lockdown, which will be published on gov.uk on Monday, will seek to balance health, economic and social factors with the very latest epidemiological data and advice.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Today I'll be setting out a roadmap to bring us out of lockdown cautiously. Our priority has always been getting children back into school which we know is crucial for their education as well as their mental and physical wellbeing, and we will also be prioritising ways for people to reunite with loved ones safely.

Our decisions will be made on the latest data at every step, and we will be cautious about this approach so that we do not undo the progress we have achieved so far and the sacrifices each and every one of you has made to keep yourself and others safe.

We have therefore set four key tests which must be met before we can move through each step of the plan.

The roadmap outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the government will examine the data to assess the impact of previous easements. This assessment will be based on four tests which are that:

- The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.
- Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
- Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
- Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

The four tests are currently being met so the first step will proceed from 8 March, at which point the top four priority cohorts for vaccinations – as

determined by the independent JCVI – will have received a degree of immunity, three weeks after being offered their first dose.

Due to the current, relatively uniform spread of the virus across the country, restrictions will be eased step-by-step across the whole of England at the same time.

The roadmap seeks to balance between social and economic impacts, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country.

Outdoor settings are known to be lower risk than indoor, so outdoor activities will be opened earlier than indoor ones.

MPs will have an opportunity to vote on the regulations that will enable this roadmap in Parliament in the coming weeks.

We continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations as we have throughout the pandemic. They are setting out approaches for easing for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.