

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances 2022: Joint statement to the OSCE

Mr Chair,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway, San Marino, Ukraine and my own country, the United Kingdom.

30 August marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. We want to take this opportunity to strongly condemn instances of enforced disappearances and to reaffirm our commitments to the prevention and eradication of this serious human rights violation. We also reiterate our shared commitments in adopting the [2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#).

Enforced disappearance is used to spread terror, fear and anxiety. Victims of enforced disappearance are often tortured or killed. Those who survive this abhorrent practice, and their loved ones, live in trauma – the physical and psychological scars are often irreparable.

Mr Chair, we condemn enforced disappearance whenever and wherever it occurs. Today, we are making this statement in the devastating context of Russia's heinous and systematic use of this tactic as part of its unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine.

The first and second reports of the Moscow Mechanism on the violations and abuses committed in Ukraine have found credible evidence of abductions and abuse of Ukrainian activists, human rights defenders, volunteers, journalists, health-care workers and government representatives in the areas of Ukraine under control of the Russian army. The [report](#) highlights that Ukrainian civilians in Russian-controlled areas are increasingly being subjected to so-called "filtration", a systematic operation designed to identify and brutally suppress dissent. Those who pass through filtration are often transferred, with their consent or without it, to Russian territory, while those who fail are transferred to the so-called 'People's Republics', where their whereabouts are largely unknown. Some are detained indefinitely in detention centres. Some disappear altogether. We have also heard about the arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of 21 journalists and civil society activists who vocally opposed the invasion in Kyiv, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions. We vehemently condemn Russia's use of enforced disappearance and will continue to hold Russia accountable for serious human rights violations and abuses.

Mr Chair,

We stand in full solidarity with victims and survivors of enforced disappearances in Ukraine and around the world, as well as their families and communities affected.

We also strongly defend the importance of ensuring that credible reports of enforced disappearance lead to independent and transparent investigations and prosecute those responsible, in order to provide justice to victims and their families.

In closing, we jointly reaffirm our commitment to address this egregious practice and to step up our efforts to end enforced disappearance in the OSCE region.

[New General Aviation Advocate appointed](#)

News story

Mike Pearson announced as General Aviation Advocate.



The Department for Transport has today (Friday 2 September 2022) appointed a new General Aviation Advocate to represent the needs and ambitions of the general aviation (GA) sector.

Mike Pearson, a seasoned GA professional, has been recruited by the department as the new GA Advocate to support the GA industry and provide advice to ministers. The GA Advocate role was created in 2017 and serves to represent and raise the profile of GA. Mike will build on the important work of the [previous GA Advocate, Phil Dunnington](#), who very sadly passed away in 2021, and on the work of the former GA Champion role created in 2015.

New GA Advocate, Mike Pearson, is a member of the Royal Aero Club, an airfield manager for Popham airfield and served as a Chair of the Airfield Operators Group (AOG). He also served as a Chairman of the Blackbushe Airport

Consultative Committee and as the Director of Enterprise for Southwark College.

Aviation Minister, Robert Courts, said:

It's vital we make sure the industry is well-represented to solve some of the most pressing issues they are currently facing and enhance further the UK's position as a world leader in aviation.

Mike is a longstanding role model in aviation and an ideal advocate for the general aviation sector. His career shows not only his excellent suitability for the role, but also how exciting the sector is, and I take great pleasure in welcoming him.

The appointment is key to the delivery of the [GA roadmap](#) (published April 2021) that aims to make the UK the best place in the world for GA. The appointment is also an important step in delivering the commitments on general aviation in [Flightpath to the future](#) (published earlier this year).

Published 2 September 2022

[Reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office](#)

News story

The Lord Chancellor has announced the reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office for a third term of 9 months.



The Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Lord Chief Justice, has

announced the reappointment of 3 lay panel members of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office. The members are:

Paul Curtis; Jenni-Douglas Todd; Judith Webb MBE;

The reappointments will run from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office is an independent office which supports the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice in considering complaints about the personal conduct of judicial office-holders.

Appointments and reappointments are made by the Lord Chancellor and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The reappointments have been made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Biographies

Paul Curtis is Tribunal Chair of the Medical Practitioner Tribunal Service. He is a panel Lay Member at the General Optical Council. He is also Lay Chair at the School Admission Appeals Panel and Lay Chair Independent Review Panel (School Exclusions) at the East Sussex County Council

Jenni Douglas-Todd is a Director of Equality and Inclusion at NHS England, Southampton. She is currently Deputy Chairman and Senior Independent Director with University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust. Jenni is a former chief executive of Hampshire Police Authority and the Office of the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner. She is Independent Chairman of the Dorset Integrated Care System. Jenni is a member of the English Cricket Board's Regulatory Committee; Non-Executive Director with Hampshire Cricket Board and a Trustee with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders.

Ms Judith Webb MBE is a board member of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and a member of the Independent Agricultural Appeals Panel. Her previous appointments include: Chair of Defra's Rural Development Service during its transition into Natural England; Deputy Chair of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; and Commissioner for Forestry Commission in Wales.

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UK legalises public documents electronically: 2 September 2022

The UK Legalisation Office (part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) will now be able to receive documents digitally and will issue

electronic 'e-Apostille' certificates enabling a quicker, cheaper and more efficient service for thousands of people around the globe.

A [legalised document](#) is needed in many international transactions including overseas working visas and managing property. Currently customers send their physical documents to the UK Legalisation Office by post or courier and receive the documents back several days later with a paper certificate, known as an Apostille, attached.

The first UK e-Apostille was issued on 15 December 2021 as part of a pilot initiative. The option to apply for an e-Apostille will now be opened up to more customers.

Secure digital process

Applicants will be able to quickly upload digital documents instead of posting them. Documents must be signed using either an Advanced Electronic Signature, or a Qualified Electronic Signature, which offer high levels of validation.

The Apostille is issued as an attachment to a PDF, with the document/s the certificate relates to also attached. Both the overarching PDF and the Apostille attachment are digitally signed by the Legalisation Office to ensure integrity. The electronic signature/s of the public official/s within the customer's document/s are also preserved.

Customers will still have the option of a paper Apostille, and a small number of documents (such as police record documents) will continue to require a paper-based Apostille for specific security reasons.

Chris Ward, Head of Public-facing Services, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, said:

This is an exciting development which will provide a much more efficient user experience.

A digital Apostille solution has been many years in the making, but this new system is capable of providing a fully digital service.

We want to continue to provide the best possible service to our customers and will develop the system further to meet a range of user needs.

Michael Lightowler, Notary Public and Member of the Notaries Society of England and Wales said:

The process is straightforward and efficient.

Obvious benefits are speed of turnaround and lack of need to use paper and post or couriers, all of which also reduces costs.

Record keeping is simpler, with my digital files saved directly to a folder once the e-Apostille is added, instead of a time consuming document scanning step.

The e-Apostille service offers benefits to international trade and commerce in terms of security and convenience. It will also help to reduce the environmental impact of circulating hard copy public documents around the world.

International acceptance

UK e-Apostilles have been accepted by authorities in Italy, the Netherlands, Panama and the Philippines.

Under an international agreement over 100 countries that are signed up to the [Apostille Convention](#) should equally accept e-Apostilles. Users are advised to check the requirements of the organisation or individual that has requested the Apostille before they apply.

Overseas authorities can view an e-Apostille using a PDF reader. They can check all UK Apostilles, including the new e-Apostilles, by entering a reference [online](#).

Fraudulent presidential election in Belarus: Joint statement to the OSCE

Mr Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Iceland, Moldova, Norway, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and my own country Canada, who wish to add their voices to those marking the two-year anniversary of the deeply flawed and fraudulent presidential election in Belarus. The [Moscow Mechanism report in 2020](#) and UN Special Rapporteur's investigations have found compelling evidence of a campaign of severe repression across all parts of Belarusian society which took place before, during and after the August 2020 Presidential Election.

The 2020 Moscow Mechanism report described "overwhelming evidence that the presidential elections of 9 August 2020 have been falsified and that massive and systematic human rights violations have been committed by the Belarusian security forces in response to peaceful protests and demonstrations."

The report made 65 recommendations to the Belarusian authorities, including new Presidential elections, an immediate end to the violence and release of all those illegally detained, an independent oversight mechanism on detention

conditions, and an investigation into all allegations of torture.

However, two years on, civil society has been decimated and independent media quashed. Belarusian people have faced arbitrary arrest and detention – with over 1,300 political prisoners now detained, steadily growing in number since 2020. There are credible reports that some detainees have been subjected to torture. The regime has pursued politically motivated, unfair trials, has extended the use of the death penalty to include ‘attempted’ acts of terrorism, has prevented Belarusians from leaving the country, has undertaken trials in absentia, and failed to meet international standards when conducting a constitutional referendum.

The Belarusian authorities have had ample opportunity to end their attacks on the freedoms of their citizens, to release those detained on spurious political charges, and to undertake the fresh elections needed to enable the Belarusian people to decide their own leaders and their own future. Recommendations and evidence of wrongdoing from the UN Special Rapporteur, from the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Commission of Inquiry have been consistently ignored by the regime.

Instead, two years on from the fraudulent elections, the regime now seeks to curtail the freedoms of the people of neighbouring Ukraine through facilitating Russia’s illegal invasion of their country. This support to Russia’s provided by the Lukashenko regime has served as an excuse to ratchet up repression on those Belarusians standing up against the war.

We will continue to hold the Lukashenko regime to account for their human rights violations and continued support to Russia’s illegal war. This includes through targeted sanctions packages and support for accountability measures. It is a false narrative that sanctions are provoking a global food crisis. It is, in fact, Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine that impacts upon global food security. Firm action must be taken to deter the Lukashenko regime from their violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Belarusian people, and its reckless support of Russia’s illegal invasion.

We continue to stand in solidarity with the Belarusian people, condemn the regime’s continued human rights violations, and strongly urge the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners, immediately and unconditionally.

In conclusion, Mr Chair, we again urge decision-makers in Belarus to reconsider their current course of action, to cease their support of Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, and to seek to proactively address the recommendations made in the Moscow Mechanism report.

We stand committed and ready to support the democratic rights of the Belarusian people – genuine and inclusive dialogue is the bedrock to democracy – and we invite Belarusian authorities to engage with the Belarusian people.