



DEBATE PACK

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Protecting civil society space across the world

Backbench Business Committee Debate

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. UN guide; Press/Media articles

UN guide

[A practical guide for civil society: Civil society space and the United Nations human rights system](#)

United Nations

The following is a small selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

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Press articles

[Africa: A shrinking space for autocrats](#)

Financial Times
David Pilling
23 January 2017

[Civil Society During The Trump Years](#)

Huffington Post
Lincoln Mitchell
2 January 2017

[Press freedom in Canada eroded by post-9/11 obsession with security](#)

Steven Zhou
CBC News
26 December 2016

['The Indian government has shut the door on NGOs'](#)

Deborah Doane
The Guardian
7 September 2016

[UN official criticises China over 'shrinking space' for human rights](#)

Christian Shepherd
Financial Times
23 August 2016

Journal articles

[Funding China's Civil Society – Tax Incentives, Donation Law, and the Role of Foreign Charities](#)

China Business Review
Samuel Wrest
13 January 2017

[Barack Obama's Shaky Legacy on Human Rights](#)

Kenneth Roth
Foreign Policy
4 January 2017

Blogs

[How the U.S. can protect human rights activists](#)

Brian Dooley
The Hill (blog)
8 December 2016

[It's time for development banks to start listening](#)

Maina Kiai
Open Democracy
17 August 2016

[No middle ground: the risks of being a human rights defender in India](#)

Mathew Jacob
Open Democracy
31 May 2016

[Reclaiming space through UN-supported litigation](#)

Maina Kiai
Open Democracy
19 April 2016

[Are we being innovative in protecting civic space?](#)

Open Democracy
Araddhya Mehtta
18 April 2016

2. Press releases

Minister for North Africa statement on human rights organisations in Egypt

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
13 January 2017

FCO Minister Tobias Ellwood deeply concerned by Egyptian court decision to freeze assets of several human rights defenders and their organisations as part of the Foreign Funding Case (Case 173/2011).

Foreign Office Minister, Tobias Ellwood, said:

“I am deeply concerned by the Egyptian court decision to freeze the assets of several prominent human rights defenders and their organisations on 11 January, including Nazra for Feminist Studies and its Director Mozn Hassan. This follows several other asset freezes and travel bans against human rights organisations and their staff as part of the Foreign Funding Case.

A strong civil society is vital to Egypt’s long term stability and economic development. Restrictions and sanctions on civil society organisations take Egypt further away from implementing the freedoms set out in the 2014 Constitution. The impact of this decision on the work of those striving to protect women’s rights in Egypt is particularly troubling.

I encourage Egypt to lift restrictions on civil society organisations, and allow them to operate freely in line with the Constitution.”

Russia lists 150th Organisation Under ‘Foreign Agents’ Law

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
23 December 2016

Foreign Office Minister, Sir Alan Duncan, expresses concern over the increased pressure faced by civil society in Russia.

The “Foreign Agents” law was introduced by the Russian Government in July 2012. It has the effect of making it much more difficult for civil society organisations to operate, by depriving them of vital overseas funding and subjecting them to overly-burdensome reporting, auditing requirements and heavy fines for non-compliance. Almost 20% of the organisations added to the Foreign Agents register have subsequently closed down.

The 150 civil society organisations which have been added to the register mainly work in Human Rights-related areas (including LGBT rights, HIV prevention, media freedoms and defence of democracy). But there are also a number of environmental NGOs and cultural and scientific organisations, including those working in healthcare. The international branch of Memorial, which is highly respected internationally for its work over many years to preserve the memory of victims of Soviet persecution, and the Levada Centre, a well reputed independent polling agency, have both been added to the register. The 150th organisation to be added was Project April, which works on HIV prevention.

FCO Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

“We remain deeply concerned about increasing pressure faced by civil society and human rights groups in Russia. As of 19 December, 150 organisations have been added to the foreign agents register since the introduction of the “Foreign Agents Law” in 2012, shrinking further the space for civil society in Russia. By imposing the politicised and highly stigmatising label of ‘Foreign Agent’, the Russian Government is attempting to discredit and undermine the important work of NGOs – an essential element of a vibrant civil society.”

Further information about the human rights environment in Russia can be found in the FCO’s [Human Rights Report](#).

Marking Human Rights Day

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

9 December 2016

Baroness Anelay's speech from the FCO's Human Rights Day event on Thursday 8th December.

Introduction

Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests, colleagues. Welcome to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is a pleasure to see so many of you here tonight.

The theme of this year’s UN Human Rights Day is ‘stand up for someone’s human rights’. It is more relevant this year than ever, because all around the world people’s human rights are under threat every single day. Whether it is through a squeeze on civil society space, a stifling of public debate or free speech, or a ban on freedom of assembly: it all means the same thing: our human rights are at risk. A short while ago, Hannah who helps me with all my human rights work, asked me what human rights mean to me. Human rights are the right to be yourself without fear of prosecution or persecution, because that runs a theme across everything that makes human beings who they are and who they can be.

Importance of civil society

That is why the role of civil society is so important to ensure that human rights can be both promoted, and where they do exist, preserved. It is also why this year's theme is so relevant to our work here in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with our focus on civil society and democracy. I share the Foreign Secretary's belief that human rights, vital in themselves, are also good for the security, prosperity and development of countries around the world. If the Foreign Secretary were here today – as he would very much like to have been - he would tell you how much he personally values civil society as the mechanism through which all citizens can exercise their freedoms and make their voices heard.

Today I would like to talk to you about the work that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is doing to support civil society, and our commitment to promote and defend human rights around the world.

Work of FCO

Many of you are regular visitors to this building and may have attended some of our recent events – such as our ground breaking conference in October on freedom of religion or belief as a bulwark against extremism, or last month's Week of Women events. Some of you were with us just this week for the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery; or at Australia House for the event we co-hosted an event on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Those are just a few examples of the human rights work we do here in London.

Overseas, our Embassies and High Commissions are also working on human rights every day. Whether it is supporting organisations that defend human rights, lobbying host governments or debating rules in international fora, our diplomats put human rights at the heart of everything they do. They promote and defend human rights not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is integral to our national interest and our international reputation.

Their efforts are making a real and positive impact - for example, in helping to create the Human Rights Council's first ever mechanism to combat violence and discrimination against LGBT communities - that was crucial work they did. When that mandate was challenged at the UN General Assembly, our diplomats helped rally support around the world, to ensure that challenge was defeated, as it should be.

Our work with the UN is crucial, and the UK has been a member of the Human Rights Council for 8 of the last 10 years. I was delighted that earlier this autumn we were re-elected last month to serve a further 3-year term.

Traditional diplomacy like this is still highly effective but we are also moving with the times and adapting how we promote human rights and democracy. Today, that means harnessing traditional and social media channels to get our messages across. They are enabling us to reach some of the most hostile and least democratic corners of our world. An example of this media diplomacy is our support via social

media to the UN's "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence", which concludes on Human Rights Day. Naturally, we all know that we need more than 16 days to achieve our goals. Our commitment to promote human rights is for the long term.

Civil society space

I mentioned earlier that one of our current priorities is to counter the "shrinking of civil society space" we are seeing happening around the world. It is a problem that has been on the rise for some time: our last 2 annual Human Rights Reports both noted the alarming rise of anti-NGO legislation and other practices that stifle basic human rights, such as public debate and freedom of assembly. The evidence is clear that shrinking civil society space harms a country's stability, economic prospects and wider social development.

One example of where we are seeing this is Egypt. I am concerned that the new law on non-governmental organisations passed by the Egyptian Parliament on 29 November will be used to prevent Egyptians from contributing to their country's future, and will create obstacles for international support for Egypt. At a time of economic hardship, Egypt needs civil society more than ever before, and I hope Egypt accepts the UK's friendly offer of support.

Human rights defenders

In this context of shrinking space for civil society, the work of human rights defenders has never been more important than it is now. In their efforts to stand up for the human rights of others, they exemplify the theme of this year's Human Rights Day as well as the wider principles and values of democracy and the rule of law. They deserve our support and protection and they are going to be the focus of our social media activity on Human Rights Day this year. You'll be able to see some of our clips being played in the background tonight.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office works with human rights defenders around the world, sharing information with them and learning from them. We hugely value their courage and dedication. They are a crucial dimension of the projects that we support. This year we are funding 129 human rights projects in over 60 countries through our Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy, and that fund is reaching some of the harder to reach communities, who are benefiting from that. But we know we can learn how to do more. Since 2014 the Fund has supported 9 NGO-led projects focused specifically on the work of human rights defenders.

Colombia, which I visited earlier this year, remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders. We are running a project to open up dialogue between human rights defenders, local and national government, and the international community. It aims to foster a common understanding of the many challenges they face, and of the potential solutions.

We are also investing in the next generation of human rights defenders, through awarding 60 Chevening scholarships for postgraduate studies

in human rights. Our scholars are selected for their academic talent and their future leadership potential, and we are confident they will be a force for good when they return home. As I travel the world for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it is always a joy to be able to meet our Chevening scholars and see the work they are achieving. They tell me how the opportunity offered to them is making a difference on issues of human rights in their country.

Conclusion

An active civil society is the hallmark of a mature society; a healthy society: one that is open to challenge and able to protect the rights of its citizens. Governments should open the space for civil society, not close it down. They should commend human rights defenders – not condemn them.

That is our message from across the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that we will continue to promote, at home and abroad. This Human Rights Day, let's all stand up for human rights.

Thank you for working with us.

Minister for North Africa statement on civil society in Egypt

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1 December 2016

Minister for North Africa Tobias Ellwood comments on the Egyptian Parliament passing a law on Non-Governmental Organisations.

Foreign Office Minister, Tobias Ellwood, said:

“Britain supports a strong civil society in Egypt. The law on Non-Governmental Organisations passed by the Egyptian Parliament on 29 November is a step backwards. At a time of economic hardship, Egypt needs civil society more than ever. So I am deeply concerned that this legislation will be used to prevent Egyptians from contributing to their country's future, and will create obstacles to international support to Egypt.

It leaves Egypt further than ever from implementing the civil society freedoms in the Egyptian constitution. I have raised these concerns with Egyptian Parliamentarians who visited London this week.”

International Development Secretary launches Civil Society Partnership Review

Department for International Development
4 November 2016

DFID's [Civil Society Partnership Review \(CSPR\)](#) today sets out a new system of central funding for civil society organisations.

It will simplify the system for funding civil society while ensuring it enhances existing high performing relationships and broadens the availability of support.

Announcing the new partnerships, International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, made clear the vital role that civil society plays in the UK's work to tackle extreme poverty and global challenges.

The four central funding sources are designed to incentivise good performance, catalyse innovation and partnership, and push for more efficiency, transparency and accountability. This will guarantee the best value for UK taxpayers and the most effective delivery of DFID's primary goal - eradicating poverty.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel also vowed to support civil society abroad stating that the sector is facing unprecedented pressure; from violent attacks to attempts to close down the space for democratic dialogue and debate.

She committed to standing alongside civil society against encroachments against freedom of thought, association and expression highlighting the extraordinary bravery of people who work for civil society organisations (CSOs), often at serious personal risk, in some of the world's most dangerous places.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

"From delivering life-saving assistance when disaster strikes, to addressing the underlying causes of deprivation, our civil society organisations are on the front line of the battle against extreme poverty.

We will work with civil society organisations so we can use their unique expertise in the most effective way to fight the scourge of poverty, protect the world from disease and instability, and create our trading partners of tomorrow.

I look forward to building upon and broadening DFID's partnerships with civil society in the future. I am also very clear that we will robustly defend the rights of civil society that are increasingly under attack in a dangerous and uncertain world. Together we will build a post-Brexit Britain that is generous, outward-looking and fully engaged on the world stage."

DFID's main funding for civil society organisations will be:

- [UK Aid Match](#) - a scheme that match-funds public donations to charity appeals for projects to reduce poverty in developing countries, giving the British public a say in what international development issues are important to them. Doubling UK Aid Match is a manifesto commitment.
- [UK Aid Direct](#) - providing grants to small and medium-sized civil society organisations, primarily for work to directly tackle poverty in poor communities around the world.
- UK Aid Connect - a new partnership approach that will allow civil society organisations to work collaboratively, bringing together knowledge, practice and expertise for solutions to some of the most difficult development problems.
- UK Aid Volunteers – which will include the manifesto commitment to triple in size the International Citizen Service (ICS) youth volunteering scheme and provide opportunities for new partnerships with volunteering agencies.

DFID will expect CSOs to be clear about the results they expect to achieve as well as the costs from the support.

The review takes on board evidence from CSOs such as the need to provide a greater leadership role to organisations based in developing countries and to recognise the diversity in the sector. In addition to these central funding opportunities, DFID will work with civil society through its network of overseas offices, ensuring DFID's work with both international and local NGOs is in line with the UK Aid Strategy and is also responding to local needs and opportunities.

3. PQs

Central America and Mexico: Human Rights **19 Jan 2017 | 59507**

Asked by: Ann Clwyd | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions Ministers and officials of his Department had on the issue of attacks and threats to human rights defenders during the recent visit to Central America and Mexico.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Noble Friend, the Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns, visited Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico from 12 to 16 December. Throughout her visit she held a number of discussions, with both government and civil society representatives, on the issue of attacks and threats to human rights defenders (HRDs). This included:

- In Guatemala, meeting key human rights contacts from the executive, legislature, judiciary and civil society, all of whom agreed on the key role played by HRDs and the need to give them protection;
- In El Salvador, meeting NGOs to discuss threats against the International Committee of the Red Cross and the LGBT&I community. Baroness Anelay also met Supreme Court judges to express the UK's support for their work to defend human rights, especially relating to prisons conditions;
- In Honduras, meeting female HRDs, who described difficulties relating to freedom of expression and the criminalisation and stigmatisation of HRDs; and, during an engagement with government representatives including the Minister for Human Rights, stressing the importance of protecting HRDs and improving the human rights environment in the country; and
- In Mexico, urging the Government to prevent and follow up cases of corruption and torture, and underlining the importance of implementing convincing actions following the disappearance of 43 student teachers in Aytozinapa in 2014; and hearing how female journalists had experienced intimidation after reporting on issues such as enforced disappearances, on which the Minister expressed deep concern.

Egypt: Human Rights
13 Jan 2017 | 58350

Asked by: Dr Paul Monaghan | Party: Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of Egypt on recent UN reports of human rights abuses in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of recent statements by UN special rapporteurs expressing concern at restrictions placed on human rights defenders and civil society in Egypt. In December, the spokesperson for the then UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, expressed concern over the arrest of prominent Egyptian human rights defender Azza Soliman.

We are concerned about the decreasing space for civil society to operate in Egypt. Ministers and senior officials regularly raise our concerns with the Egyptian authorities in both London and Cairo. During my meeting with the Egyptian Ambassador on 8 December, I raised our concerns about the arrest of human rights defender Azza Soliman. In the same meeting I reiterated concerns, outlined in my statement from 1 December, about a proposed new law on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

We have also raised our concerns about human rights at the UN. During the most recent session of the UN's Human Rights Council in September we raised concerns about restrictions on civil society in both our national statement and through the EU statement.

We will continue to monitor the human rights situation in Egypt closely, and to urge the Egyptian government to ensure full implementation of the provisions for the free operation of civil society, contained in the constitution, including through a revised NGO law that conforms to international standards and protects freedom of expression.

Egypt: Politics and Government
21 Dec 2016 | 57862

Asked by: Daniel Zeichner | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of democracy stability in Egypt.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Egypt has made progress towards more democratic institutions through the passing of a new Constitution with better protection of rights and freedoms in 2014, the completion of Presidential elections in 2014 and Parliamentary elections in 2015. We welcome these steps and continue to support the Egyptian people's aspiration for a full and functioning democracy.

We also look to President Sisi and the Egyptian government to make more progress on human rights and freedoms. We remain concerned about detentions of political and civil society activists and journalists, deaths and reports of torture in police detention and prisons, and the continued narrowing of space for civil society to operate freely. A more open political environment with better protection of human rights is vital to Egypt's long term stability.

Developing Countries: Politics and Government
13 Dec 2016 | 56790

Asked by: Chi Onwurah | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding her Department (a) has given in the last year and (b) plans to allocate in 2017 for the support of democracy and political governance; and how organisations can bid for such funding.

Answering member: Rory Stewart | Department: Department for International Development

DFID spent £685m on Governance and Civil Society in 2015.

DFID's governance work will champion greater transparency and accountability, and defend the rights of civil society in the face of pressure to close down space for democratic dialogue and debate. The Secretary of State has stated that "The UK Government, as part of its commitment to freedom of thought, association and expression, will stand alongside civil society against these encroachments. And we will support the extraordinary bravery of people who work for CSOs, often at serious personal risk, in some of the world's most dangerous places." This includes support for more open governments, politics, and societies which are the foundations of prosperity. DFID welcomes funding bids from a broad range of organisations and information about funding opportunities is available on the DFID website. We are currently accepting proposals from small and medium CSOs through DFID's UK Aid Direct programme.

South Sudan: Peacekeeping Operations
12 Dec 2016 | 55947

Asked by: Patrick Grady | Party: Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in South Sudan on (a) the role of the UN Mission in that country and (b) measures to protect civil society in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We regularly urge the Government of South Sudan, including the Foreign Minister, to allow UNMISS effectively to fulfil its mandate across the country. This includes allowing freedom of movement, and expediting the deployment of the UN Regional Protection Force. Most

recently the FCO Africa Director lobbied the First Vice President on 24 November. Civil society in South Sudan is increasingly constrained by the Government, security forces and other groups. We are concerned about the impact of the NGO law which has reduced their space to operate. The UK has consistently spoken out in support of civil society and lobbied the Government on this issue.

Islam: Religious Freedom
09 Dec 2016 | 55794

Asked by: Jim Shannon | Party: Democratic Unionist Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government is providing to (a) Iraq, (b) Afghanistan and (c) Nigeria to ensure the protection of minority Shi'a Muslims in those countries.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Iraq

The only way of safeguarding minority communities in Iraq is by defeating Daesh and establishing a lasting peace. The UK Government is committed to this. We have a comprehensive strategy for defeating Daesh and continue to support the Government of Iraq in its efforts to build a more inclusive society. Since June 2014, the UK has committed £169.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the crisis in Iraq. This includes access to clean water, food, medicines and other life-saving assistance for the most vulnerable. All UK funded aid is distributed on the basis of need, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity to ensure that civilians are not discriminated against. We prioritise reaching the most vulnerable people across Iraq, including Shia Muslims and others who have suffered from such violence.

Nigeria

It is important that all Nigerians enjoy the right to freedom of religious belief and assembly, and that the security forces act within the law. UK military training and assistance to the Armed Forces of Nigeria has consistently emphasised the importance of adherence to internationally recognised Rules of Engagement, as well as the importance of International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. We continue to work with the Nigerian Government, NGOs and civil society to improve the security situation and human rights for all the people of Nigeria.

Afghanistan

The UK is working closely with the Afghan Government as it seeks to overcome the legacy of conflict and become a more prosperous and stable state for all Afghans without discrimination. We currently have 450 military personnel in Afghanistan serving in a non-combat role, advising and assisting the Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) as part of the NATO Resolute Mission. In addition to military support, we recently pledged £750m in development aid at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan for the period 2017-2020, this is

expected to deliver improved health systems, boost education opportunities and assist with steps to tackle corruption.

Egypt: Press Freedom
01 Dec 2016 | 54851

Asked by: Helen Goodman | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of Egypt on the imprisonment of journalists and curtailment of the free press in that country.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Egypt is one of the FCO's 30 Human Rights Priority Countries. In the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Report published in April, we raised concerns about the detention of journalists and restrictions on freedom of expression in Egypt. FCO ministers and officials regularly raise human rights concerns with the Egyptian authorities, including the detention of journalists. For example, we raised the arrests of journalists Amr Badr and Mohamed el Sakka in May with the Egyptian Ambassador to London.

The UK has also raised its concerns about human rights in Egypt at the UN, most recently at the Human Rights Council in September. We also supported an EU statement at the same session which specifically expressed concerns about the arrests of journalists in Egypt. When the Prime Minister met President Sisi in September, she noted the importance of human rights. The UK wants to see more political progress and better protection of human rights in Egypt. That includes implementation of the rights guaranteed by Egypt's constitution, more freedom of expression, and more space for NGOs and civil society. These rights and freedoms are key for Egypt's long-term stability and we will continue to raise our concerns with the Egyptian authorities.

Syria
18 Oct 2016 | 615 c664

Asked by: Alison McGovern | Party: Labour Party

It is not just the Syrian opposition but Syrian civil society and non-governmental organisations in this country who are calling for our Government to lead on a comprehensive strategy to protect civilians, including a no-bombing zone. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that our Government will now take a lead in considering this strategy?

Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I pay tribute to the forcefulness with which the hon. Lady has advocated this course. I must say that I wish that, three years ago, the then Labour Opposition had been as resolute in wishing to see that kind of engagement to protect the people of Syria. A critical decision was taken

then, as the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) well remembers, which has made things much more difficult for us today. I want to see the will of this House clearly expressed in support of what the hon. Lady has said.

Maldives: Politics and Government
10 Oct 2016 | 46405

Asked by: Hugo Swire | Party: Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had on putting the Maldives on the agenda of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group for the United Nations General Assembly.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ministers and officials are in close contact with international partners about the situation in the Maldives. The Government welcomes the conclusion of April 2016 by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) that its consideration of the situation in Maldives should continue. We also support its recommendations, in particular the need for the release of political leaders, the widening of space for civil society to operate in, and a swift implementation of reforms to strengthen separation of powers and independence of the judiciary in the Maldives. At its meeting in September, we hope CMAG will take firm action in line with its mandate to deal with persistent and serious violations of Commonwealth values.

Middle East: Conflict Resolution
30 Sep 2016 | HL1950

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool | Party: Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much money they have allocated this financial year towards peace-building and reconciliation initiatives and towards the restoration of plurality and diversity in Iraq and post-war Syria; and how much has been allocated for each of the next five years.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

For the 2016/17 financial year the UK Government allocated £3.7 million from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) towards promoting reconciliation in Iraq. These funds contribute to addressing the long-term factors that led to Daesh's rise. In Iraq the funding supports efforts to encourage political reform and reconciliation through the passage and implementation of legislation, building the capacity of decision makers to craft a strategic vision for reconciliation, and creating a space for dialogue between the government and all of Iraq's communities. In Syria, we have committed over £7 million from the CSSF for the 2016/17 financial year towards the promotion of reconciliation, specifically in supporting local councils, moderate voices

and civil society groups who work to increase community engagement in local conflicts. We are also supporting Track II political dialogue and peace building work, through education, interfaith coexistence and reconciliation training.

For financial year 2017/18, and subsequent years, the final allocation of funding for promoting reconciliation in both Iraq and Syria is yet to be decided. However, this will remain a critical area for our programme funding.

Ethiopia: Political Prisoners
28 Sep 2016 | HL1675

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian | Party: Conservative Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about the treatment of political detainees in that country.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have regularly raised with the Ethiopian Government at the highest levels our concerns about respect for civil and political rights as well as political prisoners. During his visit to Ethiopia in June the former Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), impressed upon Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn the need for more space for civil society and political dissent. Following the protests which have taken place in Ethiopia and the recent numbers of arrests of political opposition figures, we have raised with the Ethiopian Government the need for people currently detained who are facing criminal charges, to be allowed access to legal representation in order to defend themselves in a court of law. The Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) has raised the protests in his conversations with Ethiopian counterparts.

Rwanda: Equality
16 Sep 2016 | HL1694

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Durham | Party: Bishop

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they are providing to the government of Rwanda to tackle levels of inequality there.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Department: Department for International Development

DFID supports various programmes that tackle economic and social inequalities in Rwanda. Our programmes on social protection, education and agriculture all support the Government of Rwanda to address inequality and focus on the needs and rights of the poorest and most excluded people. In addition to DFID's direct support to Government programmes, we also work with the private sector and other partners to promote inclusive economic growth that promotes social cohesion and

reduces economic inequalities, creating decent and sustainable jobs for all. We also work with non-governmental organisations and civil society to address economic, social and gender inequalities. We have three dedicated programmes working on gender and women and girls' empowerment, focusing on Gender Based Violence Prevention, the empowerment of adolescent girls, and addressing harmful social and gender norms.

Indonesia: LGBT People
05 Sep 2016 | 43961

Asked by: Nia Griffith | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote LGBT rights in Indonesia.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British Ambassador and Deputy Head of Mission in Jakarta have discussed this issue with a range of civil society organisations and have raised our concerns with Indonesian Ministers, including the Minister for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. Embassy officials will continue to meet the LGBT community and human rights activists to understand their concerns and provide support where we are able.

Global LGBTI Human Rights Conference
02 Aug 2016 | HL1243

Asked by: Lord Cashman | Party: Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government who is representing them at the LGBTI Human Rights Conference taking place in Montevideo and what update they can provide about the proceedings of that Conference.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK was represented at the Montevideo conference by Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials and by a representative from the Kaleidoscope Trust, a UK civil society organisation working to promote the advancement of the rights of LGB&T people globally. The conference brought together representatives of governments, civil society organisations and multilateral organisations and agencies. It discussed: diplomatic efforts to promote and protect the equal rights of LGB&T and intersex people; their social inclusion; efforts to ensure the commitment made in the Sustainable Development Goals to 'leave no one behind' is fulfilled; and ways to coordinate donor funding to best support these objectives.

Corruption**27 Jun 2016 | 40614****Asked by: Jonathan Ashworth | Party: Labour Party · Cooperative Party**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions his Department had with business and professional services companies before the Anti-Corruption Summit on 12 May 2016.

Answering member: Matthew Hancock | Department: Cabinet Office

Ahead of the Anti-Corruption Summit, Cabinet Office and a number of other government departments engaged with a wide range of businesses, including professional service companies, to understand their views, promote best practice and encourage their support for the objectives of the Summit.

A number of business leaders attended the Summit, as well as the Tackling Corruption Together conference which was organised by civil society and business on 11 May. A group of professional services companies published a statement on 11 May in which they commit to maintaining robust procedures when taking on new clients and building a culture, through education and training, that allows no space for corruption.

Egypt: National Security**09 Jun 2016 | 39194****Asked by: Alistair Carmichael | Party: Liberal Democrats**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his Egyptian counterpart on the charging of Mr Mina Thabet with undermining national security.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of Mr Thabet's case and are concerned about the decreasing space for civil society to operate in Egypt. We urge the Government of Egypt to allow NGOs to operate freely.

I have raised our concerns about pressure on NGOs with the Egyptian Ambassador to London and made a statement on 22 March on this issue. My officials regularly raise our concerns with representatives from the Egyptian Government in both Cairo and London, and will continue to do so.

Egypt: Human Rights
09 Jun 2016 | 39059

Asked by: Alistair Carmichael | Party: Liberal Democrats

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on the number of people defending human rights in Egypt who are under arrest or subject to travel bans, asset freezes or intimidation.

Answering member: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are concerned about the decreasing space for civil society to operate in Egypt, including the reopening of a case against more than 30 human rights organisations. Human rights defenders have been subject to measures including questioning, travel bans and judicial applications for asset freezing against individuals and their families. Officials continue to follow the proposed asset freeze against investigative journalist Hossam Bahgat and human rights defender Gamal Eid closely.

I raised these concerns with the Egyptian Ambassador in London and made a statement on 22 March. My officials regularly raise our concerns with representatives from the Egyptian Government in both Cairo and London.

Russia: Press Freedom
26 May 2016 | HL83

Asked by: Lord Hylton | Party: Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Russia about alleged state interference in the affairs of the RBC newspaper and news service; and whether they will make public any responses received.

Answering member: Baroness Anelay of St Johns | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British Government has not made any specific representations to the Russian Federation regarding the dismissal of three editors of Russian newspaper RBK on 13 May. However the Minister for Europe, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), did raise our broader concerns about the suppression of civil society in Russia with his counterpart Deputy Minister Titov in December 2015. As set out in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights Report, the UK is deeply concerned about the reducing space for dissenting views and the increasing pressure on the media community in Russia.

Egypt: Human Rights
11 Apr 2016 | 32547**Asked by: Hilary Benn | Party: Labour Party**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received of human rights workers being (a) summoned for questioning, (b) banned from travelling and (c) subject to attempts to freeze their personal funds and family assets by the Egyptian authorities.

Answering member: Philip Hammond | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are concerned about the decreasing space for civil society to operate in Egypt, including for Non Government Organisations (NGOs). Human rights defenders have been subject to measures including questioning, travel bans and judicial applications for asset freezing against individuals and their families. I refer you to the statement made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) on 22 March. UK officials have raised our concerns with representatives from the Egyptian Government in both Cairo and London.

Topical Questions
16 Mar 2016 | 607 c938**Asked by: Fiona Bruce | Party: Conservative Party**

Bangladesh is a significant recipient of UK aid, yet last week the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission heard grave concerns about the shrinking civil society space there. What can Ministers do to help address this?

Answered by: Justine Greening | Department: International Development

I can assure my hon. Friend that DFID and Foreign Office officials, together with other donors, raise concerns about the space for civil society with Governments, including the Government of Bangladesh. This is an incredibly important area. Non-governmental organisations funded by UK aid are active in negotiating with Governments to protect the space for civil society to operate.

Maldives: Politics and Government
15 Mar 2016 | 29915

Asked by: Julie Cooper | Party: Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on progress of democratic reforms in the Maldives since 2008.

Answering member: Hugo Swire | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

In 2008 the Maldives ratified a new constitution which paved the way for the first free and fair, multi-party elections in its history. We welcomed this process, the elections that followed it and the ambitious reform agenda of the new government.

Since 2012 there has been a steady decline in democratic space and respect for human rights in the Maldives. This includes restrictions on the right to protest, the intimidation of civil society, human rights organisations and members of the media and signs that the death penalty is to be reintroduced. Other concerns include the arbitrary detention of political figures and the decreasing independence of institutions and the judiciary. The State of Emergency declared in November 2015 temporarily suspended basic rights.

We continue to work with the Maldivian Government and the international community to encourage and support political and democratic reform.

4. Statements

World Humanitarian Summit
Justine Greening
26 May 2016 | HCWS24

I would like to update the House on my recent visit to the World Humanitarian Summit, where I headed the UK delegation.

The World Humanitarian Summit took place from 23-24 May in Istanbul. It was the first global summit on humanitarian issues, and came at a time of unprecedented need: around the world, 60 million people have been forced from their homes and 37 million children out of school in conflict-affected countries.

The Summit was truly global, bringing together participants from governments, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organisations. Leaders welcomed the UN Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity as well as his five priority areas: global leadership to prevent and end conflicts; upholding the norms that safeguard humanity; leaving no one behind, moving from delivering aid to ending need; and investing in humanity.

It was one of a number of important events this year, including February's Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London and the UN Secretary General's High Level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants and the Obama Summit on Global Refugees in September. The Summit was a key moment following the Global Goals agreed last year, galvanising political attention on how to better serve those most affected by conflict, extreme poverty and environmental change.

At the Summit I was able to demonstrate UK leadership in addressing global crises and advance our UK objectives to:

- **Secure a new approach to protracted crises, including situations of long-term displacement of large numbers of people.** The UK effectively built on the important legacy from the successful Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in February, scaling up the approach that the UK pioneered in the Syria region as a global model for protracted crisis and displacement – going beyond people's basic needs and investing in education, jobs and livelihoods. As part of this, alongside existing commitments to Syrian children, I committed an extra £30 million of support to a new joint fund for education in emergencies which was launched at the Summit to help make sure no child misses out on an education. The Education Cannot Wait fund aims to reach more than 13.6 million young people living in emergency situations with quality education over the next five years, and all crisis-affected young people by 2030.

- **Strengthen commitment to the protection of civilians in conflict.** I reaffirmed the UK's commitment to compliance with International Humanitarian Law and ending impunity, galvanising support on protection of the medical mission and preventing sexual violence in conflict. There was strong consensus amongst participants that a lack of compliance is causing significant levels of suffering and displacement, as well as prolonging conflict. There was widespread agreement that conflict resolution and protection of civilians are the only sustainable solutions. We will now need to build quickly on this momentum.
- **Call for a reformed humanitarian system, including smarter financing.** The Summit marked the beginning of a new relationship between the humanitarian and development communities, with widespread agreement of the need to work together better. The UK led the way to secure agreement to a "Grand Bargain" on more efficient humanitarian financing. This will change the way donors and agencies do business, including by adopting common standards to put affected people at the centre of the response, streamlining reporting systems and increasing the use of cash-based approaches in crisis situations. UN agencies pledged a more systematic use of shared analysis and planning. The UK, alongside other partners, will continue to drive this reform agenda in the months and years ahead.
- **Ensure a stronger focus on protecting and empowering women and girls in crises.** I also committed to put gender equality at the heart of 21st century humanitarian action, going beyond protection and making sure girls and women have a voice, choice, and control - even when crisis hits.

Overall, the Summit was a success with widespread agreement that the humanitarian system needs to reform and an emerging consensus on the way forward, in particular a renewed commitment to compliance with International Humanitarian Law. Improving the architecture to tackle forced displacement and migration was a major theme running throughout the Summit as was the need to ensure the most vulnerable are not left behind: girls and women, youth and people with disabilities. A more effective and efficient global humanitarian system will help to build global security and prosperity – which will, in turn, help advance the security and prosperity interests of the UK.

The Summit provided us with a compelling agenda for change – now we need to deliver. We will hold participants to their commitments, particularly the UN, and renew our efforts to roll out a new approach in crisis-affected countries.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Overseas

Baroness Verma

28 Apr 2016 | HLWS685

I would like to take this opportunity to update the House on my work as Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Overseas, following my appointment in December.

It has been an extremely busy period and the UK Government has continued to do a significant amount of work to protect and extend women and girls' rights globally, including on violence against women and girls.

Following my appointment I have conducted a consultation on the activities for the Ministerial Champion role, to ensure that my approach within [my high level objectives](#) is the most effective, and is informed by what people here in the UK would like me to be doing. I have consulted with civil society organisations and academics, youth activists and grassroots women's rights organisations (both in the UK and overseas), and the previous Ministerial Champion. I also conducted a [live chat](#) via the Guardian website. I had my final roundtable yesterday - co-hosted with my Ministerial colleague from the Home Office, the Minister for Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Crime (Karen Bradley) – hearing from organisations working on violence in the UK. I will share the consultation findings and my next steps soon.

Last month I represented the UK on violence against women and girls at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the largest global policymaking mechanism on women and girls' rights. I came away feeling extremely proud of the UK's leadership on violence against women and girls, including our on-going and significant investments in programming to reach the most marginalised girls and women. We can all be proud of the contribution we are making to preventing and responding to violence in some of the most difficult places to be a girl or a woman – be they living in extreme poverty, conflict or protracted crisis.

At CSW, the Secretary of State for International Development's leadership on the UN High Level Panel on women's economic empowerment was warmly welcomed on the international stage, and the UK was vocal on how violence acts as a critical barrier to women's economic empowerment. I co-hosted a side event with Brazil and Mozambique where I was particularly vocal on the need for new forms of partnerships to tackle violence. I also gave keynote speeches on the importance of tackling violence against older women and disabled women and girls. Leaving no one behind, including by ensuring we reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, remains a top priority for DFID's Ministerial team.

Crucially, the UK negotiated hard for good language on women and girls' rights, including living free from violence, in the international Agreed Conclusions. These act as soft law and civil society representatives from across the world spoke passionately about the importance of the language for setting global norms on what Member States need to do to protect and progress women and girls' rights.

We also had a large range of activities across Government on International Women's Day earlier in March. In my capacity as Ministerial Champion on Violence Against Women and Girls, I spoke alongside Ministers at the FCO and MOD on the importance of addressing violence as part of our work on women, peace and security. I also spoke at the Women of the World Festival on how violence and gender-based discrimination drive poverty, and how collectively we can work together, engaging women and girls and men and boys, to provide platforms for the most vulnerable. The [Cross-Government Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls](#) was also published, demonstrating the ongoing leadership of Ministerial colleagues at the Home Office, and the links between efforts domestically and internationally to end violence.

The priorities for me now include acting upon the series of important recommendations coming out of the consultation that I have just completed. I will be undertaking a series of visits to developing countries working to address this issue, looking to support efforts – particularly where rates of violence are extremely high – and to learn where innovative approaches are seeing dramatic reductions in violence. The UK has some way to go before we see our international goal of eradicating violence fully achieved too, and I see a critical part of my role as drawing together the best evidence from experts tackling this. Thank you to all of the Ministerial colleagues and parliamentarians working alongside me on this critical agenda.

5. Early Day Motions

RAPID RESPONSE FUNDING FOR LGBT GROUPS AND WORLD AIDS DAY

EDM 727 (session 2016-17)

28 November 2016

Stephen Doughty

That this House welcomes the report of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance on World AIDS Day 2016 on the new Rapid Response Fund for LGBT groups in 29 countries whose HIV services are threatened by stigma, discrimination and violence; is concerned that men who have sex with men are 19 times more likely, and trans women 49 times more likely, to be living with HIV than the general population, and that in over 78 countries homosexuality is criminalised; emphasises that AIDS will not be ended by 2030 without ending the human rights abuses that affect people most at risk of HIV; further welcomes the recent generous Government contribution to the Global Fund, but is concerned about reports that UK bilateral funding for HIV/AIDS may be reduced and that the impact of this on all people living with HIV/AIDS, including LGBT communities; is alarmed that overall funding for the global HIV response is in decline; is further concerned that the space for civil society is being squeezed in a growing number of countries; and calls on the Government to ensure that bilateral funding is available to support community organisations which advocate for the human rights of populations most affected by HIV and provide services that ensure no-one is left behind.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GAMBIA

EDM 359 (session 2016-17)

19 July 2016

Anne McLaughlin

That this House is very concerned about the situation in the Gambia with the continuing crack-down on freedom of expression, assembly and association, illustrated by the death in April of Solo Sandeng, Secretary of the opposition United Democratic Party, after being detained for participating in a protest in Banjul; is dismayed by reports of President Jammeh's recent comments, including his reference to the opposition as vermin and threats to bury them nine feet deep, and his threats to eliminate the Mandinka ethnic group; notes that the UN Special Advisor, on the Prevention of Genocide has expressed profound alarm at President Jammeh's public stigmatisation and dehumanisation of the Mandinka, and highlighted that hate speech constituting incitement to violence can be both a warning sign and a powerful trigger for atrocity crimes; further notes that President Jammeh has created a climate of fear since he seized power in a coup in 1994,

resulting in thousands of Gambians fleeing the country; fears that repression could increase in the run-up to the Presidential elections scheduled at the end of 2016; and calls on the UK Government, together with the international community, to condemn the actions of the Jammeh Government, to seriously consider imposing punitive measures on President Jammeh and leading members of his regime, to secure support for a Special Rapporteur on the Gambia at the UN Human Rights Council, and to do more to assist and protect civil society in the Gambia.

SLAVERY IN MAURITANIA
EDM 1067 (session 2015-16)
3 February 2016
Mark Durkan

That this House notes that Mauritania consistently ranks among the worst countries in slavery indexes with between four and 20 per cent of the population living as slaves, most of them women from the Haratin ethnic group, and with slave status often being passed between generations; further notes that purported anti-slavery legislation in 2007 has not changed the layers of civil exclusion, social degradation and economic exploitation, which Mauritanian authorities pass off as what it calls the last vestiges of slavery; deplores the lack of progress made by the Mauritanian government in eradicating slavery and addressing the growing reprisals against anti-slavery human rights defenders, including the 2013 Human Rights Prize Laureate and the 2014 residential runner-up, Biram Dah Abeid; contrasts the Mauritanian government's failure to hold slave-owners to account with the ongoing imprisonment of many anti-slavery activists; requests that the Government investigates reports of domestic workers being trafficked from Mauritania to Saudi Arabia; urges the Government to press the Mauritanian government to uphold its international human rights obligations to eradicate slavery and protect human rights defenders; and encourages the Secretary of State for International Development to work closely with international partners such as Anti-Slavery International and to allocate funds to support civil society programmes to combat slavery and broader multilateral efforts relating to political reform, good governance and human rights.

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