

Press release: UK to increase Syria medical aid in wake of chemical attack

The International Development Secretary announced additional funding today (09/04/2017), which will ensure health workers on the ground in Syria can deliver healthcare and essential medicines across the country; enabling them to prepare for future medical emergencies.

Global Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis, and we continue to lead international efforts by providing additional emergency medical support to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

This allocation builds on existing UK support to the World Health Organisation, which has enabled it to pre-position supplies and train medics in anticipation of an attack of this kind. As a result, WHO was able to rapidly deliver medicines including Atropine (an antidote for some types of chemical exposure) and steroids for treatment, ship in additional medicines, and provide immediate support to medics.

The new support from the UK will go to three NGOs on the ground and will provide a wider range of lifesaving medical aid right across Syria, including:

- access to clean water for 500,000 people for drinking and sanitation, to help prevent the spread of disease and sickness;
- medicines, medical supplies and equipment including basic surgical supplies such as sutures and pain medications for 340 primary health clinics and 69 hospitals;
- 1 million primary health care consultations, along with more than 30,000 mental health and psychosocial consultations for traumatised people; and
- training for more than 400 Syrian health workers responding to the ongoing conflict.

Priti Patel said:

This was a brutal and indiscriminate attack. Unleashing the horror of chemical weapons on women, children and the defenceless is not only utterly deplorable, but it is the mark of a craven coward.

Those responsible must be held to account. And the victims must get the help they so desperately need – that is why we are providing further medical support not only for those subjected to the horrors of chemical attack, but for those countless victims of the equally deadly bombs, bullets and diseases that are devastating lives across Syria.

It is vital that the international community continues to support the Syrian people and the UK led calls at the Brussels Conference on Syria this week for

donors to step up assistance to the most vulnerable people. As a result, \$6 billion in international funding was committed for the coming year.

Notes to editors

1. The new allocation of funding to WHO and two other undisclosed NGOs totals £7 million. It will support ongoing delivery of medicines and basic supplies to primary health clinics to treat minor illnesses, infections, chronic conditions and mental illnesses; primary healthcare and mental health support; and clean water and sanitation programming in Idlib.
2. It builds on £10.7 million provided to WHO last financial year (2016/17). WHO has been advised that any remaining UK funding from last year can be used flexibly as necessary in its ongoing response to the chemical attack.

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[News story: Trade unions to face new fines of up to £20,000 for breaking governance laws](#)

Trade unions are set to face new fines of up to £20,000 for breaking governance laws under plans being consulted on by the government.

Under the proposals, the union regulator, the [Certification Officer](#), will be able to issue fines of up to £20,000 for breaking the law including serious breaches of election rules or mismanagement of their political funds.

Currently the Certification Officer cannot impose a financial penalty, instead issuing a declaration or an enforcement order if a union breaches its statutory obligations under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act.

The new proposed powers the Certification Officer will be able to fine unions for breaches like:

- failing to ensure senior positions are not held by someone with a criminal record
- breaching requirements for elections to senior positions
- mismanagement of political funds

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said:

Trade unions exist to represent workers' interests and make decisions which can affect millions of people's lives, so it is right for the government to ensure they are run responsibly.

The proposed powers will make sure unions are properly regulated in the future to ensure they truly represent the interests of their members.

The government is consulting on these powers as agreed during the passage of the Trade Union Act last year.

The majority of the Act's new powers came into force on 1 March, bringing in tougher ballot requirements for industrial action – particularly for important public services like health, education and transport.

This will save more than 1.5 million working hours a year from being lost to undemocratic strike action.

The [consultation on the Certification Officer's powers](#) will run for 6 weeks from 9 April until 21 May.

1. The Certification Officer is responsible for regulating statutory functions relating to trade unions and employers' associations.
2. The Certification Officer's complaint rulings are published online.
3. The Trade Union Act which came into force on 1 March, is expected to reduce strikes:
 - on important public services like transport, education and health by 35%
 - in all other sectors from construction to water supply by 29%

[After attacks, UN senior official in South Sudan urges protection of aid workers and civilians](#)

8 April 2017 – Following recent attacks on civilians and aid workers in South Sudan, the top United Nations humanitarian official in the country today

called on the Government and the opposition to protect civilians and ensure the safety and security of humanitarians.

Noting reports this week of [outrageous abuses](#) by both state and opposition actors in Upper Nile against aid workers, as well as reports of horrific attacks against civilians in Eastern Equatoria, Eugene Owusu, called the attacks [reprehensible and unacceptable](#).

I call on those in power [to take swift action](#) to end the targeting of innocent people in this conflict and to hold those responsible to account, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan said.

In his statement, Mr. Owusu noted two [serious](#) attacks against aid workers in Aburoc and Melut, both in the Upper Nile, since 31 March.

He condemned the attacks [in the strongest terms](#) and demanded authorities to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

[Humanitarians](#) are in this country to save lives. It is beyond reckoning that they continue to be killed, harassed and abused despite our repeated calls for action, Mr. Owusu stressed.

Also this week, in Pajok, Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria, at least 6,000 people have been forced to flee to Uganda and reportedly several dozen have been killed, following an attack by government forces on the town.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) said that thousands more are thought to be sheltering in the bushes in areas surrounding the town, which was estimated to be home to up to 50,000 people.

I am appalled by the reports, said Mr. Owusu. I implore the leadership in South Sudan to rapidly investigate these allegations and to end all attacks against civilians.

The attacks come as the humanitarian situation in South Sudan is deteriorating. More than 3.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including nearly 1.9 million people who are internally displaced and more than 1.7 million who have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries.

OCHA estimates that an average of 2,000 South Sudanese refugees are arriving into Uganda each day, some 62 per cent of them children.

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