

Contempt of court proceedings to be brought against environmental lawyer

News story

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On 9 December, in accordance with its usual practice, the Supreme Court circulated its draft judgment on the future of Heathrow Airport to various parties involved in the case including Mr Crosland, an outspoken opponent of Heathrow's plans. The draft judgment was circulated on a confidential basis and an embargo setting out the need for confidentiality was clearly stated. It was also made clear that breaching the embargo might be treated as a contempt of court.

On 15 December Mr Crosland issued a statement to news wire, Press Association disclosing the Supreme Court's decision. In his statement, Mr Crosland confirmed that he had deliberately 'breached the embargo as an act of civil disobedience'.

Following a referral from the Supreme Court, the Solicitor General has instigated contempt of court proceedings against Mr Crosland. In doing so, the Solicitor General acted independently of government and in the public interest.

Commenting on the matter, the Solicitor General the Rt. Hon. Michael Ellis QC MP said:

After careful consideration, I have concluded that in order that the Rule of Law be upheld, contempt of court proceedings should be brought against Tim Crosland. Irrespective of any personal views on

any issue there is no excuse for knowingly undermining court processes and proceedings. As proceedings are now underway, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

The case has been referred to the Supreme Court and is now a matter for the Justices of that court.

Note to editors

1. Contempt of court is punishable by up to 2 years in prison, and/or a fine.

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Human Rights Council: UK statement for the 29th Special Session on Myanmar

Madam President,

The United Kingdom condemns the military coup in Myanmar and the arbitrary detention of members of the democratically elected civilian government and civil society, including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. It is essential that Aung San Suu Kyi, Win Myint, and all those arbitrarily detained are released. We must receive assurances of their safety and wellbeing.

We stand with the people of Myanmar who are now bravely exercising their democratic right to protest this coup. Their wishes, and the result of the November 2020 General Election, must be respected.

The human rights situation continues to deteriorate. We are extremely concerned by the reports and images of violence emerging from Myanmar perpetrated by the police and military. The state of emergency imposed by the military should be lifted immediately. All actors must refrain from violence and seek dialogue towards a peaceful resolution.

We continue to closely monitor the situation and call on the military to refrain from obstructing the people's access to information and communication.

The United Kingdom is clear that the state of emergency and all restrictions on the rights and freedoms of people in Myanmar must be lifted immediately. There must be unobstructed humanitarian access for International NGOs and Civil Society Organisations so that essential aid can reach those that need it.

The events of the past two weeks have shown that it is of the utmost importance that the Special Rapporteur continues to assess the situation of human rights and to provide regular updates. We call on the Secretary General and High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to give the Special Rapporteur their full support and press Myanmar to allow him access.

We welcome the unanimous statement of the Security Council supporting Myanmar's democratic transition, and the ASEAN Chair's statement, which recalls the principles of the ASEAN Charter, such as the rule of law, good governance and democracy. We encourage all partners to work constructively to prevent any further violence and seek a peaceful resolution.

Thank you.

New trade and investment data published

News story

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is today publishing for the first time detailed summaries of the UK's trade and investment relationships with over 200 overseas trading partners.



New factsheets, made accessible on gov.uk, will bring together key data on the value of trade and investment between the UK and 222 individual markets, using statistics from the Office for National Statistics, HM Revenue & Customs, as well as other international organisations.

They will include details such as the value of exports and imports between countries and the top goods and services that the UK trades with its international partners, including key FTA trade partners. In addition, statistics relating to the levels of Foreign Direct Investment from the UK to other markets and vice versa will also be published.

"This is the first time DIT has brought together statistics to provide a consolidated picture of the level of trade and investment between the UK and more than 220 international partner countries, demonstrating our commitment to openness, transparency, and making it easier to get insights from data.

"These new Official Statistics collate data from domestic and international organisations to give users a valuable source of information that shines a spotlight on the UK's trade and investment positions around the world."

The new factsheets will be updated periodically when new data are available and are accessible to the public on gov.uk from today.

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The All Belarusian People's Assembly: UK statement

World news story

Nicola Murray, Deputy Head of Delegation, delivers a UK statement on the All Belarusian People's Assembly to the OSCE Permanent Council.



Madam Chair,

The All Belarusian People's Assembly, which opened on 11 February, claims to include representatives of all sectors of Belarusian society, brought together to determine Belarus' priorities for the next five years and possible amendments to the constitution. In reality, the Assembly is neither inclusive nor representative. The 2,000 delegates have been vetted and handpicked by the authorities. No opposition voices will be allowed to attend or contribute.

Meanwhile, the authorities continue their sustained campaign of repression against all those campaigning for genuine democratic change, and the

independent media actors who are reporting these events. Human rights groups now list 246 political prisoners, including all significant opposition leaders. Over 33,000 demonstrators have been detained, false charges of tax evasion or phytosanitary breaches are being brought against civil society organisations and there is no progress on investigating the hundreds of complaints of brutality by the security forces.

The UK is clear that repression, brutality and stage managed assemblies will not resolve the political and human rights crisis in Belarus. This can only be achieved through genuine inclusive dialogue. We call on the Belarusian authorities to implement and adhere to the recommendations in the Moscow Mechanism report as a route to a lasting and peaceful solution to the crisis, one which meets the democratic rights of its people.

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Lastminute.com faces legal action unless it pays outstanding refunds

Press release

Lastminute.com will face legal action unless it repays over £1 million to customers it committed to refund after their package holidays were cancelled.



On 1 December 2020, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced that Lastminute.com had signed formal undertakings which committed it to pay out over £7 million to more than 9,000 customers when their holidays were cancelled due to the pandemic.

All those affected were due to get their money back by 31 January 2021 at the latest, however, Lastminute.com still owes over £1 million to 2,600 customers.

The company has also failed to meet its ongoing commitment to repay all customers entitled to a refund within 14 days of their package holiday being cancelled on or after 3 December 2020.

On top of this, Lastminute.com told some package holiday customers to go directly to their airline to get the cost of their flight back. This is also in breach of its commitments and against its obligations under the Package Travel Regulations.

The CMA has informed Lastminute.com that it will take court action if it does not repay the outstanding refunds within 7 days. To avoid court action, Lastminute.com must also ensure that customers who book their package holidays from now on will receive a full refund within 14 days where they are legally entitled to their money back following the cancellation of their package holiday.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

It is wholly unacceptable that thousands of Lastminute.com customers are still waiting for full refunds for package holidays despite the commitments the company signed with us.

We take breaches of commitments extremely seriously. If Lastminute.com does not comply with the law and pay people their outstanding refunds quickly, we will take the company to court.

Today's announcement follows significant action by the CMA in relation to holiday cancellations during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CMA has [written to over 100 package holiday firms to remind them of their obligations to comply with consumer protection law](#), and has already secured refund commitments from [Virgin Holidays](#), [TUI UK](#), [Sykes Cottages](#) and [Vacation Rentals](#).

Further information on this case can be found on the [COVID-19 cancellations: package holidays web page](#).

Notes to editors

1. [Lastminute.com committed to repay](#) at least half of customers by 16 December 2020 and to pay the remaining refunds by no later than 31 January 2021. It signed undertakings on 27 November 2020 and the CMA announced this on 1 December 2020.
2. The CMA sent a letter before action to Lastminute.com on Friday 12 February 2021. This outlined that the CMA intends to apply to the court for an order under section 217 of the Enterprise Act 2002 requiring Lastminute.com to comply with its obligations under [the Package Travel](#)

[and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018.](#)

3. The commitments signed by Lastminute.com relate to package travel holidays, not flights alone.
4. Where package holidays are cancelled and consumers are entitled to a full refund under the Package Travel Regulations, those refunds must be provided within 14 days of the cancellation.

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